

## Genealogical Studies for Selected Families with the Duke(s) Surname in the Camden District, South Carolina, 1740-1840

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#### [Benjamin Duke of Singleton Creek and Wateree River \[WikiTree\]](#)

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Mary Duke Thomas \*  
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Margaret Duke Hughes \*  
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Sarah Duke

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Rachael Duke Crim(m)  
Thomas Duke \* #  
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Robert Duke, Jr of Marion Co., MS  
Elias Dukes of Kershaw, SC and Clarke, AL # #  
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Samuel Duke of Fairfield, SC  
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Margaret Duke Perry  
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Celey Duke Horn  
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#### Other Duke(s) Families studied in the Camden District

##### [Benjamin Duke in Prince Frederick Parish, SC](#)

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##### [Robert Duke of Cedar Creek, Lancaster, SC](#)

##### [Robert Duke of Dry Creek, Lancaster, SC](#)

Robert Duke  
Crenshaw Duke  
Jesse Duke  
Green Robert Duke  
Stephen Duke

Lewis Duke \*

# yDNA Match \* Autosomal DNA Match



## Introduction

### Camden District, South Carolina

The South Carolina Circuit Court District of Camden was created from a portion of Craven County in 1769. The bounds of the Camden District were North Carolina to the north, the Lynches River to the northeast and east, the Broad, Congaree, and Santee Rivers to the west and southwest, and the Georgetown District to the southeast. The modern counties of Chester, Clarendon, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lancaster, Lee, Richland, Sumter, and York all lay within its boundaries. Over the years, these counties have formed and reformed, changing borders and sometimes names; but, except for part of Lee, always staying within the original bounds of the old Camden District. Two county names, Claremont and Salem, are now extinct, replaced, more or less, by Sumter. In 1800, the Camden District ceased to exist when it was split into smaller circuit court districts, generally along the present county lines.

Although the lifetime of the Camden District spanned only thirty years, and I cover a greater time period, it still provides a convenient frame of reference for the temporal and geographical scope of this note. The focus of this note are selected persons of Duke heritage who lived during the 100 years after 1740 in the area of South Carolina defined by the boundaries of the Camden District.

Before 1730 according to early historians, most of the population of the South Carolina Colony lived in the coastal regions. Few non-indigenous people, other than hunters and Indian traders, lived more than fifty miles from the coastal regions. After 1730, the religious tolerance of the South Carolina Colony leaders toward non-Anglicans and the easy availability of free, or nearly free, land attracted many settlers from the other colonies and from Europe. The population of the inland areas, including the Camden District, began to grow at a prodigious rate.

The well-drained portions of land in the South Carolina Colony were suitable for the cultivation of indigo, the most popular cash crop of 1750. Another popular cash crop of the period was rice, which was grown in fertile swamps along the rivers. In the first part of the 1700s, settlers throughout the colony cultivated rice using the same methods that were used to raise corn and wheat. Later, in the latter half of the century, field-flooding techniques were developed to grow rice more efficiently. Field-flooding is a labor intensive activity which depends on the availability of great amounts of water. Because of these factors, the field-flooding method was most productive on the large coastal area plantations where slave labor was readily available, and the owners were capable of making the large capital investments required to develop the necessary fields. In that part of South Carolina, rice surpassed indigo as the major cash crop.

Further inland, the estates were smaller, lands suitable for flood agriculture were scarce, and transportation to markets for cash-crops such as rice and indigo was difficult and costly. The newly-emigrated upland settlers were poor and had few additional laborers beyond family members. The land available for a cash crop was necessarily small because the land owner first needed to clear the land and to provide for his family. The typical mid-eighteenth century landowner of the Camden District area did subsistence farming. That is, on a few cleared acres they raised a variety of food crops and tobacco for their own use. This was supplemented with wild game, domesticated chickens, and geese, and open range beef and pork. As the years passed, more land was cleared, and the inland planters were able to commit more of their property to the production of cash crops such as cotton and rice. Those that did well obtained more land from those that didn't. By 1830, the region was densely settled, the land was being merged into large plantations, and many descendants of the early pioneers were leaving South Carolina to seek opportunities further south and west.

The first Duke family to settle in South Carolina was among those early immigrants coming from the other colonies circa 1750 who took advantage of the South Carolina Colony policy of bounty land grants. As the Duke family grew so did the amount of land they controlled. By 1782 and the culmination of Revolutionary War, part of the family had spread down river away from the original homestead on the Wateree River to make their homes at higher elevations along the river tributaries, in particular Wateree Creek, Sawney Creek and Twenty-Five Mile Creek. Other members of the Duke family sought their fortune outside the Camden District by immigrating to South Carolina's 96<sup>th</sup> District which lay west across the Broad River. What follows is a genealogical chronicle of their lives based on information gleaned from the historical records left by the family augmented by the DNA test results of their descendants.

## Discussion

Genealogists have struggled unsuccessfully for over a century to identify the ancestors of several apparently interconnected families with Duke-Dukes surname who lived between 1740 and 1840 along the Wateree River and three of its tributaries, Wateree Creek, Sawney Creek and Twenty-Five Mile Creek. As the river flows through the area from north to south, the river is known progressively as the Catawba River, the Wateree River, and finally below the mouth of Twenty-Five Mile Creek, as the Santee River. Also, later records sometime refer to Twenty-Five Mile Creek as Rice Creek. The early Duke families built their homesteads in the Camden District of the South Carolina Colony in the area that is known today as Lancaster, Kershaw, Fairfield, and Richland Counties of South Carolina..

I now add my name to the list of genealogy students who seek to define the interconnection between those Duke families with my weak argument in several parts, each one starting with some of the scant historical data. Scant is a good descriptive adjective to use considering the depredations of time and fire. Both Richland and Lancaster are considered ‘burnt’ counties. I augment the historical data with the emerging Duke Family DNA results provided by the Duke DNA Study Group. DNA results help coalesce the gaps and missing bits in the historical records.

Many genealogists have contributed to my knowledge of these Duke Families and their attached historical data records collection, too many to enumerate here. There are several long-time major contributors that I must mention: Lynn Teague, Joe Lineberger, Gary Duke, and Joe Duke. To these names I add the genealogists, some long-time and some not, who are involved in the Duke DNA Study Group, in particular: Jim Dukes, Ginny Winslett, Rita Talton, and [Chris]Topher Sims.

I’ll present the historical data by using links to excerpts from my existing Duke studies then follow them with ‘experience’-based interpretations and assumptions to build my Camden Duke ancestor argument. This allows me to express my opinions while preserving the integrity of my earlier studies. My hope that is by doing so, my efforts will provide a starting point for future generations who will either prove or disprove them. Every day sees more Internet data and indexes becoming available so I don’t doubt the ‘disprove’ part will happen, but hopefully in small amounts.

*I argue that Benjamin Duke, deceased before 1770, SC of the Wateree River, Lancaster County/ Camden District, SC was the paternal ancestor of three of the four Camden District Duke(s) families.*

### [Benjamin Duke on Singleton Creek and Wateree River](#)

The 1778 lease and release conveyance of Benjamin Duke’s land from John Chesnut to James Perry gives us the first name of Mary for Benjamin Duke’s wife and likely sets an upper limit on their lives. After Benjamin’s land grant, this record is the next one in the colonial documents that mentions him by name.. It also refers to an owner of the land other than himself. Official registration of land deed trans-

fers between family members were sometimes delayed for years, often until the land was transferred outside the family. The dearth of prior deed transfer information for Benjamin Duke makes us to suspect that the transfer of ownership happened through probate after his death, probably as directed by his will. If a will did not exist, the oldest male child would have inherited the land by law of primogeniture. The succession of ownership to a non-Duke as listed in the 1778 conveyance implies Robert Humphries was a son-in-law of Benjamin Duke and a legatee by marriage. The next owner after Humphries, Nehemiah Joiner, is named on the 1770 land grant for John Dixon on the Wateree River. Joiner is listed as a bounding neighbor with the language of the bounding line being identical to that on Benjamin Duke's Wateree River land plat. This fact allows us to move the death date for Benjamin Duke back 8 years to 'before 1770.' No mention is made of a 'widow's dower' in the Chesnut to Perry conveyance so Benjamin's wife Mary was either dead or re-married 'before 1770.' Nehemiah Joiner had an unusual given name, one that was present in the fourth branch of this Duke family.

Robert Humphries witnessed the lease and release between William Harrison with wife Ann/Nancy to John Dukes. The Harrison land that John Dukes bought in 1753 was on the Wateree River, the same side, north, upriver about 4 miles from Benjamin Duke's land. John was the second Duke listed in the records for the Camden District of South Carolina.

*I argue that this John Dukes, referred to as John Duke of Lancaster is the son of Benjamin and Mary Duke because of closeness in time and locale and because of the involvement of Robert Humphries as a witness in the land indenture.*

#### [John Duke of Lancaster, Wateree River and 96th District, SC](#)

The two other witnesses to the Harrison-Duke land conveyance were Richard and Jno. Kirkland, neighbors and in-laws of William Harrison. William Harrison's wife was Nancy Ann Kirkland. Nancy Ann had a sister named Esther Kirkland who is thought to be the wife of John Duke. The Kirkland sisters had a brother named Moses Kirkland. The Harrison-Duke land conveyance was copied into the South Carolina Colony records in 1762. That same year Richard Kirkland bought the land next to John Duke on one side and William Harrison had a survey made for land on the other side. By then John Duke and Moses Kirkland were linked as business partners and owned adjacent land in both the Camden and the 96<sup>th</sup> Districts. John Duke named his oldest surviving son Moses Kirkland Duke.

There is no mention of a community in the area. The Duke land was located below the falls in a shallow stretch of the Wateree with an island, a shoals and a ford, named later on Mill's South Carolina Atlas of Fairfield District<sup>1</sup> as Stark's Island, Aldridge's Shoal, and Duke's Ford.

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1 <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps860030-23863.html>.

Less than four miles northeast, upstream of John Duke of Lancaster's homestead and on the same side of the Wateree River, is the site of the next colonial grant to a person with the Duke surname. In 1764, Robert Duke petitioned for land on the Wateree River along a tributary called Cedar Creek.

### [Robert Duke of Cedar Creek, Lancaster, SC](#)

Little is known about this Robert Duke other than his proximity to Benjamin Duke and John Duke of Lancaster. There are no records of him selling the land; however, by 1806 James Bredin owns the land. The tract is long, narrow, and includes both sides of Cedar Creek as well as a tributary identified on the plat as Dry Branch.

The Lancaster District map in the Mills Atlas<sup>2</sup> locates a number of mills near the mouth of Cedar Creek. It is possible Robert Duke of Lancaster, Cedar Creek was more interested in acquiring proprietary water access for mills than he was in obtaining land for crops. Perhaps it was an investment that was quickly resold.

*We'd like to link this Robert Duke to John and Benjamin Duke, but other than proximity of location and time, the data to argue for it aren't available.*

An equal distance from Cedar Creek, farther north and away from the river lie the lands owned by Robert Duke of Dry Creek, Lancaster, SC by 1771. Often too, in this period, travelers passing through from the northern colonies paused long enough to take advantage of South Carolina's attractive land grant policy before continuing on to Georgia.

At least seven known Robert Dukes lived in the area during the study time period and most of them were involved in land grants and transactions. Positive identification is sometimes impossible.

*Still, there is the proximity of location and time and a few years later there are records for another Robert Duke, or perhaps the same one, in area who we can definitely argue has a connection to John Duke of Lancaster.*

### [Robert Duke of Fairfield, SC](#)

We've never precisely located the land tract Robert Duke of Fairfield described in his will as "... Tracts of Land one near the mouth of fishing Creek..." but thanks to Mill's Atlas for Chester District, SC,<sup>3</sup> we know that Fishing Creek enters the Wateree River, also called the Catawba River, near the northern end of Mountain Island. This locates tract of land mentioned in Robert Duke of Fairfield's

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2 <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps860035-23868.html>.

3 <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps860025-23858.html>.



will as about five miles north, across and upriver from the Cedar Creek land grant and less than ten miles from John Duke of Lancaster's homestead. The land grant is dated 23jun1774. In 1779, John Duke witnessed the lease and release conveyance between Robert Duke of Fairfield and John Leonard for the land.

Four tracts of land are mentioned in Robert Duke of Fairfield's will, recorded in 1785: the Fishing Creek tract mentioned above, the 300 acres homestead split by Moses and Aaron that Robert acquired in a 1775 trade with William Simmons, a tract for Jesse Duke on Sawney Creek, and a tract granted in 1774 on Horsepen Branch, the branch identified on Mill's Atlas for Fairfield District,<sup>4</sup> as a tributary of Sawney Creek, entering the creek near "...Carey's old Saw Mill...", likely where Crims Mill is located on Mill's Atlas for Kershaw District in 1825.<sup>5</sup>

The owner of Crim's Mill was a descendant of Peter Crim, Jr and Rachael Duke, the oldest daughter of Robert Duke of Fairfield. By the time of Rachel's death about 1790, the Crims had their homestead nearby on the Wagon Branch of Sawney Creek. John Abbott, the brother of Robert Duke of Fairfield's wife Nancy, was in the historical records for the Wagon Branch area with his grant in 1769 using a 1762 land plat. Peter Crim is listed as a neighbor on John Abbot's 1787 land grant and has a nearby grant of his own by 1788. William Wells, the husband of Sarah Duke, the daughter of Nehemiah and Elizabeth Duke was granted land there in 1799.

Robert Duke is on the Petit Jury Lists of 1778-1779 in the section "...between the Broad and Catawba [Rivers]..." He is listed adjacent to Peter Crim, likely the Peter Crim, Jr.<sup>6</sup> who married Robert's daughter Rachael. By that time Peter Crim, Jr. who was born about 1750, had sold the land on Broad River that he had inherited from his father Peter Crim, Sr.

By 1738, Peter Crim, Sr. had immigrated from Europe and was living in the Amelia Township, an early township originally established in 1732 for the Reformed Swiss Protestants. The township was located in the east side of what became the Orangeburg District of South Carolina. He was granted the land in 1744 and platted another 250 Acres in the fork between the Broad And Saludy Rivers in 1750. By 1757, Moses Kirkland owned 51 acres in the Amelia Township and was Peter Crim, Sr.'s next door neighbor.

On 07DEC1785, the eldest son of Robert Duke of Fairfield, Thomas with his wife Mary made an indenture to sell 100 acres of land on Wateree Creek to Robert and John Ellison that was part of a 1750 land grant to John Aldridge of Fairfield. The conveyance does not indicate how Thomas and Mary Duke came into possession of the John Aldridge land, nor is there an earlier conveyance in the records concerning the transaction. The John Arledge grant was located nearby, if not adjacent to, the land granted to John Duke in 1766. John may have acquired the land in a trade, one that didn't make the

4 <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps860030-23863.html>.

5 <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps860034-23867.html>.

6 [http://genealogytrails.com/scar/newberry/crimPeter\\_family.htm](http://genealogytrails.com/scar/newberry/crimPeter_family.htm), <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=633&p=surnames.crim>, and <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=352&p=surnames.crim>



record books. The absence of a transaction history that includes Thomas Duke may indicate a family conveyance or inheritance. Bequeathing property to nephews may be a tradition in John Duke of Lancaster's family. John's son Moses bequeathed property to his nephews, Moses D. Hughes and Elijah Duke.

The exact date that John Duke of Lancaster died is unknown, but can be estimated by his family's historical records. In 1779, He signed as a witness to the lease and release conveyance between Robert Duke of Fairfield and John Leonard for the Land on Fishing Creek. In May of 1785, a conveyance on the Wateree River mentions Widow Duke as a bounding land owner.

Directly following the Thomas Duke record is one for a Charles Pickens to John Ellison indenture that transfers the 100 acres granted 1766 to John Duke of Lancaster. Charles Pickens indicates he purchased the land from Robert Thompson in 1784. One of the three executors of John Duke's estate was John Thompson. Again, there is no transaction history to indicate how Robert Thompson became the owner of the land.

*I argue that the historical records imply that both Robert Thompson and Thomas Duke were legatees of John Duke of Lancaster. Robert Thompson married one of John's daughters and Thomas Duke was John's nephew. Another likely daughter and legatee of John Duke of Lancaster's was Anna, the wife of John Arledge of Edgefield and inheritor of 100 acres that once belonged to John Duke. I find it easy think that John Duke of Lancaster and Robert Duke of Fairfield were both associated with Moses Kirkland and that was the reason both named a son Moses.*

*By 1781, there was a third Moses Duke in the area, the son of Richard Dukes of Edgefield. I argue that Richard Dukes of Edgefield was a brother of John Duke of Lancaster and Robert Duke of Fairfield. Richard lived near John Duke of Lancaster and the Kirklands in the 96<sup>th</sup> District, SC in the part that is now called Edgefield County.*

### [Richard Dukes of Edgefield, SC](#)

A lone South Carolina historical record mentions Richard Dukes of Edgefield. He is listed along with John Duke of Lancaster, a Stark, and several Kirklands on the 1778-1779 Jury Lists for the 96<sup>th</sup> District of South Carolina. The disparity of records lead genealogists to speculate whether he died circa 1781 in the final days of the Revolutionary War. After 1800, his children, Moses Duke and Elizabeth Duke Foster appear in the Kershaw and Fairfield Districts, SC records where they raised their families before emigrating to Alabama and Mississippi.

*There is another lone South Carolina historical record that, when coupled with yDNA evidence, leads us to argue that Benjamin had a brother named Jeremiah Duke who arrived in South Carolina perhaps later than Benjamin but before 1774, and that he was the first Duke to settle in the Twenty-Five Mile Creek area.*

### **Jeremiah Dukes on the Round Top Branch of Twenty-Five Mile Creek**

The single record for Jeremiah Duke was the 1774 survey for Samuel Nipper's land grant. Inscribed across the upper right corner of the land plat survey is the words "*lands held by Jeremiah Duke*" No South Carolina land grant was issued for Jeremiah Dukes. However, later land grants indicate that Nehemiah Duke's widow Elizabeth lived in that same area on Round top Branch.

In a likely scenario that is supported by yDNA results, Jeremiah Duke died before he could apply for a land grant and the semi-legal right to the land passed by primogeniture to his son Nehemiah Dukes who also died. Nehemiah's widow, Elizabeth continued to live on the land during her lifetime. The records show that Elizabeth Duke started the land grant process and had a survey made in 1784 but a land grant was never issued. Later, her son Samuel applied for state grants that overlapped Elizabeth Duke's land and secured it's possession.

*This leads us the fourth Camden District, South Carolina Duke family. The fortuitous mention of Nehemiah Duke in John Brown's family bible. "...Elizabeth Duke wife of Nehemier Duke..."*

### **Nehemiah and Elizabeth Duke, Fairfield, SC**

Like Richard and Jeremiah, Nehemiah Duke is defined by a single record, an entry in the John Brown family bible. Unlike Nehemiah, his widow Elizabeth Duke and her children are well documented in the region. They appear to be the last Camden District Duke family to arrive in South Carolina, arriving too late to be found in the early records. They settled next to land eventually owned by Robert Duke of Fairfield on Twenty-Five Mile Creek, specifically on Round Top Branch. Robert, Elizabeth's eldest son was a Patriot during the Revolutionary War and used his military pay to buy land nearby on the Cedar Creek that empties into the Broad River. In the War Indents, he differentiated himself from Robert Duke of Fairfield by using the name Robert Duke Junior.

*This ends my weak argument for Benjamin and Jeremiah Duke's families. The real proof is in the DNA results:*

### **DNA Results for the Benjamin Duke and Jeremiah Duke Families**