

John Ellis (I) (born 1648) - my 8th Great-Grandfather – David Arthur - <http://www.edavidarthur.net/>

John Ellis (II) (born 1680) "Indian Trader" - my 7th Great-Grandfather – David Arthur

John Ellis (III) (born 1710) "Bear Story" - my 6th Great-Grandfather – David Arthur

Appears that John Ellis (II) (born 1680) know as "Indian Trader" was in Prince George County in early 1700s, then in Amelia/Nottway County VA in 1730s to 1740s and then moved to Rowan/Davidson County NC in mid 1700s. Seems that John Ellis (III) (born 1710) went to NC in 1750s with several of his younger sons including William, Radford and Willis, with William and Radford then going on to GA and Willis remaining in NC. Willis is the Grandfather of NC Governor John Willis Ellis (1820 - 1861).

John Ellis (III) (born 1710) moved to Rowan Co NC. His daughter Jane Ellis married Hampton Wade - my 5th Great-Grandparents – (David Arthur), Jane and Hampton Wade moved to Halifax Co. but seemed to continue to own land in Nottaway/Amelia Co. The deed of slaves below, with the statement “for divers good causes and considerations, me thereunto moving, but especially for and in consideration of the natural love and affection I have and bear unto Hampton Wade of the said Parish and County and Jane his wife” seems to be saying that he is moving (me thereunto moving). Perhaps leaving the area for NC where his father and several of his adult children are later found.

Amelia County, Virginia, Deeds
Book 5, Page 57

To all who these present come, Greetings: Know ye that I John Ellis of the Parish of Nottoway in the County of Amelia, for divers good causes and considerations, me thereunto moving, but especially for and in consideration of the natural love and affection I have and bear unto Hampton Wade of the said Parish and County and Jane his wife, a daughter of me the said John Ellis, have given, granted and confirmed to Hampton Wade and Jane his wife three slaves. The said slaves and their increase, after the deaths of Hampton and Jane Wade, to be equally divided between William Wade, Robert Wade, Richard Wade, and Betsy Wade, sons and daughter of the said Hampton Wade and Jane Wade.

Witness: Isaac Ferguson, Thomas Jeffress. /S/ John Ellis

Dated 19 Sep 1753. Recorded 27 Sep 1753

To add to the confusion, there is another John Ellis in Amelia/Nottaway County VA, as best I can determine they are not related but could be descendants of the parents of John Ellis I born 1648.

The following are several accounts of this Ellis Family

<https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/14933235/person/294876873/media/2f5d2e22-96c8-4342-82d5-90505d4124e8>

The following is found in the book, "The Heritage of Cherokee County Alabama" Printed in 1998. "Our ancestors left us so many footprints in the sands of time that they are hard to follow. The first records were about Edward Ellis, born abt. 1600, in Wales and married Marie Radford. They had one son, John Ellis I, 1648-1730. He was born in Henrico County, Virginia and died in Flat Creek, Virginia. He

married Elizabeth Willis and she died in 1730. John Ellis I (born 1648) was our earliest known Ellis (born) in this country. John had to be a true pioneer to tackle the rigors of this new land. Their son, John II Ellis 1680-1780 (this must be an estimate) and his wife Johanna Willis 1680-1730, lived along the Appomattox River in Virginia and he was also referred to as John Ellis of Amelia County. We know that he received a land grant of 464 acres. Imagine the work it took to clear his portions of the land and eke out a living for his family there in the wilderness. The records for that time period are rather scarce but in land records and other records he left his mark for all to see.

In the early 1700's this John Ellis II (born 1680) begins to show up on records. John left us with very distinctive tracks to follow. We find him venturing into the Carolinas where he was involved with the Indians and he was known as the "Indian Trader" All the early records led us to believe that John II was a very strong-willed man and that he stood up for what he felt was right. We have seen where he fought for the rights of Indians. Court records and church records show that he could be very stubborn at times. He migrated out of Virginia and into North Carolina. When John moved to North Carolina, most of his land holdings were sold to his son-in-law, William Giles who with his wife Mary later sold out and followed the migrating Ellis Clan to Rowan County, North Carolina. John and Johanna had five children" Willis, William, Jane, Martha and John Ellis III (1708-1780) John III and his wife, Lucy Mayes had nine children: Jane, Lucy, Mary Mattox, John IV, Matthew, Willis, Francis, Radford I and William. Their parents lived out their remaining years along the _____? River and were buried in Rowan Co. North Carolina. Most of John Ellis' children left us many foot prints in the annals of time and the branches of the family tree start in many directions, but for now we will follow one of our ancestors forward in time, Radford I 1746-1812, Radford I, married Elizabeth McCoy (1760-1818) in 1778 in Rowan County, North Carolina, During the Revolutionary War he received pay for running a ferry across the river for that area of North Carolina. Later, we find him in Jasper County, Georgia where his name appears in many land records. They had ten children with three dying in childhood: William, Radford II, Lucy Ann, Mary Polly, Radford III, Amy I, Amy II, James, Elizabeth and John V. Their eighth child, James Ellis, married Olive Varner (1798-1862) in Oglethorpe County, Georgia in the 1830's. They settled in Floyd County, Georgia. They were the parents of eight: Radford IV, Matthew Varner, Susan Henley, Oley Elizabeth, Jack Lumpkin, James Monroe, Martha Frances, and Thomas Jefferson. Our g-grandfather Matthew Varner Ellis 1818-1904 was the second child and married Frances Minerva Ann Montgomery 1819-1896. They lived in Cave Spgs, Georgia."

RESEARCHED BY; FRANCES ELLIS ALLEN AND ALICE ELLIS, (Information from their book, "The Heritage of Cherokee County Alabama")

<https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/14933235/person/294876873/media/b7f7cbce-1593-4923-8c18-1a38e6206969>

Ellis Family In the Beginning

Our Story begins in 1685 with a land grant to John Ellis, in which he received 468 acres of land on the south side of the Appamattuck River in the Parish of Bristol, Virginia (in the Charles City/Prince George County area). This was due to the transport of 10 people to this country. We know from this that John Ellis was here prior to 1685 but have not found documentation to prove exactly when he came to this country. Many other land grants reference his property as a boundary for new grants. Much

more research needs to be done in the time frame before Prince George County, VA was formed in 1704.

When Prince George County was formed in 1704 from Charles City County, John Ellis appears on the Quit Rent Roll for the County. We have not been able to discover who his wife was, but we believe that he had a son, also John Ellis, who became known as John Ellis, Jr., (and was an Indian trader) and that his son, John Ellis, was born there around 1710. Most of the Governing of the areas in Virginia was under the direction of the Churches, known as Vestries. A lot of what we have learned about these John Ellises comes from the Bristol Parish Vestry Book. An entry for 20 Oct. 1720 shows that John Ellis, a 10 year old boy broke his leg while his father John, Jr., was a way trading with the Indians. The young John was cared for by John West for four months before his father returned. Dr. Joss Irby who had treated the young boy was to be paid 2000 lbs. of tobacco for treating the boy and John West was to be paid 1000 lbs of tobacco for taking care of him. Upon returning home, John Ellis, Jr. did not appear too happy about the care that his son had received and refused to pay. The Vestry ordered the Church Warden, Mr. Luis Green, to seize as much of the estate of John Ellis, Jr. to equal the value of 3000 lbs. of tobacco & casq with cost and make a return to the Vestry. It appears that John Ellis, Jr., must have fought this for some time, for an entry on 11 November 1723 shows that the Parish had a new church built by Thos. Jefferson and that part of his pay was to be the 3000 lbs. of tobacco that John Ellis, Jr. still owed. It appears that John was quite stubborn, for in 1722 Thomas Eldridge had defended the suit versus John Ellis, Jr. and was to be paid 600 lbs. of tobacco. On July 9, 1724, we find John Ellis, Jr. acquiring 260 acres of land on the North side of White Oak Swamp, Meadow Branch in Prince George County; this was Patent No. 12 page 68. Then, in 1726, we find an entry in the Vestry records where John Ellis, Sr., is acquitted from paying leavy for present year and the future due to age. We believe that there are three John Ellises at this time – John Ellis, Sr.; his son, John Ellis, Jr.; and John Ellis, Jr.'s son, John, who had the broken leg. Later on when John, Sr. dies, John, Jr., then becomes known as John, Sr.(John Ellis II), and his son becomes known as John, Jr. (It gets more complicated later on trying to keep all the Johns straight!).

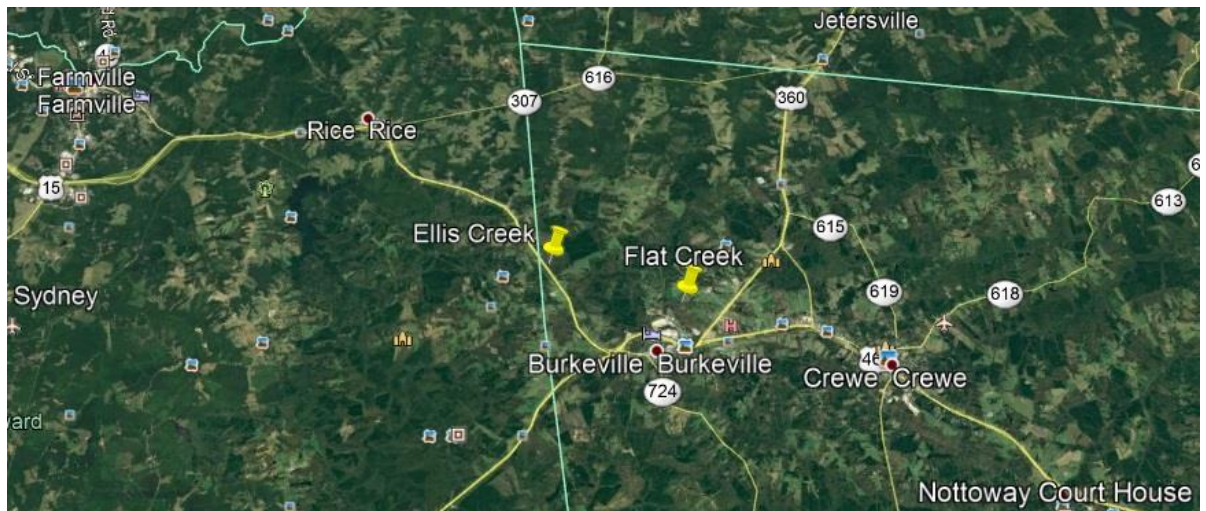
Around 1728-1730 John Ellis, Jr.(John Ellis III), marries Lucy Mayes, the daughter of William Mayes. William Mayes' property was 1200 acres on both sides of Hatchers Run, Prince George County.

In 1728 we find in the notes of William Byrd who oversaw the survey of the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina quite a few mentions of John Ellis and John Ellis, Jr., who were on both of his expeditions to do the survey. Several mentions of them can be found in William Byrd's diary, one instance was when John Ellis III was attacked by a bear and playing dead in order to avoid being eaten, and later killing a bear in retaliation for the attack. Another story tells of them having been working in a swamp for several days and food ran low and the party was threatening to eat Old John Ellis's dog. The book gives great details of their peril on the expeditions.

{Account of John Ellis III and the bear story <http://www.edavidarthur.net/JohnEllis/JohnEllis.htm>}

John Ellis III and Lucy Mays Ellis are the parents of Jane Ellis 1729-1785 who married Hampton Wade (my 5th G-Grandparents - David Arthur) and the parents of Willis Ellis 1738-1785 who is the Grandfather of John Willis Ellis, Governor of NC in 1859-1861.}

Some time, between 1730 and 1732, we figure that John and Lucy Mayes had a daughter, Mary Mattox Ellis. Around 1732-1734 John and Lucy had a son that they named John. (Pulling your hair out yet? Too many John's!)



All of this time, John Ellis II is acquiring large sections of land in the form of grants, some as much as 1066 acres at a time that he acquired in 1743. By this time, they are in what became Amelia County, Virginia.

The land grants now show mostly in Amelia County on Flat creek on the Nottaway River, which helps to narrow down the area where they were. A deed in 1743 shows John Ellis acquiring 1066 acres on both sides of Flat Creek, Amelia Co., and it refers to his land that he acquired in 1735. In 1743 we find a Lewis Vaughn, surveyor, living in the home of Wm. Mayes and employing William Mayes and John Ellis to help with some survey work. Several of the Deeds and Grants in this time period refer to John Ellis II as Indian trader. At this time, we strongly believe that John was trading with the Indians in the area that later became known as Rowan County, NC.

John Ellis II, Indian trader, begins to show up in North Carolina records as early as 1745 when he wrote a letter to Mr. Henry Morris in regards to Indian affairs. The letter was written for the King of the Catawba Indians to thank the Governor of Virginia for certain assistance rendered the King and his Tribe. Again in 1746, John Ellis III, writes to the Governor of Virginia asking for more help for the Indians. His involvement with the Indians was very strong, and by 1749 his fighting for the Indians' rights had begun to cause problems for him, for in Oct 1748 the residents of Anson Co., NC accused him of stirring up the Indians.

In 1750 we find John Ellis III, and his wife, Lucy, selling 1066 acres of land to John Foster in Amelia Co. It appears that they had settled in North Carolina and did not intend to return to VA. At this time, they were in North Carolina in the part of Anson County that in 1854 became Rowan County. John Ellis and William Ellis show up on a list of men commanded by Captain Charles King in colonial records of NC. Then, in a reconstructed Tax List of Rowan Co. for 1759, John Ellis, John Ellis, Jr., William Ellis and Willis Ellis appear. Also in 1759 John Ellis, Jr. of Rowan Co. receives from the Earl of Granville a grant of 112 acres on the north side of the Yadkin River above the mouth of Davis's Creek. There are quite a few land records which involve John Ellis in that area.

We have learned from the book, *The Boone Family* by Sparakes, "Just a few yards across the Davie County Line in present Yadkin County near the Yadkin River is the grave marker of John Ellis, 1753.

This is the earliest marker which has been located in this section. The name John Ellis is found in Rowan Co. Records." This info is from footnotes found in History of Davie County, by James W. Wall, page 28.

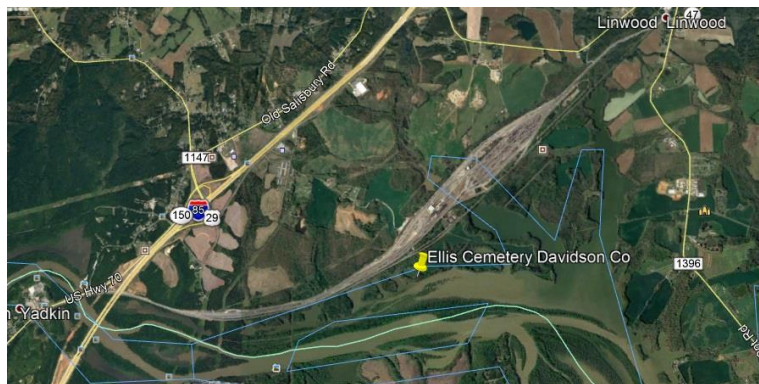
The Ellis family played a great part of the settlement of Rowan County area around Salisbury. We know that John's son Radford lived on the south side of the Yadkin River and his sons, William, Willis, and John were on the north side that later became Davidson County. William and Radford left the area during the time of the Revolution and migrated to Georgia. There are numerous land records in these areas relating to the Ellis family. In 1781 there was a major military action taking place in the Salisbury area of Rowan County. General Green was being pursued by General Cornwallis. General Green crossed the Yadkin River at Salisbury to the North side of the River, and due to the fact that the river was at a high point, Cornwallis was unable to cross, Green had moved all the boats and ferries to the north side (note Radford received pay for running Ferry on Yadkin) Cornwallis shelled the opposite bank furiously with his artillery. This area was where the Ellis's were located. This cousin William Ellis Sr. Received a Land grant in 1784 in Ga. As a refugee fleeing the British records in Wilkes Co. Ga shows that he had served in the Militia there.

There is part of the old Willis Ellis cemetery still standing along the banks of the Yadkin River in Davidson County. It has numerous markers that have stood the test of time. This is not all there is to know about our Ellis line; it's just the beginning. There is still much more to learn; this only provides places to start. So enjoy, and remember a tree that's roots are not tended will wither and die.

Written by Robert (Bob) A. Ellis (With some clarification by David Arthur)

<http://www.edavidarthur.net/JohnEllis/EllisCemNC.htm>

Ellis Family Cemetery - banks of the Yadkin River - Davidson County NC



Some seven years earlier, on October 13, 1749, a petition had been sent to the Council at New Bern informing Governor Gabriel Johnston that a bold, insolent ruffian by the name of John Ellis was trying to stir up trouble between the white settlers and Catawba Indians. It

Copyright

Anson in the French and Indian War

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was reported that he went to Hagler's court or village bearing tales. He whispered into listening ears that white men were complaining of Indians stealing horses from their plantations and kidnapping children. Ellis taunted the Indian Chief with these words: "White men's law make men pay for such with their lives." Governor Johnston took note of this and ordered his court clerk John Rice to prepare a paper

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Pages 22 & 23

This, below, is another John Ellis in Amelia/Nottaway County VA, as best I can determine they are not related but could be descendants of the parents of John Ellis I born 1648. The interesting fact here is that this John Ellis in his will leaves the Horsepen Creek property below to his wife and children and in describing the property he notes that it adjoins the property of Hampton Wade. Just coincidence? This John dies in 1762-63 in Nottaway Co. with grown married children, making him too old to be the son of

our John Ellis III born 1710. Several Ancestry trees seem to list this John as a totally different family, and numerous Ancestry trees have a jumbled confusion of the two families. Not surprising.

<http://files.usgwarchives.net/va/amelia/deeds/thesecon16gdd.txt>

Amelia-Prince George County Virginia USGenWeb Archives Deed.....Ellis, John - The Second, George June 2, 1758

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<http://www.usgwarchives.net/va/vafiles.htm>

File contributed for use in USGenWeb Archives by:

Robert Ellis <http://www.rootsweb.com/~archreg/vols/00017.html#0004075> January 19, 2007, 3:43 pm

Written: June 2, 1758

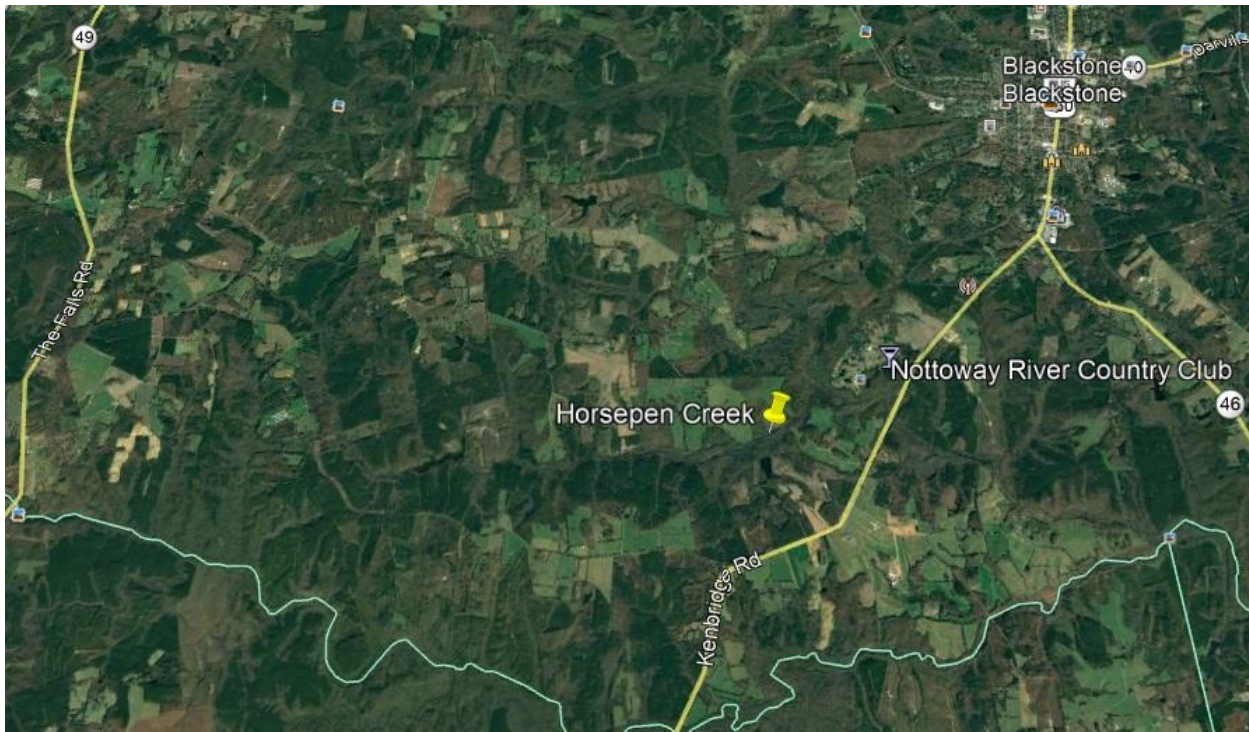
John Ellis

Amelia County, VA, 1485 Acres, Land Grant, 2 June 1758, Both Sides Horsepen Creek in the Forks of Nottoway

George the Second &c. To all &c. Know ye that for diverse good cause and consideration but more especially for and in consideration of the sum of Forty Shillings of good and Lawful money for our use paid to our Receiver General of our Revenues in this our Colony and Dominion of Virginia we have given granted and confirmed and by these presents for us our Heirs and Successors do give grant and confirm unto John Ellis one certain Tract or Parcel of Land containing One thousand four hundred and eighty five acres lying and being in the County of Amelia both sides of Horsepen Creek in the forks of Nottoway and bounded as followeth, to wit, Beginning at Bollings corner Hiccory on the South side of the said Creek thence along his line West five Degrees South ninety nine poles to his corner Thence South twenty seven Degrees West ninety three poles to a corner _____ white oak thence South thirty three Degrees East one hundred and seventy seven poles to Munford's corner white oak thence along his line East one hundred and forty eight poles crossing the Creek to his corner Hiccory thence North thirty six degrees East one hundred and seventy four poles to a faced Corner thence East one hundred and sixty eight poles to a faced Corner Thence North Four hundred and eight poles part joining on Anderson's line to Tomlinson's corner Thence West six Degrees South eight five poles along Tomlinson's line to his corner thence North eight degrees West ninety two poles to a Faced corner thence West six Degrees North eighty poles to Smart's corner Hiccory Thence along his line West twenty eight degrees South three hundred and seven poles to Bolling's line thence along his line South East two hundred and two poles to his corner white oak thence South thirty three degrees West one hundred and sixty poles to his corner on the Horsepen Creek thence down the Creek as it Meanders to the Beginning (one thousand and eighty five acres a part thereof being formerly Granted unto the said John Ellis by our Letters Patent bearing the date the twenty second Day of September One thousand seven hundred and thirty nine and four hundred acres the Residue never before granted. With all &c. to have hold &c. to be held &c. Yielding &c. paying &c. Provided &c. In Witness &c. Witness our Trusty and well beloved John Blair Esquire President of our Council and Commander in Chief of our said colony and Dominion at Williamsburg under the seal of our said Colony the second day of June One thousand seven hundred and fifty eight In the thirty first year of our Reign.

Examr.
John Blair

VA Land Office Patents No. 33, 1756-1761, p. 437 , Reel 31-32
Transcribed by Bob & Linda Ellis, Duluth, GA, 12 Jan 2007



Will Book 2x Amelia Co., VA 1761-1771

- 21 ELLIS, JOHN. Of Nottoway Parish. Will d. Jan. 14, 1762, pro. Apr. 22, 1762. Wit. Charles Irby, James Beuford, Patrick Coine. Ex. wife Elizabeth Ellis, son Richard Ellis. Sec. Charles Irby, John Hightower. Leg: son William Ellis, 600 acres adj. lines of Hardaway, Wade, Finney, Samuel Smith, line to be run from Hampton Wade's lower cor. near Jack's branch to Finney's nearest cor., but with condition that my son William Ellis pay my son Austin Ellis 50 pounds current Va. money in 3 years after my decease; if he refuses, then I give aforementioned land to my son Richard Ellis, and he pay son Austin 50 pounds to be raised out of my est. & paid by Ex. within 3 years after my decease; son Thomas Ellis; Thomas Walker & Betty his wife, 400 acres L/S Horsepen Creek, being land Walker now lives on & laid off by William Stokes; wife Elizabeth Ellis, labor & profits of 17 Negroes to maintain her & her family, & use & profits of plantation, together with 600 acres adj. for life or widowhood, then to son Richard Ellis; son Richard Ellis, 17 slaves, stock & furn. on plantation, also 16 other slaves, and 638 acres, the plantation he now lives on, incl. mill & land adj. both sides Great Nottoway River, & all rem. of my est.; son Richard Ellis to provide proper support & maintenance for my dau. Sarah Winn; George, Judy & Fanny (slaves) to continue to live on my plantation and not be put under an overseer; son Richard Ellis to manage and direct est.
- 30 ELLIS, JOHN. Est. I&A d. Aug. 5, 1762, ret. & rec. May 26, 1763. Appr. John Winn, Crispin Shelton, James Beuford, Daniel Shelton. Value 2113/9/0. Slaves mentioned: Jack, Dick, George, Sam, Harry, Charles, Dennis, Jesse, Galimede, Trojan, Judith, Lucey, Peg, Dido, Sarah, Deborah, Fanney, Sampson, Nerro, Anthony, Joe, Ned, Nanney, Phillis, Hannah, Humphrey, Peter, Stephen, George, Jenny, Milley, Betty, Sukey, Sally, Rachal.
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John Willis Ellis

My 2nd cousin 5 times removed - Governor of NC

This photo is the great grandson (Gov. John Willis Ellis of NC b.1820) of John Ellis born in Prince George County Virginia in 1710.



<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/48814659/person/20161783133/facts>

Willis Ellis 1738–1785 (son of John Ellis III born 1710 VA)
Birth 1738 • Flatt Creek, Amelia, Virginia, United States
Death 1785 • Rowan, North Carolina, United States

Married

Frances Anderson 1742–1780
Birth 1742 • North Carolina, United States
Death OCT 1780 • Rowan, North Carolina, United States

Sons

Willis Ellis 1762–1803
John Ellis 1777–1816
Anderson Ellis 1780–1832
Francis Ellis 1785–

Anderson Ellis 1780–1832
Birth 18 SEP 1780 • Rowan, North Carolina
Death 3 OCT 1832 • Jersey settlement, Davidson, North Carolina, United States

Married

Judith Ellis Bailey 1789–1868

Birth 12 JAN 1789 • Rowan, North Carolina

Death 26 JUN 1868 • Davidson, North Carolina

Children

John Willis Ellis 1820–1861

Bradford Ellis

Lucy Ellis Foster

William Ellis

John Willis Ellis 1820–1861

Birth 23 NOV 1820 • Rowan County, North Carolina, USA

Death 7 JUL 1861 • Springs, Carroll, Virginia

(July 7, 1861 (aged 40) Red Sulphur Springs, West Virginia)

<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/governors/ellis>

JOHN WILLIS ELLIS

Governor: 1859-1861

by Jerry L. Cross

Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History, 2005.

<http://www.ncmarkers.com>

See also: John Willis Ellis, Dictionary of North Carolina Biography

John Willis EllisJohn Willis Ellis (1820-1861) led North Carolina out of the Union and into the Confederacy. The son of Anderson and Judith Bailey Ellis, he was born on November 23, 1820, in eastern Rowan County (later Davidson County). He attended Randolph Macon College for one year before entering the University of North Carolina from which he graduated in 1841. Ellis then studied law under Judge Richmond M. Pearson and set up his practice in Salisbury in 1842. He was twice married, first to Mary White, who died only two months after their 1844 marriage. On August 11, 1858, six days after his election as governor, Ellis married Mary McKinley Daves, daughter of John Daves of New Bern. They had two daughters.

A Democrat, Ellis was elected a member of the House of Commons in 1844. In 1848, Dorothea L. Dix selected Ellis as liaison to champion her call for the establishment of an insane asylum. Ellis was twenty-eight when the General Assembly elected him a judge of the Superior Court, an office he held until 1858 when he won his party's nomination for governor. Ellis handily defeated his opponent, Duncan K. McRae.

As governor, Ellis pushed for faster movement of railroad freights, better plank roads and turnpikes, improvements in education, and completion of delayed river navigation projects. Hanging over his accomplishments, however, was the growing cloud of secession and sectional crisis. Running for reelection in 1860, Ellis denounced the abolitionists but steered clear of advocating dissolution of the Union. He used the constitutional question and southern rights to overshadow the issue of ad valorem taxation which was the trump card of his Whig opponent, John Pool. Even so, Ellis won by a much smaller majority than he had two years earlier.

On November 20, 1860, Ellis outlined a three-part strategy: participation in a conference of southern states to discuss the situation in the country, a state convention of the people to establish North Carolina's position, and reorganization of the militia including creation of a corps of volunteers. In his inaugural address on January 1, 1861, he continued to urge moderation, but a group from the Wilmington area decided to seize Forts Caswell and Johnston despite the governor's objection. He immediately ordered them to return control to the Union.

By early March deteriorating relationships had convinced Ellis that the state would soon have no choice but to join the Confederacy. When President Lincoln called for troops in April to put down the insurrection, the governor placed the state's sympathies with the South. After answering the president "You shall get no troops from North Carolina," Ellis ordered state troops to seize all federal forts and the Fayetteville arsenal, closing with a telegram to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, indicating that the state would support the Confederacy fully. All that was left was to make secession official at the May 20 convention.

Years of riding the circuit as a judge had weakened John Ellis's health. Battling consumption, he tried to govern from a sick bed, relying upon a committee to help in decision making. He forced himself to make public appearances to maintain the morale of the people but finally gave in and, in a futile effort at recovery, journeyed to Red Sulphur Springs, Virginia. He died there on July 7, 1861, at age forty-one. Governor Ellis's first burial took place in the family cemetery in Davidson County, but his remains later were removed to the Old English Cemetery in Salisbury.

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http://docsouth.unc.edu/browse/bios/pn0000480_bio.html

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www.uncpress.unc.edu

John Willis Ellis, 23 Nov. 1820-7 July 1861

John Willis Ellis (23 Nov. 1820-7 July 1861), legislator, superior court judge, and governor, son of Anderson and Judith Bailey Ellis, was born in the section of eastern Rowan County that later became part of Davidson County. He grew up on the plantation that his father had inherited from Ellis's grandfather, Willis, in 1806. Young Ellis attended Randolph Macon College and was graduated from The University of North Carolina on 3 June 1841. He spent the following year studying law under Richmond Mumford Pearson at Mocksville. This was the forerunner of Pearson's famous law school begun in 1847 at his home, Richmond Hill, in Yadkin County. Ellis commenced the practice of law in Salisbury in July 1842. On 1 Aug. 1844, a few months short of his twenty-fourth birthday, he was elected a member of the North Carolina House of Commons as a Democrat from a predominantly Whig county.

Shortly after the election, on 25 Aug. 1844, Ellis was married in Philadelphia to Mary White, the daughter of Philo and Nancy White formerly of Salisbury. White was editor of the Salisbury Western Carolinian (1820-30) and the Raleigh North Carolina Standard (1834-36) and a member of the diplomatic corps (1849-58). Ellis and his wife were married only a few weeks when she died of an unknown malady, possibly typhoid fever, on 19 Oct. 1844 upon their return to North Carolina.

As soon as he took his seat in the House of Commons on 18 Nov. 1844, Ellis began to champion internal improvements, a concern throughout his political career. He was again elected a member of the General Assembly in 1846 and 1848. A few days into the 1848 session he was chosen by Dorothea L. Dix to present a memorial to the house urging the construction of an asylum for the protection and care of the insane in North Carolina. As chairman of the Joint Select Committee to study this proposal, Ellis on 8 Dec. 1848 favorably reported out a bill to provide for the establishment of a state hospital for the insane. The bill became law on 21 December. On 16 Dec. 1848 Ellis, who a few weeks earlier had celebrated his twenty-eighth birthday, was elected a judge of the Superior Court of North Carolina by the General Assembly. During his tenure in the legislature and on the bench one of his most influential political mentors was William W. Holden, the powerful editor of The North Carolina Standard. As early as January 1852 Holden was urging Ellis to run for the U.S. Senate and the following year he tried to persuade him to run for governor, but Ellis declined both offers. Six years later the two men would oppose each other for their party's nomination for governor.

The Democratic convention, which convened in Charlotte on 14 Apr. 1858, nominated Ellis for governor the following day. After serving almost ten years on the bench, he resigned on 29 April. He was elected governor on 5 Aug. 1858. Six days later the widower of fourteen years married Mary McKinley Daves, daughter of John P. Daves, in New Bern. On 1 Jan. 1859 Ellis was inaugurated governor. In his address he acknowledged that animosity existed toward the Northern view of slavery, but he voiced the overriding feeling in the state at that time when he said, "Grievous as are these causes of discontent, we are not prepared for the acknowledgement that we cannot enjoy all our constitutional rights in the Union." He continued to counsel moderation with firmness in dealing with the central government.

During his first administration Ellis was vitally interested in internal improvements, especially in the completion of the navigation works on the Cape Fear and Deep rivers from Fayetteville to the coal fields in Chatham County. He also continued a progressive program of improving plank roads, navigation, turnpike roads, and the state's educational system. Another high point during his first term was the visit of President James Buchanan to Chapel Hill to deliver the commencement address at the university on 1 June 1859. Ellis escorted the president on his many stops en route to Chapel Hill. The dominant theme of the president's remarks at every stop was the preservation of the Union and the Constitution. Shortly after Buchanan's departure, the governor's wife gave birth on 8 June to a daughter, Mary Daves. A second daughter, Jean Graham, was born on 9 Oct. 1860.

Ellis was reelected governor for a second term on 2 Aug. 1860 by a smaller majority than he had received in 1858. There is some speculation that he lost votes because of his strong advocacy for states rights at a time when most North Carolinians supported the central government. His message to the General Assembly on 20 Nov. 1860 was not a call for secession, but a plea for the "prevention . . . of civil war and preservation of peace." However, he did recommend that North Carolina consult with other Southern states on the question of secession and then let the people express their opinion in a convention. He also recommended reorganization of the militia.

On 1 Jan. 1861 Ellis was formally installed as governor for a second term, taking the oath before the judges of the state supreme court, there not being a quorum of the General Assembly in Raleigh on that day. On 29 January, at the governor's bidding, the Assembly passed a convention bill; a few days earlier it had sent a delegation to the peace conference in Washington, which Ellis had little confidence would succeed. The following day Ellis urged the members of the Southern Convention meeting in Montgomery, Ala.—to which the Assembly had also sent a delegation—not to delay their business by waiting for the Virginia delegates to arrive because "Va. N. Ca. and other border slave states will much sooner join an organized government than secede without such government." The majority of North Carolinians did not seem to agree with their governor's strong views because on 28 February they defeated the call for a convention. On 13 Apr. 1861 Fort Sumter fell to South Carolina troops. This act of aggression against the central government caused President Lincoln to call for 75,000 troops to coerce the seceded states. When requested on 15 April to furnish two regiments for this undertaking, Ellis replied by telegram the same day that Lincoln would "get no troops from North Carolina."

Ellis immediately ordered state troops to seize the federal forts in North Carolina as well as the federal arsenal at Fayetteville. On 17 April he telegraphed Confederate President Jefferson Davis that he was "in possession of Forts, Arsenals, etc. come as soon as you choose. We are ready to join you to a man. Strike the blow quickly and Washington will be ours." Called into session by Ellis on 1 May, the General Assembly immediately passed a convention bill and authorized Ellis to send troops to Virginia at once to help defend that state. The convention called in Raleigh on 20 May 1861 unanimously adopted an ordinance of secession. Whereupon Ellis promptly telegraphed President Davis the news.

In delicate health for some time, Ellis was compelled during the latter part of June to journey to Red Sulphur Springs, Va., in an attempt to regain his strength. A few days later he died at the age of forty-one. He was buried in the family cemetery in Davidson County; sometime later he was reinterred in the Old English Cemetery, Salisbury.

SEE: Noble J. Tolbert, ed., *The Papers of John Willis Ellis*, 2 vols. (1964).

Noble J. Tolbert

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