

Berryman Hicks Withers/Weathers
Supplement To The Essay By Mary Grey Withers

I offer this essay to correct and expand on the writings of Mary Grey Withers, my aunt, pertaining to the life and accomplishments of her paternal great grandfather Berryman Hicks Withers/Weathers. For purpose of clarification the names Withers and Weathers seem to have been used interchangeably by various generations of our family.

Berryman Hicks Withers was born in Lincoln County, North Carolina (now Gaston County, North Carolina) on February 19, 1818 one of seven sons of Samuel Weathers and Sallie Rhyne. We know from the writings of my aunt and other sources that the Withers/Weathers family of Lincoln County, North Carolina came to that area from southwest Virginia early in 1800. The family had lived in various locations throughout Virginia from 1681 until early in the 1800's.

My aunt's sketch of Berryman Withers indicates that Samuel Weathers' move to Lincoln County was not a financially sound move and that from a very early age Berryman was forced to support himself as a carpenter and builder working for various builders in Lincoln County. In 1836 one of the builders took Berryman into north central South Carolina as a carpenter to work on several building projects that he had under contract. Early letters from Berryman to his brother Michael Weathers indicates that Berryman was successful as a builder and that by the time of the letters, which were dated in 1841 and 1842, he had been made manager for several projects.

Projects were performed during the period from 1836 to 1845 in York, Chester and Fairfield counties South Carolina. In addition to being a good manager it seems that Berryman had a strong desire for knowledge and through reading and inquiry he became well educated and informed. His intelligence and sound judgement and his reputation as a man of high integrity caused his fellow citizens to come to him for counsel and advice on both business and personal matters. It was said at the time that his documents had never been the cause of litigation or complaint.

In several letters written to Michael Weathers from 1841 to 1845 Berryman provides a good insight into conditions in South Carolina during those years. In a letter of January 1845 he writes "the times so hard and such a little

doing in this country that I have not much to write ... I have been wanting to go home for better than twelve months". However, in a later letter he writes "Just as our last job was about finished, there came a gentlemen wanting us to build him a large house. We made the calculation and engaged the job at \$ 3,000, we had to find the materials and board ourselves. We expect to do the best business we have ever done. This building is for a boarding house at the independent institution established lately by the Universalists, five miles northwest of Buckhead P.O. When this work is done, we have the promise of cost acts for two more houses in this same place, worth \$ 1,500 apiece, and the people of the settlement warranted us work for five years to come." The school identified as "the institution established by the Universalist" was the early boarding school called Feasterville Academy. We know from a history of Feasterville Academy (refer to the Feaster Papers at the South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina) that a period of expansion began in 1842 and continued on until approximately 1848.

One result of the contracts in Fairfield County, South Carolina was the introduction of Berryman Withers to the Meador and Mobley families who were prominent families in both Fairfield and Union Counties. Mary Grey Withers reports in her original writings that a letter from Berryman to his brother Michael in 1846 reports that on April 30, 1846, after having spoken for many years of remaining a bachelor, Berryman Withers married Susannah Elinor Meador, youngest daughter of John Meador, Sr. and Rebecca Mobley.

On April 6, 1847 John Samuel Withers was born in the area of Fairfield / Chester Counties South Carolina, the first son of Berryman and Susannah. A second son Michael Withers was born circa November 1849 but the U.S. census of September 1850 for Fairfield County households indicate that Susannah had died prior to the census. Berryman is known to have married Susannah's older sister Elizabeth Meador; she is listed in the census of 1850 as a member of the household of Berryman Withers as Elizabeth age 33 together with John Samuel age 3, Michael age 10 months and a cousin named Mobley. The baby Michael died at a young age and Elizabeth, the second wife of Berryman, had died prior to 1862. In July 1862 Berryman married for the third time to Mrs. Coleman Crosby. Berryman Withers died on June 28, 1875 in Chester County, South Carolina and is buried in the Coleman Crosby cemetery.

John Samuel Withers received an early education through the efforts of Scotch and English tutors at a small school established by Berryman Withers for several families in Fairfield County, South Carolina during the 1850's. The boys were being prepared in a classical education preparatory for entrance to South Carolina College in Columbia, South Carolina. On September 15, 1864 at the age of 17 John Samuel Withers joined the Confederate forces when he enlisted in Company B, Gills Battalion of the Chester Volunteers. A letter dated Sunday September 18, 1864 from John Samuel Withers to his cousin Sallie (Sarah C. Meador) provides much information on the family and its relationship with the Meador family of his mother and his step mother. In the letter there is mention of his cousin Janie (Dorcas Jane Meador) his cousin William (William Mobley Meador) who was in an adjoining Company. He also mentions sending his regards to Uncle John and Aunt Mary (John Meador, Jr. and Mary Triplett Meador). The original of this letter is in the Meador family and provides quite a bit of information on the families at the close of the Civil War.

On June 28, 1866 less than two years after the close of the Civil War John Samuel Withers married Margaret Mary Walker of Chester, South Carolina. John Samuel Withers was engaged as a landowner and farmer in Chester County, South Carolina after the Civil War. He was the father of one son and seven daughters. Beginning with the family of John Samuel Withers the family has very specific information on the family members and this will serve as the subject of a second addendum to the original family sketch prepared by my aunt Mary Grey Withers.

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