

Aug. 16, 1953

Rt. # 4

Sevierville, Tenn.

Mr. James Gatlin and Miss Peggy Gatlin

Laurel, Mississippi

Dear "Gatlins"

The enclosed clipping from the Gatlinburg Press will tell you how I obtained your names and addresses.

Previous to the Civil War a man lived in this County (Sevier) named Radford Gatlin; he was teacher, preacher and storekeeper, as well as justice of the peace. Gatlinburg, entrance to the Great Smoky Mountain Park, was named for him; he operated a store there in the 1850's. There have been many stories and traditions regarding him, but he has been an elusive figure. I am a local historian in this County and would like to contact descendants of this Radford Gatlin in order to obtain more facts about him.

It has been said that he was a southern sympathizer on the eve of the Civil War, and was forced to leave this County which was a strong Union section of East Tennessee. It has also been said that the local people of Gatlinburg, first called the White Oak Flats, agreed to name the place for him if he would leave the County. All this is tradition and I am interested in obtaining the truth about this Radford Gatlin, who I am sure was quite a character. I thought that you might possibly be a descendant, or that you would be able to give me names and addresses of family members who could furnish family data on your Gatlin family. It is not a common family name in this country.

I know that Radford Gatlin and wife, Elizabeth, did leave this County about the outbreak of the Civil War, and that shortly before they left both were involved in a fight with residents of the Gatlinburg section; I have circuit court and Tennessee Supreme Court records to prove this. I also know that Gatlin obtained a Tennessee land grant for all the land around Gatlinburg and much of the Le Conte Mountain; it is said that he attempted to open a land office and sell this land to settlers, who already occupied this land, but I do not have any records to prove this.

I visited the National Archives, Washington, D.C., this Summer, and found a Revolutionary War Pension File of one Jesse Gatlin; he filed for a pension, May 7, 1818, while living in Randolph County, N.C., and was 69 years old at that time, thus he was born in 1749, the place of his birth was not stated. He died on May 6, 1838; his wife's name was Elizabeth Bradley, and she was born Dec. 8, 1759 and was living in Randolph County, N.C., in 1839, when she was allowed a pension as the widow of Jesse Gatlin. They had the following children: James, b. June 25, 1781; Edward, b. Dec. 17, 1784; Morning, b. April 15, 1786; John, b. Feb. 7, 1788; Jesse, b. July 25, 1790; Polly, b. April 10, 1796; Betche or Elizabeth, b. _____ 2, 1797. The son, Edward, stated that he was the fifth child, but the names of the other children were not given; this meant that there three other children older than either James or Edward. However, Radford Gatlin who lived here was born in Georgia in 1798, according to the census records for this County in 1850. Of course Radford could have been a son of James or Edward, and a grandson of the Revolutionary soldier, Jesse Gatlin.