

From the Atlantic, Bullpasture, Bluegrass, To the Missouri River James Robert Estill

By: Jasper Castle, Richmond KY

The Estill brothers, William, Thomas and Daniel, came to America from France in the later part of the 1600s and settled in New Jersey. As with most families, they multiplied and in a few years were looking westward as the country became crowded on the East Coast. The most extensive branch of the Estill family is that of Wallace Estill, (Thomas) who moved from New Jersey to Virginia. Members of this family are to be found in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri. Thomas Estill married Lucia Wallace. Most all of the Estill family shared the first name of Wallace.

Wallace Estill (1702-1792) and Mary Ann Campbell had nine children, Mary, Sarah, James, William, Abigail, Samuel, Wallace, (1758-1835), Isaac and Ruth. Captain James Estill, (1750-1782) died in The Battle of Little Mountain near Mt. Sterling, Ky. Captain James Estill married Rachel Wright in Virginia and had the following children: Benjamin, Wallace (1774-1860), Jonathan, James and Sallie. Captain James Estill, and brother Samuel played an important role in settling Madison County, Ky. The Estill family in 1882 placed a large monument in the Richmond, Ky., Cemetery in honor of James Estill. James Robert Estill from Howard County Missouri was one of the many family members that was present at the dedication of the monument. James Estill sold Archibald Woods 1,000 acres on Pumpkin Run for a rifle, with the understanding the spring of water would never go dry. The next summer the spring when dry, so he looked up Estill and got his rifle back.

Wallace was 8 years old when his father James was killed. He inherited part of the original land grant from his father and married Elizabeth Rodes and had the following children: Mary, Webber, (died young), William R., John H., James Robert, (1819-1900), Jonathan T., and Clifton R. James Robert Estill, was born in 1819 and grew up on his father's farm on the Speedwell turnpike. He attended public schools in Madison County and in 1835 he was sworn in as deputy sheriff and served under high sheriff Richard Broaddus. Between 1835 and 1843, he and his father, Wallace, had made several trips to Missouri for land speculation. On one of the trips to Missouri, Wallace Estill helped lay out the town of Booneville, Mo. Wallace also helped to lay out the town of Columbia, MO. Wallace Estill never lived in Missouri, but had land interests there.

When Wallace Estill died, he left his fine estate on the Speedwell pike to his son Clifton Rodes Estill. Clifton Rodes had tried to raise cotton and had lost his fortune. On his death, the farm and mansion was put up for public sale, (Richmond Climax 1887). The sale also mentioned a Mattie Estill. Mattie was an infant, and that her father, William Rodes Estill, Sr., a brother to James Robert Estill, married a second wife, Martha Coleman Van Meter. Mattie was a year old when her father died. William Rodes had inherited the home place when his brother Clifton died unmarried. James Robert Estill came from Missouri and bought the home place in Kentucky at public auction. He later {1899} sold it to Taylor Rice and H. H. Collier.



James Robert Estill was married in 1845 to Mary Ann Turner, the daughter of Talton Turner and Sallie Turner. Talton Turner was a native of North Carolina, and was one of the pioneers of central Missouri, and was a man of great prominence and influence. He conducted an extensive trade with the Indians, and accumulated a large fortune. He had served in the war of 1812 under General Green Clay.

Talton Turner was one of the 13 founders of the town of Glasgow, MO. He sold lots in the new town to the other other founders. The Turner home stands just to the south of Glasgow and is still owned by the Turner family.



James Robert and Mary Ann Estill had 8 children. Three had died while young and five survived to marry and have their own families. Wallace, born 1845, married Mary Etta Forbes. Eleanor, born 1856, married Felix La Force. William Rodes, born 1861, married Nancy (Nannie) Elizabeth Gentry. William Rand Nannie had a son Richard Gentry Estill. Richard Gentry Estill married Mary King, who was a granddaughter of the founder of the famed King Ranch in south Texas. Alice, born 1853 married Lewis Nelson. Mary Clifton, married Washington Butler La

Force. The home place just north of Estill was called "Greenwood." Greenwood is still standing. It is reputed to be one of the finest homes in Howard County.

Felix and Washington Butler were brothers. Sets of sisters marrying brothers was common in the 19th century. The La Force father was from Clark County, Ky. Felix La Force owned a farm and was feeding cattle with a large conveyor belt, the belt came loose and pulled the motor down from its moorings and killed him instantly. James Robert started with a purchase of 460 acres and gradually he added land until he had 3,200 acres of land in one body. In early days, he devoted a considerable portion of his land to the cultivation of hemp, and bred and fed mules for the sugar plantations in Louisiana. Later, he engaged largely in the breeding of fine stock. In 1883, he imported from Scotland a herd of Angus cattle and from this importation and additions thereto came the famous Angus herd of Wallace Estill, on exhibition at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. This herd won over \$4,000, making the best showing of any herd of beef cattle. Also, he won prizes and money at the 1904 St. Louis Fair.

The large estate also included the famous Burckhart salt spring, where in 1812 Nicholas Burckhart employed over a hundred men in the manufacture of salt. Burckhart Spring is located near Boone's Lick (see AUG 2022 HCGS Newsletter). In 1865 soon after the close of the civil war, Col. Estill became a director in the old Tebo Neosho Railroad, planned to run from Sedalia to Hannibal, which subsequently became a part of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railway system (called the Katy Line). Later, a railroad ran from Franklin on the Missouri River to Hannibal through Estill's property.

The railroad established a station and called it Estill. The town of Estil is unincorporated and currently is occupied by only one house. The Estil postoffice closed in 1944.

James Robert Estil was always aware of and had a keen interest in the cause of education. When the orphan's school was moved from Camden Point to Fulton he interested himself in its welfare, becoming one of its foremost promoters and benefactors. He and his wife both gave scholarships to this institution, and assisted it in numerous other ways. For many years, he was a member of the Board of Curators of the Missouri State University at Columbia. He and James S. Rollins, the president were close friends, and visited each other's homes. James S. Rollins was born in Madison County, Ky., to Dr. Anthony Rollins and Sarah Harris. James S. Rollins played a important part in the start up of Missouri University as he was in the legislature from Boone County, Mo., he also was a state senator and was a member of Congress during the Civil War. He was identified with various other institutions, among which was the Farmers Bank at Fayette, and the Franklin Bank at Franklin, Mo., in which he served as director for many years. Though at no time a resident of Kansas City, he possessed a large amount of valuable property in that city.

James Robert Estill was in many ways a remarkable man. In the first place, he was recognized as the qualities which endeared him so closely to the young was his desire to help young men help themselves. His numerous benefactions were performed in the most modest manner, and rarely, if ever, did he find his confidence misplaced.



James Robert Estill died March 11, 1900, in Estill, Howard County, Mo. He was buried in the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery near the old home place. Mary Ann Estill died March 20, 1900, nine days later. She is also buried in the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery on Highway 5 north of New Franklin, Mo., near the old home place. Mt. Pleasant Cemetery is also the resting place of Lee Edgar "Jelly" Settle, who composed the music for the Missouri State Song (see FEB 2023 HCGS Newsletter).

Editor's Note: I added a few pieces of information and some photos to Jasper Castle's excellent article. Mr. Castle is a resident of Richmond, KY. That city was founded by John Malcolm Miller, one of my ancestors. There are many connections between Richmond, Madison County, Kentucky and Howard County, Missouri. The Estil family was very prosperous. Mr. Castle said in an Email to me that '...they could make money while standing on a rock'. I had never heard that phrase before and I intend to use it at the earliest opportunity. I express my appreciation to Jasper Castle for that, this excellent article, and other communications.

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