

JOHN GREENE MURPHEY
[Alexander¹ Archibald² John Greene³]

John Greene Murphey, my great, great-grandfather and the third and youngest son of Archibald and Jane Debow Murphey, was born circa 1780-81 in Caswell County, North Carolina. It is my conclusion that he was named in honor of General Nathaniel Greene. General Greene's southern campaign began in 1780. Consequently, it seems likely that Archibald's admiration of his general came as a result of service proven to merit that admiration --- 1780-1781.

John Greene Murphey died in 1845 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. The exact date of his death is unknown and it is presumed that he was buried in a family graveyard situated on the land bequeathed to his children by his father. The search for that graveyard continues. It seems reasonable to assume that may not be within sight from any current road, but rather may be on private property. It is also reasonable to believe that both John Greene's and his first wife, Tabitha Bryant's, graves were marked at one time. John Greene died leaving unsettled debts and his estate did not leave money for full satisfaction of those debts. Consequently, it is unlikely that his widow, Sarah Lehue, had the resources to pay for a grave marker. However, at the time of John Greene Murphey's death, he left adult children who may have been able to afford a gravestone.

I initially started this work to get some insight into a man who was the youngest son of Archibald, and brother of the famous and prosperous Archibald Debow Murphey. Did he feel overshadowed by his brother's accomplishments? The more I learn of this family, the more I feel that John Greene was probably proud of his older brothers, but set out to make his own mark in the world. Records show that he kept in touch with his family and that family, on their trips to Tennessee, visited with John Greene and his family, and John Greene made frequent trips back to North Carolina.

While residing in Caswell County, John Greene Murphey was a Deputy Court Clerk for a time under his father. Although John Greene's brother, Archibald Debow, attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, John Greene is not reflected on alumni rosters. However, one might guess that he received a classical education, as he named his third son Cicero. Further, no military service record has been found for John Greene, although his older brother, Alexander, served in the War of 1812. It is entirely possible that he did serve in the military and that his record is one of the many listed for the various John Murph[e]ys. I also have been unable to find ownership of any land by John Greene in Caswell or Person Counties. Unfortunately, only a few records have been found to piece together the life of John Greene, and none have given us any real insight into his character or personality.

Although virtually every other family member partnered with Archibald Debow Murphey in business ventures, there is little evidence to suggest that John Greene Murphey speculated [other than a few small transactions in West Tennessee] in any of the diverse endeavors undertaken by his brothers, particularly land speculations. This may have been simply because he did not have the money to speculate.

In his April 14, 1807 letter to his son, Archibald Debow, Archibald Murphey says:

"Your Brother John Greene has been here one day and two nights, he has left us this morning and goes home by way of Hillsborough. He informs that he is to be married to a Planter's Daughter of good Character on Thursday the 23rd Instant. He has also appointed to be here on the 23rd of July when and where we shall expect to see you with your little family. We intend to make an attempt of having the family once more together on that day and as you and he are furthest off, we expect those near will assuredly attend."

It is presumed that John Greene resided in Granville County at the time of his father's letter, but when he moved there, why he moved there, and what he did for a living is not known. John Greene, as well as his brother Alexander, married in Granville County, and it is wondered how they met their brides, and what the relationships of the families were prior to the marriages. Granville County adjoined Orange County, North Carolina. When Caswell County was formed, Granville then adjoined Caswell County, then later, when Person County was formed, Granville County adjoined Person County.

John Greene Murphey and **Tabitha Bryant** were married on 23 April 1807 in Granville County. Tabitha was the daughter of Rowland [Roland] Bryant and Mary Hunt.

Roland Bryant was born 11 February 1760 and he died in Granville County in August 1843. In the early 1760's, William Bryant, Roland's father, purchased a tract of land in Granville County, North Carolina and settled his family there. With him came his wife, Elizabeth Rowland Ferrington, and their children, William, Rowland, Delilah, Martha, James and Tabitha. Granville County records include an undated paper which lists William Bryant, along with Pomfrett Herndon and Samuel Kittrell²³, as petitioners for a public road "to convey the produce of their land and labor to market" from Captain John Dickenson to Callier's Road. William Bryant was murdered and subsequently the trial of the slave convicted of the crime is on the 1773 record in Granville County. Rowland Bryant was not yet of age when his father's estate was settled.

Little is known of John Greene during the period between 1807 and 1814, although **John G. Murphy** is reflected on the 1810 federal census in Granville County, North Carolina. In 1811, **A.E. Murphy, Jno. G. Murphy** and **H. Haralson** witnessed the will of Nathaniel Pass on January 11th in Caswell County.

Deed records show that John and Tabby lived in Danville, Pittsylvania County, Virginia from 1814, when they purchased two city lots from Stephen D. Watkins, until 1816 when they sold the lots to George Marable.

John Greene Murphey and his family removed to Rutherford County, Tennessee in 1817 and settled on land owned by his father, Archibald Murphey. In October of 1817, Archibald added a Codicil to his Last Will and Testament identifying the land in Tennessee and bequeathing the land in trust to John Greene's children:

"Further my son **John G. Murphey**, at my request and with my approbation, since the execution of said Will, having removed and settled on a tract of land conveyed to me by James Sanders on **Bradleys Lick Creek of Stone's River**, containing Two Hundred and Ninety Two acres or thereabouts. I therefore give to my son **John G. Murphey** the aforesaid tract and parcel of land, in trust for his children in the same manner and under the same rules and regulations, as the estate to them in my said Will is devised, at the valuation of three commissioners to be appointed by the County Court where the land lies, and the amount of said valuation to be part of their distributive share of my said estate."

On 18 December, 1817, following the death of his father, John Greene petitioned the Rutherford County, Tennessee Court for an appraisal of the land bequeathed to his children. However, the value placed on the land is not known.

JGM attended the sale of personal property belonging to his father, Archibald Murphey, on 01 January 1818. His only purchases were a bay horse for \$30.00 and one saddle for \$12.00. Although his brothers and other family members purchased slaves, it appears that JGM bought none.

On 10 April 1819, Jno. G. Murphey, Geo. P. Wallace and Drury Floyd witnessed a deed conveying land on Bradleys Fork in Rutherford County from Jesse Brashear to Timothy Thomas.

The Murphey family is shown on the 1820 federal census for Rutherford County, Tennessee as **Murphrey**:

1 male 26-45	[1775-1794]	[John Greene]
1 female 26-45	[1775-1794]	[Tabitha]
1 male under 10	[1810-1820]	[Cicero L.] ²⁴
2 males 10-16	[1804-1810]	[Archie & John D.]
1 female under 10	[1810-1820]	[Mary Jane]

Following a trip back to North Carolina, John Greene wrote to his brother-in-law, Herndon Haralson, relating family news:

Rutherford County, Tennessee
March 24th 1822

Dear Sir:

After my Compliments to You, I shall relate the Voige and History of NC as far as Came within my Knowledge. I left home on the 16th of September, with Mrs. Clopton and a jurney of 15 Days we arrived at my Mother's. On this jurney we were much favored with weather, having only to make one stop on account of rain or bad weather. I found the Old Lady very well. My unexpected visit gave her some alarm, but was soon over when announcing all was well. On the day after, I accompanied Mrs. Clopton to her father's, found all the family well, and on the second day after I returned to Mother's.

Previous to this I had heard of the situation of Bro. Alexander's health, and on the next day went to see him. His features I recognized, but his flesh, complexion, and manners had left him. Instead of a fleshy man, a skeleton appeared. Instead of a rosey cheek, a corpse like face appeared and for a Joyful and pleasing Temper, the most base and cross one filled their places. It would be impossible for me to describe to you the peavishness he possesses. Not one iota goes in and right _____. With him and eavery thing his friends thinks, for to desert his mind, he takes it to aggravate his passion.

His wife [poor Woman] was on the Verge of being Delivered of an infant when I left that Country. What will be the consequence after her confinement I cannot say. But am afraid the family will not be as well situated as perhaps it was before her confinement, which I assume was not of the best -- but more of this when I see you. I will not report the standing of the aforesaid, agreeable to information.

I was informed by Tollerable authority that all his property was under incumbrance; has Sold Spencer for \$600--Three Hundred less than he gave; besides many other sacrifices not recollected. In fact, he was Considered Broke by most of the people I talked with. I stayed with him Two Days, and on the third went to ADM to meet him, agreeable to a Letter I wrote him, on my way in at ____ Court, and fortunately met him. I made known to him the cause of my visit to NC. [Say, Lucy & Debow's Debt]. When he shew me the settlement between him and Debow, which debt neaver was mentioned in said settlement, and moreover, he appears to have struck from Debow's debt near \$4,000 and taken his obligation for \$10,000. That is a gracious present. I have made known to him my extreme want of Money and in a Serious Manner. Asked

²³ In the 1860 Wilson County [which adjoins Rutherford County] TN census, an Archibald Murphy, age 46, wool carder, is in the household of Samuel J. Kittrell.

²⁴ This does not agree with later records that show Cicero Lafayette born in 1822.

him if the Exr. has not made Sale of the Forked Deer Lands, when he answered in the Affirmative; and Stated that he had been informed the Lands were not of the Quality as he expected it was from the Grant. [I have as near as possible platted it for you with my pen and ____ ____ ____].

He stated that the Courts of Guilford, Rockingham and Caswell would probably Collect him some Money and _____ one week from my Appointment to Start to Tennessee and met him at Caswell Court, which I consented. I attended Court from Tuesday until Friday, when it adjourned. I had a private Interview; _____ more than money was the result, after hard persuasions I obtained \$50, and promises of more being transmitted by mail shortly. But not yet arrived here. He informed me that as soon as he went home he intended to advertise his property for Sale, and become out of debt if possible.

On Friday evening, Jonathan Haralson arrived at the Court House; we agreed to accompany each other to Mother's. When on the road Jonathan informed me that he was credibly informed that ADM's property was all under a Deed of Trust -- and that to prolong the payment of Some Debt in Chatham of ADM's, he has entered as security, for an appeal from the Inferior to the Superior Court. That Judgment had entered up against them and the money he was Compelled to raise in a few days or suffer his property to be exposed to Execution has been issued to Orange and returned Nothing found. This is truly hard, and as it was of my Father's places all powers in the hands of the Extrs. -- those that have not received their Coto.[?] may whistle for the balance [But more of this when I See you.]

While I was in NC I frequently was at the Doctor's. He appears to be going on in the Old Way. I cannot perceive any alteration in his affairs more than he has Brandon and Polly in the House with him, the former not doing anything for a Living. Henry is Situated and practicing Medicine in Milton. [The Letter from Betsy to Polly will give you a more full acct. of the family affairs.] She told me not to forget to state the delivery of Cornelia Carter of a fine Daughter about the 8th of October.

While on a few days before I started from NC I obtained an Order from Alex. on Thomas A. Thompson for \$100. He informed me which no doubt is the case that he is Living on the Obine or its Waters. If you have leave or Seen anything of him, please write me where I may find him, he having Sold Some Lands for Alex. I should have been to see you before this time, but I had not money to bare my Expenses. I shall start my Job in a few days and as soon as I plant my Corn I will pay you a Visit.

John Daniel is not worth a Cent. Neather does he appear to pay a parental care towards his children. They yet remain as they were when you left the Country.

We started from Bro. Alex. for home on the 11th of Inst. And had tolerable weather until we arrived at Mrs. Fulkersons when a snow fell and from there until we arrived at home on the 28th we had the most disagreeable weather I ever traveled in.

My family in my absence has been very Sick, but was recovering when I got there and have been well since. I will now give you a plat of the Lands in ____ County. Please write me by Mr. Simmons, which I requested to Call on you.

Love to Sister and all the family,
While I am yours, Respectfully,
Jno. G. Murphey

John Greene Murphey appears in Rutherford County, Tennessee records on several occasions. In 1824, he was one of the buyers at the estate sale of John Carter, and he witnessed the Will of

Alexander Jordan, whose land adjoined his. In 1826, he witnessed a deed for Nancy Jordan. That same year JGM's name appears as a Commissioner in the settlement records of John Carter.²⁵

By 1830, the Murphey family had grown as shown on the 1830 Rutherford County, Tennessee census. The spelling this time was **Murfree**.

1 male 40-50	[1780-1790]	<i>[John Greene]</i>
1 female 30-40	[1790-1800]	<i>[Tabitha]</i>
1 male under 5	[1825-1830]	<i>[probably Cicero L.]</i>
1 male 5-10	[1820-1825]	<i>[probably John D.]</i>
2 females under 5	[1825-1830]	<i>[Louisa & Nancy]</i>
1 female 5-10	[1820-1825]	<i>[Mary Jane]</i>

John Greene and Tabby's son Archie returned to Caswell County, probably sometime between 1820, when he was 12, and 1830. There are many possible reasons for his return to Caswell, but it is my guess that he was "adopted" by his Uncle Archibald Debow to oversee his education. Archie was the eldest son and a namesake. Perhaps, too, he was a sensitive or frail child, not suited to the frontier life that his father had chosen.

Between 1831 and 1833, JGM was witness to a number of estate settlements in Rutherford County. Since the individuals named in those settlements have not been found to have any connection to the Murphey family, it is thought that JGM may have acted as a court clerk for a time in Rutherford County.

On 24 November 1832, **John G. Murphey** and **John Debo Murphey** deeded two acres of land to the United Baptist Church [Deacons Robert Jarmon, Alex Harris and Bennett Rucker] for \$10.00. That deed was not recorded until 19 September 1857, when it was entered in Deed Book 9, page 109.

Tabitha Bryant Murphey died between 1830, when she appeared on the census, and probably before 1837 when a portion of the land was sold.

On 30 January 1837, **John G. Murphey** and **John D. Murphey** sold 155 acres on Bradleys Creek to David Jordan and Thomas Wilson for \$1,552.50. The deed was witnessed by William T. Ball and H. Trott. That deed was recorded on 29 June 1847 in Deed Book 3, page 137. Mentioned in the deed is one-fourth acre reserved for the graveyard of **John G. Murphey**: ". . . with a reserve of two acres to the meeting house which has been deeded, also one fourth of an acre for the graveyard of the said John G. Murphey, leaving a balance of one hundred and fifty four and one-half acres as represented in the foregoing platt . . ."

Nothing has been found to locate the land belonging to the United Baptist Church, to which JGM deeded two acres for a graveyard and meeting house. A search of the deed records of Rutherford County should be made to determine whether the United Baptist Church later deeded that same property to another party, perhaps another church.

John Greene and **Tabitha Murphey** had six children:

- i. **Archibald [Archie] Murphey** *[see page 167]*.
- ii. **John Debow Murphey** *[see page 170]*.
- iii. **Mary Jane Murphey** *[see page 172]*.

²⁵ Any relationship to John Paine Carter, is unknown.

- iv. **Louisa Elizabeth Murphey** was born about 1820 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. She married Thomas Lasater, son of Absolum Lasater, on 20 January 1845 in Rutherford County. Thomas was born 05 January 1823 and died on 04 September 1869 in Rutherford County and one estate settlement record shows his name to be Green T. Lasater. They had the following children:
 - [a] **Julia Diretha Lasater** was born on 14 June 1846 and died in May 1896.
 - [b] **Bazel D. Lasater** was born 15 December 1848.
 - [c] **Drury F. Lasater** was born on 04 February 1853 and died on 31 January 1922.
 - [d] **Sion DeWitt Lasater** was born on 05 April 1855 and died on 15 July 1863.
 - [e] **Arminda Lasater** was born circa 1865.
- v. **Cicero Lafayette Murphey** *[see page 174]*.
- vi. **Nancy Greene Murphey** *[see page 178]*.

After the death of Tabitha, **John Greene Murphey** married **Sarah Ann Lehue**, daughter of Jeremiah Lehue and Milla A. Rudiciller, on 04 January 1839 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. Sarah was born in 1816 in Shenandoah County, Virginia and died sometime after 1880 in Wilson County, Tennessee.

The Lehue family has been in America since the 1600's, beginning with the immigrant, Nicholas Lehue, who appears in Northumberland County, Virginia in 1666.

At the time of their marriage, John Greene was almost 60 years of age and Sarah was 23 -- several years younger than Archie and John Debow, John Greene and Tabitha's eldest sons. Archie was no longer in Tennessee and there is no evidence to suggest how well he knew his step-mother.

John G. Murphey and his family appear on the federal census in Rutherford, Tennessee in 1840 as follows:

1 male 50-60	[1780-1790]	<i>[John Greene]</i>
1 female 20-30	[1810-1820]	<i>[Sarah]</i>
1 male 20-30	[1810-1820]	<i>[John D.]</i>
1 male 15-20	[1820-1825]	<i>[Cicero L.]</i>
1 female 15-20	[1820-1825]	<i>[Nancy]</i>
1 male 5-10	[1830-1835]	<i>[William]²⁶</i>

John Greene Murphey and **Sarah Ann Lehue** had four children:

- vii. **William H. Murphey** *[see page 179]*.
- viii. **Cornelia D. Murphey** *[see page 180]*.
- ix. **James Knox Polk Murphey** *[see page 181]*.
- x. **John C. M. [Martin] Murphey** *[see page 184]*.

²⁶ It is guessed that this entry represents William H., the first child of John and Sarah. However, if that is the case and the child was born following their marriage in January 1839, he should have been represented as under age 5.

John Greene Murphey died in Rutherford County, Tennessee in 1845:

Letters of Administration

State of Tennessee]
Rutherford County]

January Term 1846

TO: Aden Taylor, a citizen of Rutherford County.

It appears to the County Court now in session that **John G. Murphey** has died leaving no will, and the Court being satisfied as to your claim to the administrator, and having given bond and qualified as dictated by law, and the Court having ordered that Letters of Administration be issued to you, we are, therefore, to authorize and empower you to take into your possession and control all the goods, chattels, claims and papers of the said intestate and return a true and perfect inventory thereof to our County Court in 90 days, to collect and pay all debts and to transact all the duties in [illegible] to said estate which lawfully [illegible] on you as administrator, and after having settled up said estate, to deliver the residue thereof to those who are by law entitled.

Witness: Robert S. Morris, Clerk of said Court at Office this **5th day of January 1846**.
/s/Robt. S. Morris, Clk.
Recorded 13th January 1846

A sale of JGM's personal property took place on 19 January 1846. None of his children or siblings was among the purchasers. Sarah made several purchases, including a bedstead, furniture, a looking glass, cradle and a side-saddle. Sarah's brothers, Abner, James and William also made some small purchases. The estate was settled in April 1848, paying creditors "forty cents on the dollar".

On the 7th of September 1846, JGM's children brought suit against the purchasers of the property, David Jordan and Thomas Wilson, and their brother, **John D. Murphey**, for selling land that had been bequeathed to all of the children by their grandfather, **Archibald Murphey**. That suit continued for several years.

April Term 1849 - Chancery Court - Rutherford County, Tennessee

Archibald Murphey, Cornelius Philips and wife, **Mary Jane**, William Lassiter and wife, **Nancy Green**, Thomas Lassiter and wife, **Louisa**, **Cicero Murphey**, **John C. M. Murphey**, **William H. Murphey**, **Mitty Murphey** and **James K. Polk Murphey** --vs-- David Jordan, Thomas Wilson, Amzir Patterson and **John D. Murphey**

All of the heirs are named in the suit, including the children of both Tabby and Sarah. Listed ahead of his brothers and sister in the suit is John C.M. Murphy. However, census records reflect that he was the youngest of John and Sarah's children and was the only one for whom a guardian was appointed, although his siblings were also minors.

Subsequently, John Greene's son, Archibald, and the others sold their share in the estate to their brother, Cicero, who eventually disposed of the land.

Guardianship for J.C.M. Murphey

State of Tennessee]
County of Rutherford]

05 March 1850

James Bivins was this day in open Court appointed Guardian for **J. C. M. Murphey**, a minor heir of John G. MURPHEY, Deceased., who gave bond and security according to law.

The real mystery, however, lies with **John C.M. Murphey**. It would appear that John Greene had two sons [by two different wives] named John. It would also appear that **John C.M. Murphey** was born well after the death of John Greene. Further, no guardianship records have been found for John Greene and Sarah's other minor children.

The 1850 federal census for Rutherford County shows Sarah and her children, just two houses away from her brother, James Lahugh and family, in the Milton District.

Sarah A. Murfee	34	born VA
William H. Murfee	9	born TN
Cornelia Murfee	5	born TN
James K.P. Murfee	5	born TN
John M. Murfee	1	born TN

By 1860, Sarah and her children were in nearby Cainsville, Wilson County:

Sally Murphey	48
William Murphey	20
Cornelia Murphey	17
James Murphey	15
Martin Murphey	10

John Debow Murphey was not found in either the 1850 or 1860 Rutherford or Wilson County, Tennessee census records.

However, in 1870 John D. Murphey was the head of his household in Wilson County, and living with him was Sally and John D.'s half siblings:

John D. Murphey	60	born NC	Tailor
Sally Murphey	53	born VA	
Cornelia Murphey	25		
John M.	21		
Francis [female]	3		

John D. Murphey and his step-mother, **Sarah Lehue Murphey**, continued to live together, presumably until their deaths after 1880. In the census for 1880 in Wilson County they are shown as follows:

J. D. Murphey	69	born NC	Tailor
Sally Ann Murphey	62	born VA	Step-mother
Sarah	14	born TN	Granddaughter

Records have been found for all of John Greene's children, with the exception of John C.M. Murphey.

Sometime in my search I heard a family legend that John D. Murphey left his father's home when he could not get along with his step-mother. However, it is clear from the census records that John D. Murphey and his step-mother, Sarah Lehue Murphey, mended their fences and lived out their lives together in Wilson County after John Greene's death.

It may be that John Debow Murphey and his step-mother, who was younger than he, had a more complicated relationship than might be assumed at first blush.