

REV. STANLEY PEURIFOY AND MARTHA NEAL PERSONS

On June 14, 1827, twenty-six-year-old **Rev. Stanley Peurifoy (1800–1864)** married eighteen-year-old **Martha Neal Persons (1809–1889)** in the town of Yatesville, sixty-three miles south of Atlanta, in Upson County, Georgia. They were married by the local justice of the peace, Joseph Sturges (1799–1854).

Neville's Purifoy heritage¹ is deeply rooted in the English Midlands. This lineage enables us to trace Neville's ancestry to notable characters of ancient history, including **Mark Antony (83–30 BCE)**, **Charlemagne (c. 742–814)**, and **William the Conqueror (c. 1028–1087)**.²

It was Neville's eighth great-grandfather **Captain Thomas Purefoy Sr. (1578–1639)** who first came to America in 1621.³ He settled at the mouth of the James River in Virginia. The settlement, called Elizabeth City, is now in the city of Hampton, Virginia. Captain Thomas Purefoy Sr.'s great-grandson **Rev. Nicholas Purifoy (1679–1770)**,⁴ a Baptist, moved to New Bern in Craven County, North Carolina, where he became an important figure on behalf of religious freedom. In about 1795, Rev. Nicholas Purifoy's grandson **Rev. William Dixon Peurifoy (1771–1829)**, a Methodist, changed the spelling of his name to the old French version after a family squabble. He then moved with two of his brothers from North Carolina to central Georgia. The Peurifoyes in Georgia⁵ were Methodist preachers.

Rev. William Dixon Peurifoy's fourth son was Rev. Stanley Peurifoy, who was born in Warfield, a small town in Putnam County, Georgia. He and his wife, Martha Neal Persons Peurifoy, had six children⁶ and established a plantation near Yatesville. It remained in his family for at least 120 years.⁷

Rev. Stanley Peurifoy died in May 1864, at age sixty-three, on his plantation. His death came less than five months before the capture of Atlanta on September 2, 1864, during the Civil War. Rev. Stanley Peurifoy's will,⁸ dated April 15, 1864, was mostly concerned with the allocation and distribution of his slaves, even though the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued over a year earlier and slavery would be ruled unconstitutional in 1865.



Martha Neal Persons's family, like her husband's, was deeply rooted in colonial Virginia. Her ancestor **William Cooke (1615–1679)**⁹ came to America in 1635, and his son-in-law **John Person Sr. (1630–1707)**¹⁰ arrived in 1648. The next two generations in her Person lineage included **John Person Jr. (1660–1738)** and his son, **Francis Person (1697–1758)**.¹¹ They were Anglican planters who lived in counties south of the James River in the Tidewater region of Virginia.

Martha Neal Persons's grandfather **John Person II (1730–1786)**¹² migrated south to Granville County, North Carolina, in about 1750. He fought in the French and Indian War (1754–63). His son, **Jones Persons (1760–1850)**,¹³ was a Revolutionary War soldier who received bounty land in Georgia and moved there in about 1788. He was the first in this ancestral line to add an *s* to his surname. Jones Persons was married to **Dianna Neal (1774–1859)** for sixty years, and they had eleven children. He accumulated vast land holdings in central Georgia.

Dianna Neal, Martha Neal Persons's mother, was the daughter of **Thomas Neal Jr. (1758–1807)** and the granddaughter of **Thomas Neal Sr. (1735–1799)**. Through this Neal heritage, Martha Neal Persons was a second cousin of **Rev. Patrick Neal Maddux (1801–1870)**, another of Neville's great-great-grandfathers.

Martha Neal Persons Peurifoy was fifty-five years old when her husband, Rev. Stanley Peurifoy, died in 1864. She remarried, and in the 1870 and 1880 U.S. Federal censuses, she is listed as Martha Simmons, living in the household of her son, **Charles Hardy Peurifoy (1838–1900)**. Martha Neal Persons Peurifoy Simmons died at age eighty, almost twenty-six years after her first husband. They are buried together in the Purifoy Family Cemetery, just south of Yatesville. This cemetery is only about three miles from the Persons Family Cemetery, where Martha Neal's parents, Jones and Dianna Neal Persons, are believed to be interred.

Neville's great-great-grandparents Stanley and Martha Neal Persons Peurifoy are buried in the Purifoy Family Cemetery in Upson County, Georgia, about seventy miles south of Atlanta. Martha Neal's parents, Jones Persons and Dianna Neal Persons, are interred in the Persons Family Cemetery nearby. Another set of Neville's great-great-grandparents, Patrick Neal and Martha Neville Maddux, are buried in the Ebenezer Methodist Church Cemetery, eighteen miles northeast of Yatesville.

