

28 March 1961

Dear Mrs. Sullivan:

Thanks for your interesting letter and Poe family data. There are a few things that I can tell you which may be of some help.

I am reasonably sure that your ancestor Maj. James Poe was a son of Simon Poe Sr (died 1793) of Chatham county NC, whose will (dated 1790) mentions a son named James Poe. Since you Maj. James named a son Simon, I feel sure this must be your line.

You and I are from the same group of Poes; I am descended from the Reuben Poe who is in the 1790 census of Chatham county. Just what kin my Reuben was to Simon Sr is something I don't yet know, but all of the Poes of Chatham obviously belonged to the same family.

Our line is of English origin; we have no connection with the German Poes, nor with the ancestors of Edgar Allan Poe the author, whose ancestry goes back through Northern Ireland to Ayrshire, Scotland. The English Poes originated in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, adjoining counties in north-central England, in the section where the famous Sherwood Forest once stood. From there some of the Poes went to Ireland and to Virginia. The earliest known Poe in Virginia was Samuel Poe of Essex county, and we believe he is probably our ancestor. Essex adjoins Caroline county, Va, where our Poes lived before coming to Chatham county NC. Your presumed ancestor, Simon Poe Sr, was a resident of Caroline county for many years, and he, with some others of the family, came to North Carolina around ~~1760~~ 1759, for religious reasons. They had become Baptists in Caroline county, and as that sect was then a good deal persecuted in Virginia, they came to NC for greater religious freedom.

One of the other children of Simon Poe Sr was Stephen Poe, whom we believe to be the Capt. Stephen Poe (died 1773) on whose land the first Chatham county courthouse was located, and who was representing Chatham county in the Colonial Assembly at the time of his death. One of the orphan sons of Capt. Stephen Poe was Larkin Poe, who I think must be the man who married Rachel Harrington and later settled in Alabama. This Larkin would therefore be a nephew of your Maj. James Poe, and not his son.

One thing that I believe you will soon learn in doing genealogical research you will often have to disregard old family traditions that have no basis in documentary evidence. Every family has many such tales which seldom contain much if any truth. An example of what I mean is the allegation in the biography of James T. Poe, that Calvin & Simon Poe (sons of John) were first cousins of the author Edgar A. Poe. These men obviously belong to our line the name Simon is sufficient proof of this - and therefore they were not the slightest kin to the author, let alone his first cousins. I have often run into the same sort of thing among some of my kinfolks, who will insist stubbornly that we are "closely related" to the author, whereas there is actually no kinship whatever. Such ideas originate simply on the basis of the mutual surname; somebody says "Poe is an uncommon name; we must be kin to Edgar Allan Poe", and the next thing you know this statement is being repeated as a known fact.

The John Poe who was the father of Calvin and Simon is probably the John Poe who appears in 1820 census of Anson county NC, with sons of these ages. If not a son of Maj. James Poe, then probably his nephew; surely must belong to the same general line.

Just across the state line from Anson county NC, there were some Powes in

Chesterfield county, South Carolina. Powe is merely a variation in spelling, and is pronounced just as we pronounce Poe; the two spellings were often used interchangeably in the 18th and 19th centuries. U. S. Senator Sam J. Erwin, the senior senator from North Carolina, is a descendant of this Poe family of Chesterfield county SC; his mother was Laura Powe. The first of the Chesterfield Powes that I know of was named William Powe, who was in Chesterfield as early as 1792; he might be a brother of your Maj. James Poe, who did have a brother named William.

One James Poe of Anson county married Lucy Eush, daughter of Richard Eush of Anson (now Union) county; but I think this James is probably the James Poe "Jr" who is in the 1800, 1810 and 1820 census returns of Anson county. From your information, it appears that this James "Jr" cannot be a son of your Maj. James.

Among the odds and ends of Poe information that have been sent to me from time to time, I find one item about a Wyatt Poe of Tuscaloosa county, Ala, who married 1st Emily _____, 2nd Emily Tyner; no dates given.

The names Wall and Shepherd are names of pioneer families in Wilkes and Ashe counties, North Carolina; if I am not mistaken, I think the name Martin Wall occurs in these families. There were several men named Martin Wall in Culpeper county, Va, in the late 18th century, and I think the Ashe county Walls descend from this line. Incidentally, there were also some Poes in Ashe county, who we believe are distantly related to our line.

I wish that there were more that I could tell you about our common ancestry, but I have never had an opportunity to do any research in the records of Chatham county, and consequently there is a vast great deal that I do not know about my own ancestry. I have had to depend mostly on what others have sent me, and on miscellaneous information gathered from published sources. I have not yet been able to trace my direct line beyond Reuben Poe of Chatham county, who was my great-great-great-grandfather; nor have I learned who his wife was.

There are several families very much connected and intermarried with our Poes, both in Caroline county, Va, and in Chatham county NC; two that were especially mixed up with the Poes are the Disbukes and Straughan families.

Sorry I can't be of more help; but perhaps this will be enough to set you on the right track. If you should ever happen across any items concerning my Reuben Poe, I'd certainly appreciate it if you would let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Allan L. Poe

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