

Francis in Florida

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What I am about to tell you is a coming-of-age story. As such, it calls upon the listener to divine the psychological state of the subject, and how it changes over time. I am going to try to refrain from offering my own interpretation; instead, my aim is to provide as much historical context as is available and leave it to you to draw conclusions as to how this individual made the decisions he did, and how those decisions affected the course of his life.

For the past several years I have found great pleasure in giving tours of Poplar Forest, the history of which has been so ably documented by Al Chambers, and whose work I relied on heavily for this paper, and the restoration of which was expertly guided by our own Travis McDonald. Tours of the house are preceded by a 12-minute video, which tells visitors that “just two years after Jefferson’s death on July 4, 1826, Francis Eppes [his grandson] sold the property.” Thereby hangs our tale.

Jefferson died secure in the knowledge that he had provided handsomely for Francis, the only surviving child of his daughter, Maria. Not only did he leave him the house, which he deemed “the best dwelling house in the state, except that of Monticello; perhaps more preferable to that, as more proportioned to the faculties of a private citizen,” but also just over 1000 acres of prime Bedford County land, enough to sustain a gentleman farmer. He will, however, did not specify that Francis was to receive any slaves to work the land.¹

Not only did Francis sell the property, he sold it at a tremendous loss. In 1828 the Bedford County appraisers valued the land and house at \$25,704. Francis sold it all for \$4925.²

Thomas Jefferson and his wife Martha had six children, but as was often the case in those days, only two, both daughters, survived to adulthood. Martha died in 1782, at the age of 33, not long after the birth of their sixth child, ten years after they married. (Appendix A, #1) The oldest child, named for her mother but known as Patsy, had a better track record: she and her husband, Thomas Randolph, had 12 children; eleven reached adulthood. Her younger sister, Maria, was not so fortunate. (Appendix A, #2) Her first child, born in 1799, lived less than a month. The second, and the subject of my paper, was a son, Francis Eppes VII, born in 1801. (Appendix A, #3) Francis was named for his paternal grandfather, Francis Eppes VI. Less than three years later Maria gave birth to a daughter. Maria died just two weeks later and that daughter, named

for her mother, died at age three. So by the time Francis was six, he had no siblings, no mother, and a frequently absent father.

Francis's father, John Wayles Eppes, called Jack, was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates the year Francis was born. After serving a two-year term, he was elected to Congress, where he served four consecutive terms in the House of Representatives (1803 - 1811), which kept him away from his plantations and from young Francis. He was not re-elected for the 1811 - 1813 term but then was elected for a fifth term, 1813 - 1815. He lost re-election again but was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1816. He served only two years in the Senate before resigning due to ill health. So in the first 18 years of Francis's life, Jack Eppes was in one legislature or another for 14 years.

Though he lacked for a strong parental presence, young Francis was nurtured by his extended family. He seems to have been equally at home at Eppington, the Eppes family home in Chesterfield County, near Petersburg, as at Monticello. During his sojourns at Monticello he was



tutored by his grandfather, particularly after Jefferson retired after his second term as president in 1809, but more often and possibly more thoroughly by his aunt Martha and even Martha's eldest, Ellen. Martha was an intelligent, accomplished woman who had been educated in Philadelphia and Paris. She served as First Lady in the President's House for her widowed father in 1802-03 and 1805-06. About the time that Jefferson completed his second term, Martha and husband Thomas moved with their then nine children to Monticello. So young Francis had the daily company of nine and eventually eleven first cousins, as well as his Aunt Martha, his grandfather, and intermittently, his father. Martha home-schooled them all, even as she performed the duties of plantation mistress. In 1807 to 1808,

seven-year-old Francis actually lived with his father and grandfather in the President's House.³

The loss of his daughter Maria at age 26 in 1804 was a profound blow to Jefferson. One way he coped with the loss was to dedicate himself to young Francis's well-being. He took every opportunity to tutor him in his early education and as Francis grew, Jefferson assumed responsibility for his education and considered plans to leave Francis a house and land. In 1809, Jack Eppes remarried and moved to his Millwood plantation in Buckingham County. Later that year he wrote to Jefferson that he would be happy for his father-in-law to take charge of young Francis's education. Jefferson did so gladly, writing back to Jack that "a boy of finer dispositions, & more easily governed, I have never seen. I have no occasion to exercise any restraint towards him, but as to his appetite."⁴ Over the next ten years the education of Francis

Eppes was chaotic, due both to a lack of coordination between his father and grandfather, and by changes in his schools over which they had little control.

Education in Virginia in the first two decades of the nineteenth century depended in large measure on socioeconomic status. By that time much of New England had some form of public schools. In Virginia, there were spotty efforts, usually mounted by religious organizations, to provide a basic education to the mostly rural populace. The planter class home-schooled where possible and sent older children to be tutored, often with several other children, by tutors who were often ministers who provided room and board as well as instruction.⁵ By the time he was 17 and ready to enter William & Mary, Jefferson himself had had two tutors.



This small building is located behind the house built by Thomas Holcomb on Federal Street, near 12th Street, and was probably the school house attended by Francis Eppes.

Francis was not so fortunate. Despite Jack Eppes's apparent willingness to cede responsibility for his son's education to Jefferson, and Jefferson's ready embrace of that responsibility, the reality was that both men were committed to Francis's welfare and sometimes made decisions without consulting the other. For example, in 1813, when Francis was 11, his father enrolled him in a school in Lynchburg run by Thomas Holcombe, a lawyer, schoolmaster and later mayor. Jefferson only learned that his grandson was nearby when he received a letter from him. Rather than being miffed, Jefferson was pleased with the choice of school and the location: "I was much pleased ... that Francis was placed at school at Lynchburg, as, besides giving me opportunities of seeing him, it will habitualize him to the neighborhood, and give him those early attachments of friendship and acquaintance which carry their impression and value through life."⁶

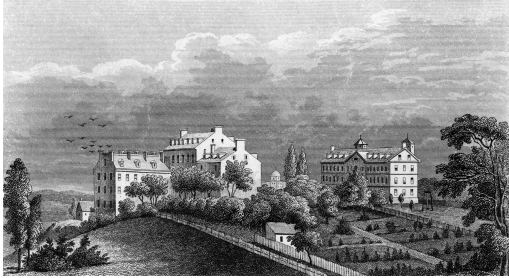
But Francis was not taken with Lynchburg. His father explained to Jefferson in a letter that "his great objection to Lynchburg appears to be the want of books and of persons of science. He speaks of the inhabitants as a race devoted solely to gain and having no ideas unconnected with money."⁷

But this wasn't the end of Francis's educational journey. Far from it. In the winter of 1815-16, Francis was at Monticello being tutored in French by his aunt and cousin, Ellen. Jefferson agreed to pay for his education if he enrolled at New London Academy, even closer to Poplar Forest than Lynchburg. Arrangements were made for Francis to begin classes at New London on June 3, 1816, but Francis arrived a month late.

Francis was at New London through the summer and fall of 1816. As winter approached, he was again at Monticello, being tutored in Spanish by Ellen. In the spring of 1817 he was sent by his

father to Richmond to board with a tutor, John Wood, but by June that school had closed.⁸ Jefferson had met with a new headmaster at New London in April and was pleased with what he found, and suggested that Francis return there. Later that summer, Jefferson wrote to Jack Eppes to suggest that Francis enroll at the new Central College in Charlottesville, a bit of wishful thinking because the cornerstone of its first building was not laid until October of that year.

(Central College would become the University of Virginia.)



Instead, the senior Eppes enrolled Francis in Georgetown College in the District of Columbia. Francis resolved to stay at Georgetown only until the following spring because he didn't like it. He wrote to his grandfather that "they are bigoted Catholics extremely rigid and they require the boys to observe all the regulations of their church which makes a great interruption in the course of our studies."⁹ That winter, as he had done for several

years, Francis returned to live at Monticello.

By May of 1818 Jefferson had made arrangements for Francis to attend New London yet again, which was overseen by a new headmaster, Alfred H. Dashiell. By October of that year, Dashiell had resigned and Jack Eppes wrote to Jefferson that they would need to find yet another situation. Two months later Francis and his cousin Wayles Baker were enrolled in a new school in Charlottesville operated by Gerard Stack. Jefferson had had a hand in founding it and anticipated that it would be a preparatory school for the University of Virginia. The school, though, lasted only one year.¹⁰

On Jefferson's recommendation, Francis had to move once more. He was enrolled at the University of South Carolina in October 1820. He was sent there primarily because of Professor Thomas Cooper, whom Jefferson greatly admired. In a letter to Francis's father, Jack Eppes, Jefferson said that Thomas Cooper "has more science in his single head than all the colleges of New England, New Jersey, and I may add Virginia put together."¹¹ Imagine Jefferson's delight the following June when he received a letter from Cooper praising Francis's work!

By late 1821, Jefferson's debts made it impossible to shoulder the cost of his grandson's education, but he remained a steadfast cheerleader, writing to Francis in November 1821, "The thankfulness you express for my cares for you bespeak a feeling and good heart: but the tender recollections which bind my affection to you, are such as will for ever call for everything I can do for you, and the comfort of my life is in the belief that you will deserve it. To my prayers that your life may be distinguished by its worth I add the assurance of my constant & affectionate love."¹² Francis stayed at South Carolina until the spring of 1822, when he withdrew and returned to Virginia because his father lacked the funds to pay his tuition.

By now Francis was 21 and beginning to take control of his own life. He wrote to his grandfather before leaving South Carolina that he intended to return to his father's Millwood Plantation and read the law. Jefferson agreed with the plan. He thought it wise that his grandson had a profession to fall back on when farming was not productive. Jefferson was quick with recommendations for the books that Francis should read.¹³

Francis was also taking control in another way. He announced in September 1822, just two months after his 21st birthday, that he would marry his cousin, Mary Elizabeth Cleland Randolph, known as Elizabeth. Jefferson expressed grave concern that marriage would interfere with Francis's law studies. In correspondence between Jefferson and Jack Eppes, both men expressed their reservations, even as they realized there was nothing they could do to dissuade the young man. Jack Eppes was dire in his assessment of the situation: "To reason however with a man or boy in love is hopeless. As a parent I cannot but consider this premature marriage as death to his future prospects. To see him settle down as a mere farmer and planter with perhaps less skill and industry than his neighbors is so different from the course my partiality as a parent perhaps had marked out for him, that I cannot look forward to his marriage before he has completed his law reading with any feelings but those of heartfelt sorrow and regret." Jefferson wrote back, "being a case not under the jurisdiction of reason, we must acquiesce and make the best of it."¹⁴ Both Jack Eppes and Jefferson were correct in their assessment. Francis's foray into the profession of law was short-lived.

Though Francis was probably aware of these misgivings, he and Elizabeth were married at Monticello on November 28, 1822. But Francis was not yet ready to exert his independence more forcefully. That would have to wait a few years. In the meantime, he and Elizabeth moved into Poplar Forest in April 1823. By that time, Jefferson had made it clear that he would gift the house and associated farmland to Francis in the future, but complicated financial arrangements necessitated that the transfer be delayed.

Whatever excitement Francis and Elizabeth may have experienced to have a home of their own soon evaporated. Neither liked the isolation of farm life. Added to that, Francis's father died in September of that year, just five months after they moved into Poplar Forest. In January 1824 Francis's cousin, Virginia Randolph, wrote to her future husband Nicholas Trist, that Francis "is now there [at Poplar Forest] and apparently heartily sick of: 'solitude and the screech owl.'"¹⁵ Elizabeth wrote to Virginia in November 1824, "I left home as usual with a heavy heart, & could not forbear contrasting your happy lot, in the bosom of your own family...with the dreariness & desolation of mine, cut off as I am from friends so kind, so affectionate, so deservedly dear to me, and placed here among strangers..."¹⁶

The house had its own issues. Francis was able to put out a fire on the roof in February 1825, but the repair work by John Hemmings proved unsatisfactory, not because of Hemmings's workmanship, but because the lap of the newfangled tin shingles permitted leaks. Much of the work had to be redone.

Francis struggled with farming. 1824 was a good year, but the economy was depressed. He was unable to get a loan that year and complained in a letter that crops and land were selling far below their value. The 1826 tobacco crop was poor due to an excessively wet season, and 1827 was apparently no better. He wrote to his cousin Thomas Jefferson Randolph, called Jefferson, in June 1827 that "Quality of the tobacco thin, short and yellow. Rich tobacco such as I have seen Papa sell at \$15, selling at \$6 because it is dark brown! Damn the crop say I, and the State to boot. Our staple is worth nothing certain, is always fluctuating, and the population, with the exception of ourselves, in all honor and reverence be it spoken, is totally changed....I want much to see you, to have a little chate on the subject of emigration."¹⁷ This was not the first time he expressed thoughts of leaving the state.

By early 1826 the isolation, the leaky house, and the struggles with farming were too much. Francis and Elizabeth were ready to leave Poplar Forest. He offered to sell it to his cousin, Jefferson Randolph, writing that he was "so much dissatisfied with the house," even though at the time he did not have title to it.¹⁸ In early 1826 he also learned of the scheme to launch a national lottery to defray his grandfather's enormous debt. On learning of the severity of his grandfather's financial difficulty, he wrote an effusively affectionate letter to Jefferson offering to return Poplar Forest to him.¹⁹

It is unclear when Francis hatched the idea to leave Virginia to seek his fortune elsewhere. Many at this time felt that Virginia was in decline and that it was necessary to move west or south in order to make a living. During the first three decades of Francis's life, the structure of Southern society shifted. Tobacco was in decline and cotton became ascendant. Slavery increased in importance. There was a political shift away from the eighteenth century world of educated, philosophical men of the Enlightenment, such as Jefferson, to the more aggressive, emotional, cotton aristocracy of South Carolina and Mississippi.²⁰ In 1813 John Randolph of Roanoke [plantation, in Charlotte County] had written, "In a few years more, those of us who are alive will have to move off to Kaintuck, or the Massissippi, where corn can be had for sixpence a bushel, and pork for a penny a pound. I do not wonder at the rage for emigration. What do the bulk of the people get here, that they cannot have for one-fifth of the labor in the western country?"²¹ Randolph proved prescient. Many felt that Virginia had seen better times. The population of many counties, particularly in the west, were in decline as settlers moved further west. It has been estimated that between 1810 and 1820, one-third of Virginia's population pulled up stakes and moved farther west or south.²² Various scapegoats were identified: outdated

farming methods, an over-dependence on tobacco, influences from the north (“Yankee greed”), slavery, and a lack of infrastructure.²³

In November 1826, five months after Jefferson’s death, Francis wrote to Nicholas Trist, husband of his first cousin, Virginia Randolph, complaining about changes in the Virginia population that he found distasteful. “Many circumstances of late, have induced me to believe, that the liberality and generosity, and patriotism of the old Dominion, is on the wane....Yankee notions, and Yankee practices, have wrought a thorough change in the public mind....You may depend, that the settling of this hard-hearted, copper souled race of tin peddlers, amongst us, has had a great effect in poisoning the public minds and that added to the continued emigration of the old settlers from the state, and the more equal distribution of property, has smothered the flame which once burnt in our bosoms.”²⁴ Francis was voicing a commonly held belief of the time. In the same letter, he made a bold proposal: “What say you to a general move to a more southern latitude. I want to go where I can make more money.... What say you to Florida, or Kentucki, or Tennessee, or Missouri? I will go any where so that we may all settle together: but from accounts lately received should greatly prefer E. Florida. I am told that money and health, are the spontaneous productions of that soil. ...Here lies the road to wealth! Bundle up and let us leave our gullies to the Yankee peddlers, who covet them so much.”²⁵

In the early 1820s, William DuVal, a Virginian who was the territorial governor of Florida, described the territory in glowing terms that proved irresistible to some Virginians: “The lakes abound in trout, bream, perch and soft-shelled turtles; in winter with wild fowl...the natural open groves of hickory, beech, oak and magnolia surpass in magnificence the proudest parks of the English nobility....” and so forth.²⁶

In April 1827, Francis’s wife, Elizabeth, now pregnant with their third child, wrote to Jane Randolph, wife of his cousin Jefferson Randolph, that they would probably move to the Tallahassee area.²⁷ The big news, though, was that they would eventually be joined by her parents and siblings. Virginians tended to emigrate as family groups,²⁸so this was more the rule than the exception. Francis’s dream of what he called a “general emigration” was beginning to take shape.

In March 1828 Francis began the first of two exploratory trips to Florida. By this time he was convinced that emigration was the right move. He wrote to Nicholas Trist just before leaving: “I see no ties which should bind any descendant of our grandfather to this state. The people are cold to his memory, the soil is exhausted, the staple reduced almost to the prime cost of the materials—a level to which it is fast progressing. What inducement is there to remain!”²⁹ He returned in early June and wrote to Trist that he was “entirely satisfied with the part of Florida that I visited.” He went on to describe a society composed of “men, young, enterprising, enlightened, of capital

and of family;—of the best that the Carolinas, Virginia, and Georgia can afford. Such society I had never expected to see removed from the vicinity of a large city.”³⁰

Francis delayed his move to Florida until he could sell Poplar Forest. He had difficulty finding a private buyer but wanted to avoid an auction. A buyer finally emerged in November 1828 in the person of William Cobbs, a neighbor. As I mentioned earlier, Cobbs got a heck of a deal and the sale freed Francis to act on his emigration plans. Aware that he would be judged for the transaction, he wrote to his cousin Jefferson Randolph, “...I have sacrificed the home tract, whether for better or worse, the event must decide and by that event I shall be judged. If I am fortunate and make money I shall be esteemed bold and judicious; if the reverse injudicious and rash. And it may be that I am. But let me squeeze through this scrape and damn me if you ever find me in another.”³¹

In December 1828 Francis began a second trip to Florida, taking with him pack mules and some tools. He left his wife and three children with her parents in Lynchburg, and returned in late March.³² While in Florida he rented 135 acres of land in Leon County, which encompasses Tallahassee, and planted corn, cotton and a small patch of sugar cane. One source indicates that he left the fields in the care of Richard Howard, brother of the Poplar Forest overseer, who, if true, must have accompanied him on this trip. He might have arranged for a cabin to be built in his absence before he returned to Virginia.³³

Back in Virginia, Eppes closed his accounts, paid his debt to his cousin Jefferson Randolph, and saw to it that his infant son was baptized Thomas Jefferson Eppes. Leave takings such as this were profoundly sad occasions. It was assumed that you were leaving family that you might never see again. A few days before they left Virginia, the Eppes family visited Elizabeth’s parents in Lynchburg and attended a prayer service where all sang ‘Blest Be the Tie That Binds.’³⁴

The family—Francis, Elizabeth and their three young children—set out for Florida by wagon train on May 20, 1829.³⁵ Elizabeth’s sisters Harriet and Mary Page Randolph accompanied them, keen to open a school in the Tallahassee area. The group included an unspecified number of slaves, animals and wagons. The trip took 30 days.³⁶ Elizabeth’s parents would sail to Florida from Norfolk in the fall.

In a letter to his cousin Jefferson Randolph dated July 4, 1829, Francis said that he found the crops he planted on his trip in the early spring to be in “fine order”.³⁷ In another letter the same day to Nicholas Trist he complained that his sister-in-law was “sadly out of humor with my log palace. Looks, looks, looks; woman cares for little else!” The records available are not clear as to whether this log house was built before his arrival or after. He bought land adjacent to the small

farm purchased the same year by his father-in-law. The land bordered Black Creek, so he named his new plantation L'Eau Noir.

Much of Francis's time and effort in the early days were spent on the construction of his own house and a house for his Randolph in-laws. He then settled into cotton farming. By 1835, the log house was small and uncomfortable and the upstairs was said to be uninhabitable.³⁸ A month after the birth of their sixth child, and just as they were to move to their new house on Black Creek, Elizabeth died. Her child, a boy named Francis, died six months later.

Elizabeth's death prompted several major changes. Francis sold his plantation and bought two other properties. One parcel was 1900 acres on Lake Lafayette, which became his new plantation. The other was in the town of Tallahassee, where he built a two-story frame house to accommodate his five now-motherless children, all 12 years old and younger.³⁹ This move was prompted in part by concerns about recent Indian hostilities. The U.S. gained possession of Florida from the Spanish in 1821 and then, by the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, created a large Indian reservation in the middle of the Florida peninsula. By a later treaty, the Treaty of Payne's Landing in 1832, negotiated under the new President, Andrew Jackson, all Indians were to leave Florida. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 required that they relocate to the Indian Territory, later named Oklahoma. The second of what would be three Seminole Wars began in 1835 and in its early phase was characterized by scattered raids on white settlers.⁴⁰



Two years after Elizabeth's death, Francis remarried. His bride, Susan Margaret Ware, known as Margaret, was the daughter of U.S. Senator Nicholas Ware of Georgia. Margaret and Francis would eventually have seven children.

Unlike his famous grandfather and father, Francis was not inclined to political office, but the reach of his pedigree was felt even in Florida. Less than two months after he arrived in Florida with his family, he wrote to his cousin, Jefferson Randolph, and asked him to apply to the newly installed President Andrew Jackson to appoint Francis's brother-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, to the office of Inspector of the Land Offices of Florida and Alabama. Francis wrote that the office was held at the time by "a violent Adamsian" who was "woefully deficient."⁴¹ Thomas got the job.⁴² Two years later, in 1831, Francis used his name to ask President Jackson to appoint his father-in-law, Estlin Randolph, United States Marshal for the District of Middle Florida. Randolph got the commission and with it a salary that relieved him of financial worries.⁴³

Francis was known to his neighbors and to the territorial governor, William DuVal, to be an educated man who spoke French and Spanish and was able to read both Latin and Greek. DuVal also knew that Francis was the grandson of Thomas Jefferson, a credential that, by itself, justified DuVal's 1833 appointment of Francis one of fourteen justices of the peace for Leon County. He held the position for six years.⁴⁴

Francis's credentials resulted in other appointments that expanded his connections within the community. In 1836 he was appointed to a board of trustees for what was to be a University of Florida. That effort was eventually unsuccessful. He was also on the board of the Leon Academy, a private school for boys that was founded in 1827 but ultimately failed in the early 1840s.⁴⁵

His involvement in these and possibly other endeavors resulted in his election to the office of Intendant (mayor) of Tallahassee in 1841, where he served three consecutive one-year terms. According to a sympathetic biography published by a descendant in 1926, Francis was motivated to seek the office by the lawlessness that he saw in Tallahassee, particularly the increasing prevalence of dueling and the loss of several valued friends to that custom.⁴⁶

As Intendant, Francis proposed ordinances to outlaw dueling, profane speech, public drunkenness and disorderly conduct. A permit was required to carry a concealed weapon. Francis organized methods of enforcement, including a night-watch patrol and an expanded police force. The new ordinances were enforced with hefty fines and jail time. These moves had the desired effect, bringing order to what had been a lawless frontier town, and that is what he is most remembered for in Tallahassee. But Francis had other major problems to contend with. There was a yellow fever epidemic in 1841 and, in 1843, a huge fire that destroyed much of Tallahassee's downtown. Francis organized committees to assess the damage and provide relief to those affected. In those pre-FEMA days, he addressed letters to the mayors of most major U.S. cities, reminding them that Tallahassee's annual cotton exports were over a million dollars but its imports from the north far exceeded that amount. Tallahassee received relief funds from a number of cities.⁴⁷

After his third one-year term as intendant, Francis was absent from political life for six years. He had a considerable farming operation to run. The 1845 tax rolls of Leon County showed that he owned 3800 acres of land and 67 slaves.⁴⁸ He was no doubt active socially. And he was active in other ways. Between 1839 and 1857 Margaret bore five daughters and two sons. One of the daughters died in infancy. The daughters would figure prominently in his family history.



Even though his own education had been chaotic, Francis was a firm believer in education. In 1851, the Florida legislature passed a bill authorizing the establishment of two “seminaries of learning.” One was to be east and the other west of the Suwannee River. The locations were not otherwise designated, leaving communities to vie for the opportunity to have a university.

Tallahassee’s city council patched together the \$6172 needed to construct a school building.⁴⁹ A contract for the brick work and plastering went to R.A. Shine, whose name would later become intimately associated with the Eppes family.



In 1853 the legislature designated Ocala as the site of the Seminary East, which intensified efforts west of the Suwannee to get the designation. The building that Tallahassee built for that purpose was ready by March 1855, and school opened in it that year. The trustees were the city council and Intendant. When it reopened for its second year in October 1856, Francis was again Intendant of Tallahassee and therefore a trustee of the school, now called the Tallahassee Male Seminary. Francis went to the state legislature, asking it to designate the school Seminary West. He offered a further inducement: Tallahassee would provide \$2000 annually for tuition for local students. The legislature duly designated the school Seminary West of the Suwannee. As a formally recognized state institution, several changes were mandated. Tallahassee turned over the land and the education building to the newly constituted managing board, now known as the Board of Education. The governor named Francis to the Board. Three years later Francis was elected president of the Board.⁵⁰

His main goal for the ensuing Civil War years was to keep the school open, and he was successful, though it was no easy task. In 1861 the legislature raided the Seminary Fund to buy arms and pay the state’s debts. Attendance fell and with it tuition receipts, so that it was difficult to retain faculty. In February 1862 the male portion of the school closed. Both male and female departments of the school were operating in the fall of 1862, but students were required to pay tuition in advance. Between that time and 1864, the male department lacked a chief administrator and Francis shouldered many of the responsibilities of that position.

Other schools in the South were having the same problems but some had found a solution by converting their institutions to military schools and commissioning the teachers as officers. Francis moved the school in that direction, petitioning the Florida legislature to allow the school’s name to be changed to the Florida Collegiate and Military Institute. Doing so would allow the governor to commission the faculty as officers in the Florida militia and protect them

from conscription. Though both houses of the legislature approved, the governor did not. Although it was not formally designated a military school, it was commonly referred to as the Florida Military Institute, and the students as cadets.⁵¹

Following the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant in April 1865, the Confederacy ceased to exist. Consequently, in May 1865 Union troops occupied Tallahassee and were billeted in the school's dormitory. They remained at the school until September of that year, when Francis, as president of the Board of Education, announced that the school would reopen. Several instructors agreed to teach even though it was not clear they would be paid. In 1866 Francis was re-elected president of the board.⁵² The school that he championed before the Florida legislature in the 1850s and nurtured through the Civil War survived and continued to evolve. It is now Florida State University.



There have been several efforts to recognize Eppes's contributions to the founding of Florida State. Largely in response to a 1995 letter from an alumna, the Psychology Building, originally constructed in 1918, was renamed Eppes Hall.⁵³ It was still Eppes Hall when the building underwent a multimillion dollar renovation in 2012, but it was renamed the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice Building in 2021.⁵⁴ The renaming was part of a larger effort to cleanse the campus of its connections to slavery.



As part of FSU's campus improvement project, begun in 1989, the University president announced in 1999 a project to erect statues honoring those who had made major contributions to the university over its first 150 years. The first statue erected in this project was that of Francis Eppes, unveiled in January 2002 in a place of honor near the central administration building.⁵⁵ It depicted a seated Eppes, grasping papers presumably pertaining to the early school, and turning as if in conversation with someone on the bench. Fourteen years later,

the Student Government Association raised objections to honoring a former slaver holder and recommended removal of the statue and the renaming of

Eppes Hall. The statue was removed to a less conspicuous location on campus in mid-2018 and in July 2020 was removed from the campus entirely on order of the University president. At the same time the university president announced the formation of the President’s Task Force on Anti-Racism, Equality, and Inclusion.⁵⁶ I was unable to determine the statue’s current location.

There was one other very public effort to honor Eppes. After U.Va. defeated the FSU Seminoles in FSU’s first ACC conference game in 1992, the Jefferson-Eppes Trophy was established. The trophy, a silver pitcher mounted on a wooden base, was presented to U.Va. President John Casteen.⁵⁷ Since then, the teams have not met every year due to expansion of the ACC, but they have played 19 times and Florida State has taken the trophy 14 times. They met again on September 26, 2025, and to the great surprise of fans on both sides, U.Va. prevailed in double overtimes. The accounts of the game that I read did not mention the trophy.



Like most Southern planters, Francis did not fare well after the Civil War. A firm believer in the cause of the Confederacy, and sure of its ultimate victory, he sold his plantation in 1864, accepting Confederate money as payment.⁵⁸ It is not known how many human beings he owned at the end of the war but, of course, they were freed.

In 1868, Francis once more became a pioneer. He left Tallahassee and moved to Orlando, then a small town in Orange County. Determined to make a fresh start, he bought land and planted an orange grove. The first commercial citrus grove in Orange County had been planted in 1865 from seed, so Francis was among the first. Whether he made money is not clear. Raising citrus in the 1870s in Orange County meant transporting the product overland to Florida’s west coast and then transporting it to the American East Coast by ship. He was a little ahead of his time: the citrus boom awaited the arrival of the railroad in 1880.⁵⁹



Francis built a house on 80 acres of land near the shore of Lake Pineloch in South Orange County, probably completing it in 1871, and named it Pine Hill. The house still exists, though a series of owners have remodeled and added to it.⁶⁰ It is marked by an

historic plaque mounted on the

wall of the front porch. In what may have been a measure of his financial distress, he sold his grandfather’s books at auction in New York City in 1873, a collection of some 600 books that he might have carted to Florida in 1829 or



might have stored in Virginia.⁶¹

An interesting anomaly in the Francis Eppes story is the marriage of three of his daughters by Margaret Ware with three of the sons of Richard A. Shine. You heard Shine's name earlier as the brick mason and plasterer for the education building that Tallahassee constructed. The second daughter, Maria Jefferson Eppes, married William Francis "Frank" Shine in December 1865. He was a surgeon in the Confederate army during the war. They moved to St. Augustine where he practiced medicine. The fourth daughter, Martha Virginia, married Thomas Jabez Shine in 1866. The couple moved to the Orlando area in 1871 and settled near Francis. Thomas was commander of the Orlando Guards, a local militia, later named the Shine Guards after his death. He was a bank director and served on the Orlando Board of Trade. Caroline Matilda Eppes, the youngest daughter, married David S. Shine in 1882, the year after Francis Eppes died. They moved from Tallahassee to Orlando shortly after their marriage, where he became Deputy Clerk of Courts and was later Orlando's postmaster. The Shine-Eppes couples always joked that their children were triple first cousins.⁶² (Appendix A. #4)

Like his father and grandfather, Francis had been raised in the Episcopal Church. All three generations observed religious holidays but for the most part kept their religious beliefs and opinions to themselves. Based on his surviving letters, it appears that Francis's Christian faith became a major part of his life only after his move to Florida, and its importance appears to have increased with age.

When Francis moved to Leon County there was no organized church. Even in his first months in Florida, he was considered one of a few men who worked toward organizing a church, securing the services of missionary priests and places to worship. By late 1829, Tallahassee's St. John's Parish, the third in northern Florida, was incorporated. Francis served the parish as a vestryman, a subscriber to the building fund, and later as treasurer.⁶³ The organizing convention of the Diocese of Florida was held in their new church building in 1837, and Francis was a delegate. At about this time Francis underwent the sacramental rite of confirmation, in which he expressed "a mature commitment to Christ, and receive[d] strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop." (Book of Common Prayer) A measure of his embrace of the faith can be found in a letter he wrote to his daughter Jane in June 1840, apparently on the occasion of her own confirmation. "...And to Him from whom must come all your help, you must continually look up, my dear child. Pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit, in all things; and alike in trouble and in joy, go first to Him. Endeavour to have God in all your thoughts..."⁶⁴ His was a personal, deeply felt faith that would have been foreign to his Enlightenment grandfather.

Finding no church when he moved to Orlando, Francis organized occasional morning and evening prayer services in his home, attended by Episcopalians from all over the area. Church records note that there was a missionary in the area around 1874, and that the Bishop of the Diocese of Florida held services in Orlando in 1875, staying with Francis Eppes.⁶⁵ The prayer



Original St. Luke's Church, Orlando

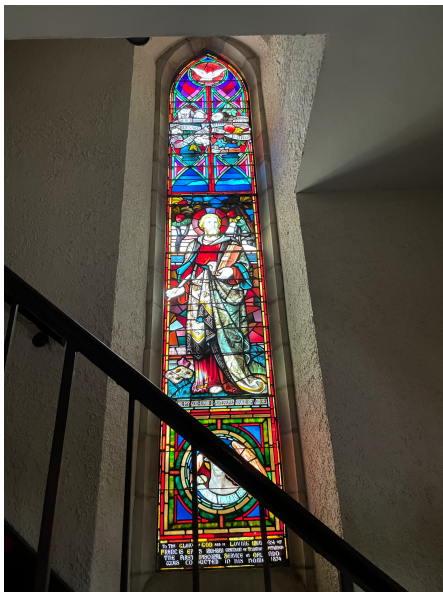
group that Francis organized became the nucleus for St. Luke's Mission, which was organized as a church in 1881, the same year that Francis died following a stroke. The next year the new church erected a small, wood-framed church building in Orlando, which became St.

Luke's Episcopal Church in 1884. It was formally designated a cathedral in 1902.

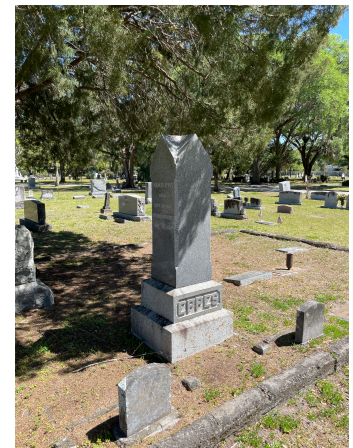
The church outgrew its building by 1920, and erected on the same site a much larger gothic revival building.⁶⁶ The



building contains a large stained glass window honoring Francis Eppes. After it was completed, someone noted an error in the text—that Francis was Thomas Jefferson's nephew—and that was later corrected. (Appendix B, #1) The church contains a magnificent carved wooden lectern dedicated to the memory of Francis's son-in-law, Thomas Jabez Shine. (Appendix B, #2) Outside is a historic marker which, like the historic marker near the Eppes-Shine plot in Greenwood Cemetery, perpetuates the historical error that Francis had a middle name. (Appendix B, #3)



Francis Eppes was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Orlando. Members of the Eppes family share a plot with the Shine family. Nearby is an historical marker the gives a short biography of Francis's life and attests to the close association of the two families. (Appendix B, #4)



Francis Eppes grew up without his mother or siblings, but in the bosom of his wider family and in the embrace of his famous grandfather. Having lost his father when he was 22 and his grandfather three years later, he made the bold decision at age 27 to leave his extended family, sell the house and farm that his grandfather had lovingly prepared for him, and leave his native state, all for an uncertain life on the frontier. He was financially successful, was an active participant in the community life of both Tallahassee

and Orlando, and was a champion of education, and supported the establishment of the Episcopal Church in Florida. He had written to his cousin Jefferson Randolph in November 1828 that “If I am fortunate and make money [by moving to Florida] I shall be esteemed bold and judicious.” By any measure, Francis succeeded.









An interesting footnote to this story that brings the story full circle: Francis Wayles Shine, second child of Thomas Jabez Shine and Martha Virginia Eppes, (Appendix A, #5) was born in the Eppes homestead in Orlando. He attended the Sewanee Military Academy and then the University of Virginia for both his undergraduate and Medical School degrees, graduating from the Medical School in 1898. He then served two years as a resident in New York before going abroad for training in Prague and Vienna. He then settled in New York City in 1904. He was a highly regarded eye surgeon at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary from 1907 to 1938. He retired in 1939 and in 1940 moved to a home at Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville. He spent his last days in the UVA Hospital in September 1941, on the grounds of the University his great-great-grandfather founded, and is buried a few steps from him in the cemetery at Monticello.⁶⁷

Appendix A


















#1

 <p>Thomas Jefferson Age: 83</p>	 <p>Martha Wayles Age: 33</p>
Birth 13 Apr 1743 Death 4 Jul 1826 Burial Charlottesville, Virginia, Monticello Alias Note	Birth 31 Oct 1748 Death 6 Sep 1782 Burial Alias Patty Note Born at the plantation home of her father, The Forest. Her mother










+ Children

 <p>Martha Washington 27 Sep 1772 – 10 Oct 1836 Age: 64</p>
 <p>Jane Randolph 1774 - 1775 Age: 1</p>
 <p>Unknown 28 May 1777 – 14 Jun 1777 Age: <1</p>
 <p>Maria 1778 – 17 Apr 1804 Age: 26</p>
 <p>Lucy Elizabeth 3 Nov 1780 – 15 Apr 1781 Age: <1</p>
 <p>Lucy Elizabeth 1782 – 1784 Age: 2</p>




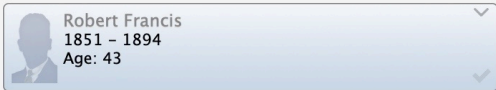

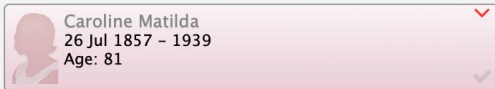


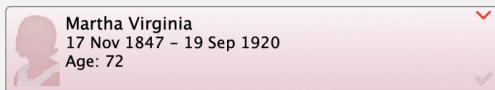
#2

 Thomas Mann Randolph	 Thomas Jefferson 13 Apr 1743 - 4 Jul 1826 Age: 83
	 Martha Wayles 31 Oct 1748 - 6 Sep 1782 Age: 33 ali: Patty
+ 23 Feb 1790, 38 years +	
 Thomas Mann Randolph Jr. Age: 60	 Martha Washington Jefferson Age: 64
Birth 17 May 1768 Death 20 Jun 1828 Burial Alias Note From the Monticello website:	Birth 27 Sep 1772 Death 10 Oct 1836 Burial Alias Patsy Note From the Monticello website:
+ Children	
 Anne Cary 23 Jan 1791 - 11 Feb 1826 Age: 35	 Mary Jefferson 2 Nov 1803 - 29 Mar 1876 Age: 72
 Thomas Jefferson 12 Sep 1792 - 8 Oct 1875 Age: 83	 James Madison 17 Jan 1806 - 23 Jan 1834 Age: 28
 Ellen Wayles 30 Aug 1794 - 26 Jul 1795 Age: <1	 Benjamin Franklin 14 Jul 1808 - 18 Feb 1871 Age: 62
 Ellen Wayles 13 Oct 1796 - 21 Apr 1876 Age: 79	 Meriwether Lewis 31 Jan 1810 - 24 Sep 1837 Age: 27
 Cornelia Jefferson 26 Jul 1799 - 24 Feb 1871 Age: 71	 Septima Anne 3 Jan 1814 - 14 Sep 1887 Age: 73
 Virginia Jefferson 22 Aug 1801 - 26 Apr 1882 Age: 80	 George Wythe 10 Mar 1818 - 13 Apr 1867 Age: 49

#3

 Francis Eppes VI ▼	 Thomas Jefferson 13 Apr 1743 – 4 Jul 1826 Age: 83 ▼
 Elizabeth Wayles 24 Feb 1752 – ▼	 Martha Wayles 31 Oct 1748 – 6 Sep 1782 Age: 33 ali: Patty ▼
+ 13 Oct 1797, Monticello, 6 years +	
 John Wayles Eppes Age: 51 ▼	 Maria Jefferson Age: 26 ▼
Birth Apr 1772, Chesterfield County, Virginia, Eppington Death 13 Sep 1823, Buckingham County, Virginia, Millbrook Burial Buckingham County, Virginia, Millbrook Alias Jack Note He was Maria's cousin.	Birth 1778 Death 17 Apr 1804, Monticello Burial Alias Polly Note
+ Children ▼	
<div data-bbox="264 1094 748 1178" style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 20px;">Unnamed ca 31 Dec 1799 – 25 Jan 1800 Age: <1</div> <div data-bbox="553 1220 1037 1304" style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 20px;">Francis VII 20 Sep 1801 – 30 May 1881 Age: 79</div> <div data-bbox="846 1346 1330 1430" style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px;">Maria Jefferson 15 Feb 1804 – Jul 1807 Age: 3</div>	


#4

 <p>Francis Eppes VII Age: 79</p>	 <p>Susan Margaret Ware Age: 72</p>
<p>Birth 20 Sep 1801, Chesterfield County, Virginia Eppington Death 30 May 1881, Orlando, Florida Burial Orlando, Florida, Greenwood Cemetery Alias Note From the Poplar Forest Information for Docents:</p>	<p>Birth 14 Feb 1815 Death 1 Sep 1887 Burial Orlando, Florida, Greenwood Cemetery Alias Note She was a daughter of U.S. Senator Nicholas (or Nathaniel) Ware of</p>
<p>+ Children</p>	
 <p>Susan Frances 1839 - 1908 Age: 69</p>	 <p>Robert Francis 1851 - 1894 Age: 43</p>
 <p>Maria Jefferson 12 Apr 1840 - 8 Sep 1896 Age: 56</p>	 <p>Caroline Matilda 26 Jul 1857 - 1939 Age: 81</p>
 <p>Nicholas Ware 1843 - 1904 Age: 61</p>	
 <p>Mary 1845 - 1845 Age: <1</p>	
 <p>Martha Virginia 17 Nov 1847 - 19 Sep 1920 Age: 72</p>	


#5

 <p>Thomas Jabez Shine Age: 50</p>	 <p>Martha Virginia Eppes Age: 72</p>
Birth 7 Jul 1838	Birth 17 Nov 1847, Tallahassee, Florida
Death 1889	Death 19 Sep 1920, Miami, Florida
Burial	Burial
Alias	Alias
Note He was commander of the Orlando Guards (later called the Shine	Note In her later years she and her daughter Lilla were members of teh choir


+ Children




Lillias Eleanor
5 May 1867 -




Francis Wayles
1874 - 24 Sep 1941
Age: 67



Richard Alexander
1878 - 1931
Age: 53

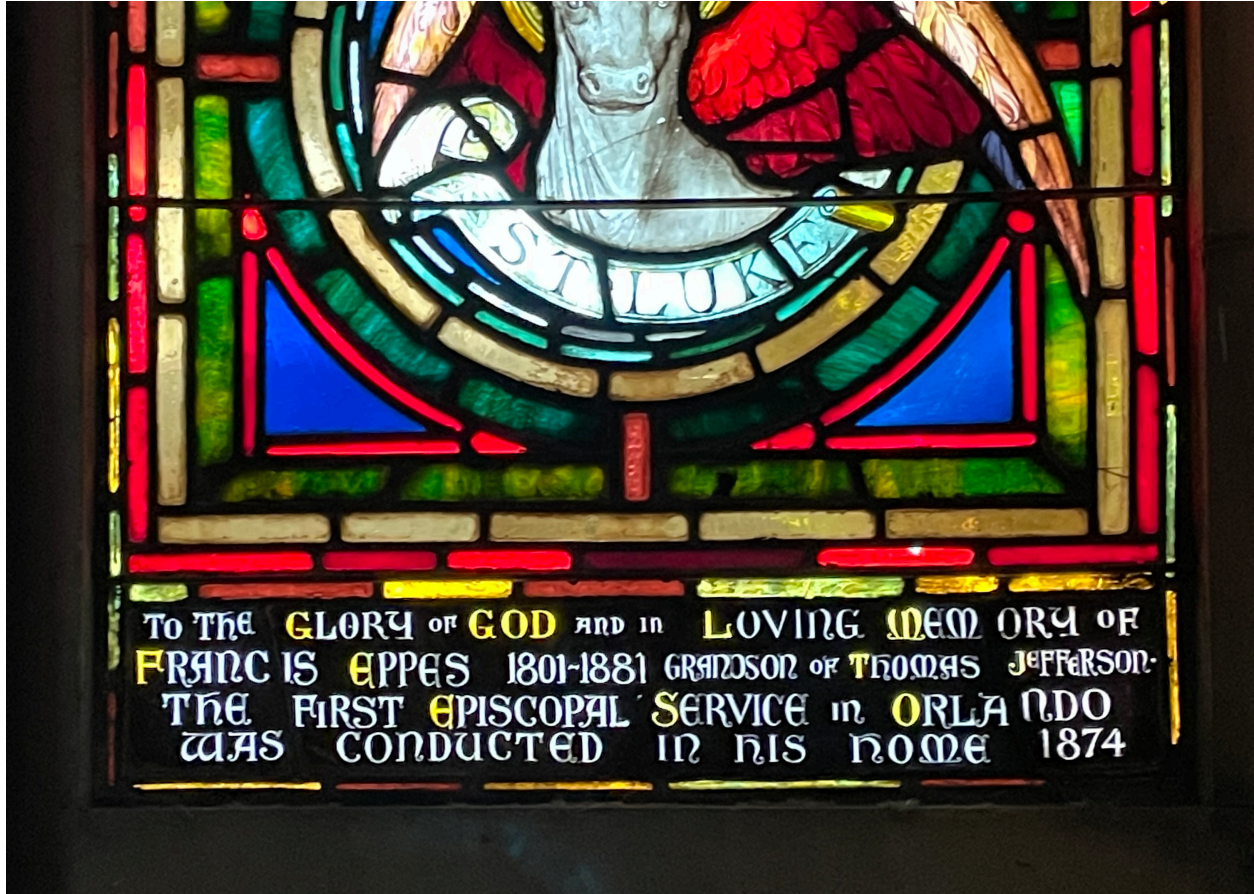


Thomas Jefferson
1881 - 1883
Age: 2



William Eston
18 May 1885 - 8 Jan 1913
Age: 27

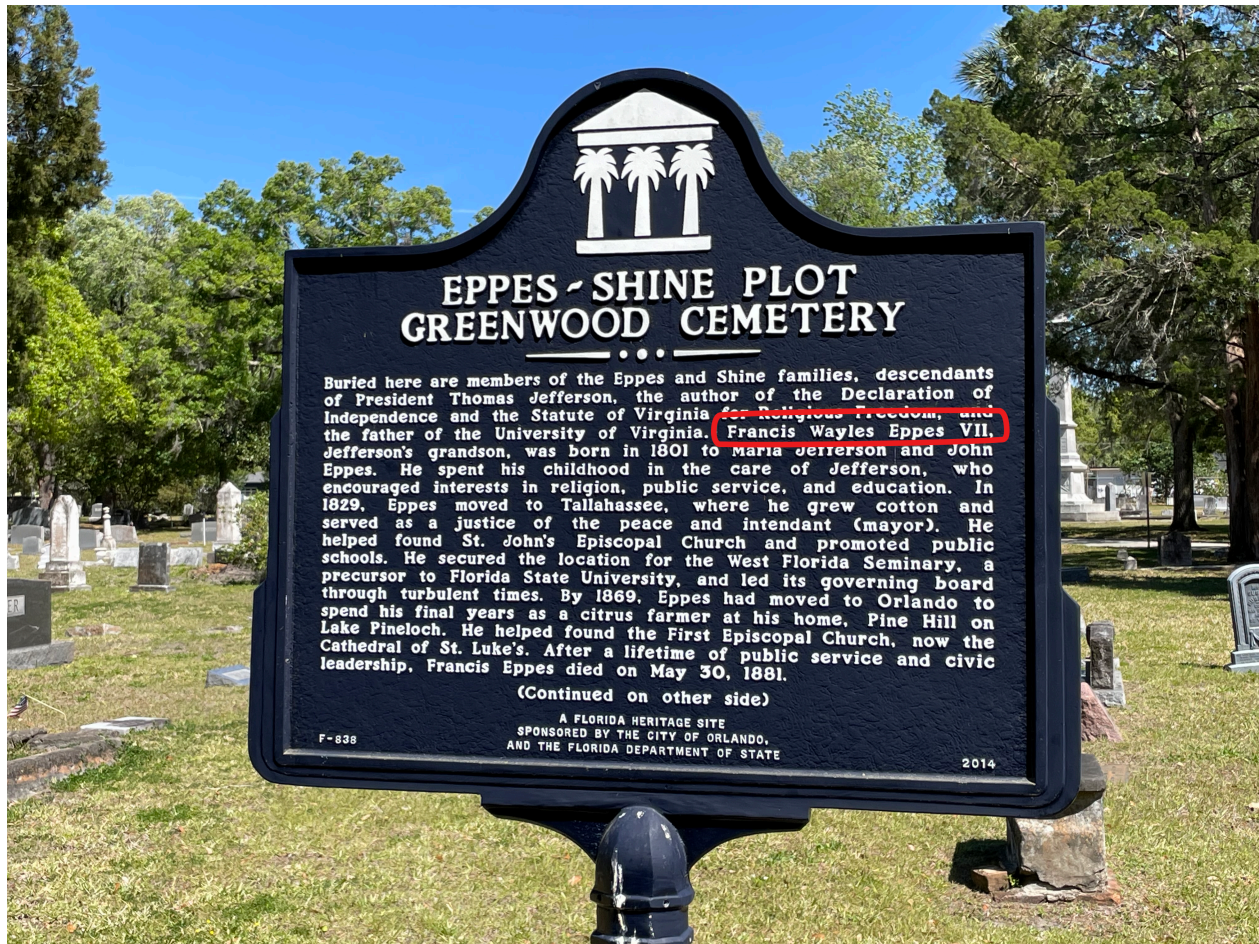
Appendix B, #1



#2







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