

Plonk Relations at Long Creek Presbyterian Church

by William Lee Anderson III, 2011

Long Creek Presbyterian Church

John Jonas Plonk (1823–1908) was born near Crouse, North Carolina. His parents were Joseph Plonk (1788–1888) and Barbara Rudisill (1795–1864). His grandparents were Jacob Plonk II (1747–1845) and Christina Kiser (1755–1823). Those early generations were buried at the [Plonk Cemetery](#) in Lincoln County.

In 1848, John Jonas Plonk married Anne Ellen Oates (1831–1905). Her family lived near and attended the [Long Creek Presbyterian Church](#) in Gaston County.



Long Creek Presbyterian Church
Founded 1780. Gaston County, North Carolina

John Sloan operated an iron works during the Revolutionary War. Oates and Ormand families participated. The [Ormand Iron Furnace](#) is about a half mile away.



Ormand Iron Furnace
Built about 1788. Gaston County, North Carolina

See [bird's eye view](#). You can visit the Ormand Furnace by getting permission from the owner.

Anne Ellen Oates's mother was Elizabeth Espey (1789–1856). Elizabeth's father was Samuel Espey (1758–1838). Her mother was Elizabeth Sloan (1760–1812).

All the above individuals were buried in [Long Creek Presbyterian Church Cemetery](#).



Samuel Espey gravestone and 1935 marker.

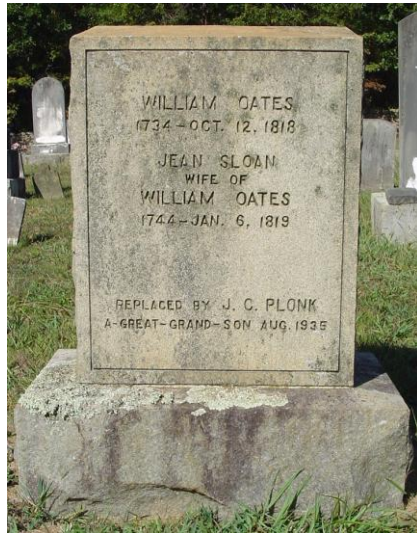
Samuel's gravestone reads: "Samuel Espey/North Carolina/Capt Graham's Regt/NC Troops/Rev. War/December 29, 1838" He was a [militia captain who participated in the Battle of Kings Mountain](#). His name appears among the [wounded](#) on the [national monument](#). Espey's signature appears on [James Hill Revolutionary War pension application](#) (Hill, James, pension application 1832).



Samuel Espey's wives gravestones: Elizabeth Slone, broken and repaired, and Mary Renick

For many years, third great-grandmother Elizabeth Sloan's gravestone was lying in soil, broken, and barely legible. In 2010, it was repaired and stood up again. Recently, grass-trimmer wire has scarred both Samuel's and Mary's gravestones.

Third great-grandparents William Oates I (1734–1818) and Jean Sloan (1744–1819) have a 1935 marker.



William Oates I and Jean Sloan 1935 Marker

In 1880, Robert Marcus Oates, a Plonk-related 1st cousin, organized the Charlotte Cotton Mill, the first cotton mill in Charlotte. Its two buildings are still standing. He hired 3 nephews: David William Oates, John Edward Oates, and James M. Oates. All men and their families are buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte.



Charlotte Cotton Mill, 1880

Great-grandparents John Jonas Plonk (1823–1908) and Anne Ellen Oates (1831–1905) have a single large gravestone.



John Jonas Plonk and Anne Ellen Oates Gravestone

Granduncle Joseph Calvin Plonk (1852–1939) was a wealthy textile manufacturer. He owned and managed a [textile mill in Cherokee Falls, South Carolina](#). His early life is described in the book [Men of Mark in South Carolina](#) (Hemphill 1908, 310–313). About 1913, he helped influence the railroad corporation to route the new railroad track through Blacksburg and Gaffney, South Carolina (Journal and Carolina Spartan 1913). His many contributions to the development of Cherokee County, South Carolina, were recorded by historian Dr. Bobby Moss.

In 1884, Joseph Calvin Plonk, who became a natural executive with a strong and commanding personality, was brought to Cherokee Falls from the old McAden Mill in North Carolina by the new superintendent, George Gray. Gray, who had succeeded the first “super,” John LeMaster, made Plonk the overseer of the carding room. Gray served as superintendent for a period of sixteen months, after which Plonk held the position until 1900. Plonk became the guiding genius of the Cherokee Falls Manufacturing Company. He was a sturdy spirit of the old school, whose rugged virtues did much to give the community a distinctive atmosphere. A native of Cleveland County, North Carolina, he managed to secure a good education despite the limited educational opportunities of his day. Although Plonk spent his later teens teaching school in upper Cleveland County, he decided that textiles promised a more secure future. He entered mill work at the old mill in McAdenville, North Carolina. When he came to his new employment he did not have a dollar of capital. However, with hard work, tireless energy, a keen brain, and a natural knack in the handling of men, he was able to reach the top of his profession. He married Miss Laura E. Roberts, a sister to the secretary-treasurer of the mill, Rufus P. Roberts. Even though he did not have a child, he adopted Nora Allgood and raised her as his own. Although Plonk did not believe in promiscuous and indiscriminate charity, he did believe in the dignity provided by an opportunity to work and earn an honest livelihood. Since he practiced what he preached by treating his men fairly, his employees became so loyal that fourth and fifth generations of the original employees are still working at Cherokee Falls. (Moss 1972, 338–339)

Joseph Calvin Plonk’s wife Laura Elvira Roberts died of cancer in 1921. On 22 May 1922, Joseph Calvin Plonk purchased 900 milligrams of radioactive radium for cancer treatment at Rutherford County Hospital. That extraordinary gift costs about \$100,000. On 23 May 1922, a notice appeared in the *New York Times*. The hospital was one of few places where such cancer treatment was possible. That quantity of radioactive radium was the size of a small pebble, yet it was 1/180 of the world’s industrial supply. You can read more at [Rutherford County Hospital](#) history. Click on menu About Us, History, page 8 of 13. Rutherford County

Hospital commemorates this donation by a portrait of Joseph Calvin Plonk in the hospital museum, which is open during ordinary business hours.

In 1930, Joseph Calvin Plonk purchased the [stone marker and original bronze plaque](#) at the Plonk Cemetery. In 1935, he erected the Espey and Oates markers shown above. He also provided funds for the stone wall around the [Long Creek Presbyterian Church Cemetery](#).

Joseph Calvin Plonk and his first wife Laura Elvira Roberts have large gravestones.



Joseph Calvin Plonk and wife Laura E. Roberts Gravestones

[Long Creek Presbyterian Church](#) accepts donations to help maintain its cemetery.

Sources

Hemphill, James Calvin. "Joseph Calvin Plonk." In *Men of Mark in South Carolina*, 310–313. Washington, DC: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1908.

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Moss, Bobby Gilmer. *The Old Iron District, A study of the development of Cherokee County 1750-1897*. Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1972.