

Isaiah Lewis (1823 – 1864)

John Sharp, jhnshrp@gmail.com

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I have been working on Isaiah Lewis, who is our ancestor going up Grandma Sharp's line. You get to Isaiah by Grandma Sharp (Catherine Alma Lee Lewis) to James Houston Lewis to William Jephtha Lewis to Isaiah Lewis. So Isaiah is my 3rd Great Grandfather.

The research for this story required reading quite a few books:

1. "Silent Cavalry" by Howell Raines
2. "The Story of My Life" by John R. Phillips © 1923
3. "First Alabama Cavalry USA: Homage to Patriotism" by Glenda McWhirter Todd
4. "Unionists in the Heart of Dixie" by Glenda McWhirter Todd (7 volumes!)
5. "Family Maps of Marion County, AL" by Gregory A. Boyd, J. D.

I first became aware of an interesting story about Isaiah when I looked at his FindaGrave site (see <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45291832/isaiah-lewis>). The story was related by Joyce Riggan, a 2nd Great Granddaughter that Isaiah fought in the 1st Alabama Cavalry (U. S.) for the Union side during the Civil War. According to Joyce, Isaiah said that he didn't support one person owning another person.

That struck me as very interesting! Is this story true? It sounds like something that may just be one of those stories that travel down through generations, but I wanted to do some research.

I started off with the book "Silent Cavalry" by Howell Raines. Raines is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, whose ancestor was also in the 1st Alabama Cavalry. "Silent Cavalry" does cover a lot of the 1st Alabama's actions during the Civil War, but most of the book is about how the existence of this unit was suppressed and denigrated as "not seeing much action" during the War. Raines cites a lot of other historians to show that this viewpoint pushed by Alabama Lost Cause apologists was definitely not true.

John R. Phillips was in the 1st Alabama Cavalry, and I was able to acquire a signed copy of his autobiography! The 1st Alabama Cavalry and served at the forefront of Sherman's Army during the Battle of Atlanta (July 22 – to September 2, 1864). Sherman stayed in Atlanta until November 15th when he struck off on his March to the Sea, again with the 1st Alabama leading the Cavalry. The 1st Alabama stayed with Sherman as he then turned north through the Carolinas and met up with Grant's Army at Appomattox for R. E. Lee's surrender.

How did it happen that I didn't know anything about this? I was never taught anything about this in any of my history classes. Apparently when Alabama seceded from the Union, several counties in northern Alabama tried to secede from Alabama. So during the Civil War, there was another civil war going on in northern Alabama. There were atrocities on both sides as Alabama's Confederate government tried to capture and force the northern Alabamans (Alabamians?) into the Confederate Army and the northern Alabamans retaliated in kind.

Next, who was Isaiah Lewis? I mean, beyond my 3rd Great Grandfather and the guy in the picture to the right?

Isaiah was born on July 23, 1823 in South Carolina, according to a small notebook that belonged to his Great Grandson John Boley Lewis III. Isaiah's parents were John Boley Lewis and Lucinda Bush. The Lewises stayed in South Carolina until sometime between 1830 and 1831, as Isaiah, Peter, Shadrack, and Margaret were born in South Carolina (probably Spartanburg County), but then John Boley, Jr., George, Ephraim, William Wiley, Mary, Thomas, and Benjamin were all born in Alabama (probably Marion County).

Isaiah had a fair complexion, light hair, gray eyes, and was about six feet tall. There are various stories about Isaiah being half Native American, due to his mother Lucinda being Native American. I don't know much about Isaiah's life until he married Martha Rivers Bishop in 1852. There are stories that Martha may also have been Native American or may have some Native American DNA, but at this time I have not been able to verify either of those stories – about Lucinda or about Martha. I know that Lewis Sharp (my father) has Native American DNA in him, but I haven't identified the source yet.



An interesting story is that Isaiah's father (John Boley Lewis) and Martha's grandmother (Margaret "Peggy" Lewis Bishop) were brother and sister, making Isaiah and Martha 3rd cousins. This is a common thing in Dad's ancestry! It might explain a lot! But it would conflict with the story that Martha was Native American. But again, I don't know the whole story yet.

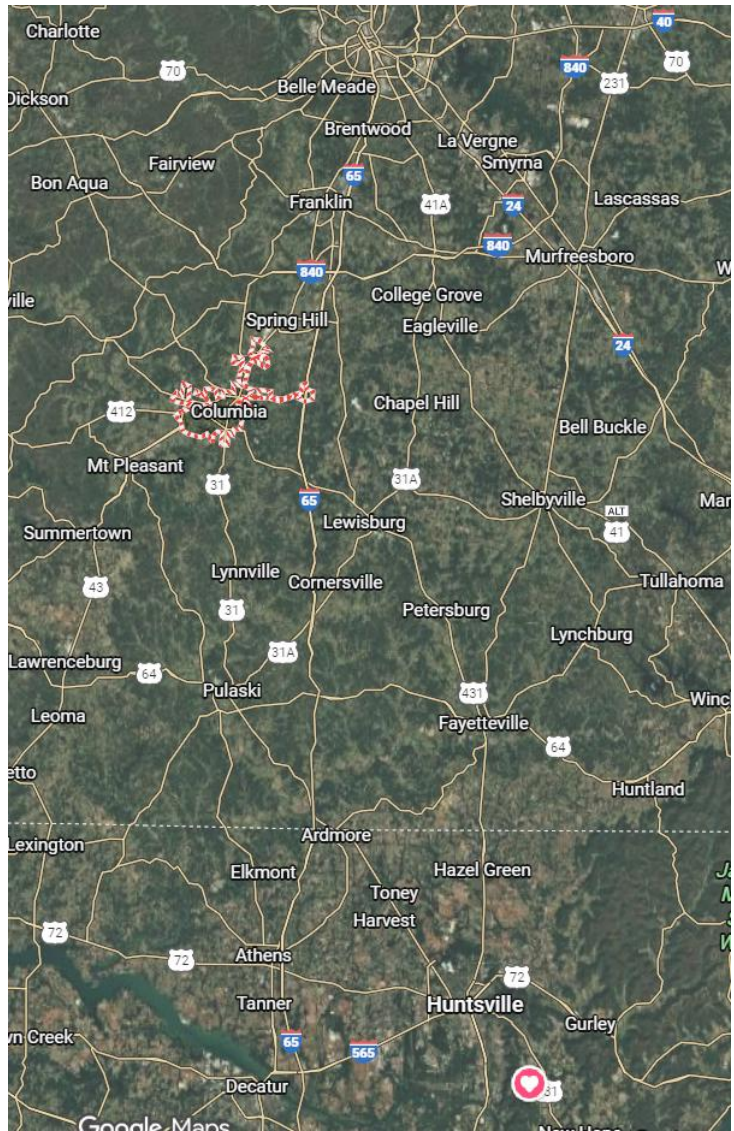
Isaiah and Martha set about having kids and building a family in Marion County, AL. Our direct ancestor (William Jephtha Lewis) was born in 1854, John Boley Lewis in 1856 (sometimes this John Boley Lewis is confused with his uncle and Isaiah's brother), Mary Elmina Josephine in 1858, Amanda Minerva Lucinda Caroline Lewis in 1860, James Henry Lewis in 1862, and Martha Jane Lewis in 1864.

By late 1863, the Civil War had turned against the South, with losses at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. The Confederate Conscription Acts were getting tighter and tighter. And northern Alabamans who were originally against the war, became more bold as they began to join up with the Union Army. In December 1863, Isaiah joined the ranks of this group, becoming a private in Company A of the 1st Alabama Cavalry

(US). He served with this group until late 1864 when he was furloughed due to sickness. By this time, due to the atrocities occurring in northern Alabama against Union sympathizers, Martha and her children had relocated to Columbia, TN behind Union lines (see map to the right). The city in the top center of the map is Nashville, the red-circled town is Columbia, TN.

The story is that Martha and her five children walked from Hamilton, AL to Columbia, TN – hiding by day and walking at night. The oldest child (William) was 10 and the youngest (James Henry) was 2 years old at that time. People were made out of sterner stuff in those days!

Unfortunately, little John Henry died in September 1864. I doubt the long walk to Columbia, TN did his health a lot of good. Once Isaiah was furloughed home, he never went back to service, dying in late October 1864, a month or so after John Henry died. We don't know where Isaiah or John Henry are buried, with some stories saying they were buried side by side in unmarked graves in Columbia, TN.



Isaiah had several other brothers that served in the Civil War:

- Peter Lewis (1826 – 1863) – Peter also enlisted in the 1st Alabama Cavalry with Isaiah died at the Post Hospital in Corinth, MS April 14, 1863 of Continued Fever (which could have been due to an underlying infection like typhoid, tuberculosis, or pneumonia)
- Shadrack Lewis (1828 – 1862) – Shadrack enlisted in the Confederate Army, in the 1st Mississippi Infantry, Company G. He died in 1862, and I don't know if it was due to a battle or an illness. The main battle that the 1st Mississippi was involved in during 1862 is the Battle of Fort Donelson, at the Tennessee-Kentucky border. Almost the entire 1st Mississippi was captured by Grant's forces, and then later exchanged for Union prisoners captured by the Confederates. So it could have been this battle or an illness that resulted in Shadrack's death.
- John Boley Lewis, Jr. (1831 – 1909) – John also enlisted in the Confederate Army, in the 42nd Alabama Infantry, Company K. He survived the war and had a long life.
- William Wiley Lewis (1834 – 1909) - William enlisted in Co. M, 1st Alabama Cavalry, USA on March 10, 1863. He was mustered out on Oct. 20, 1865 in Huntsville, Ala. While in service at Camp Davis, Miss., William was injured when his horse fell on him breaking his right arm below the elbow and

his collar bone. This also caused injury to his right hip and right breast. His horse reared up and fell back on him. When this happened, he was trying to keep the horse in its proper place in line. William was carried to the regiment surgeon and then transferred to the hospital in Memphis, Tenn. for 2 months. After this he rejoined his unit doing light work until his discharge. William and family moved several times after the war before settling in Arkansas.

Post Civil War

After the war was over, Martha and the children decided to go back to Marion County, to begin the process of applying for the pension due to her and her children. (I read this in one of the books, and my only guess is that you had to apply for the pension in the county that you served). She and her 4 children had to be escorted by a Union soldier, as tensions against the “Unionist traitors” was running high. Martha eventually was granted a pension of \$4 per month for her and \$2 per month for each of her children, for a total of \$12 per month, which was a pretty good amount in 1865!

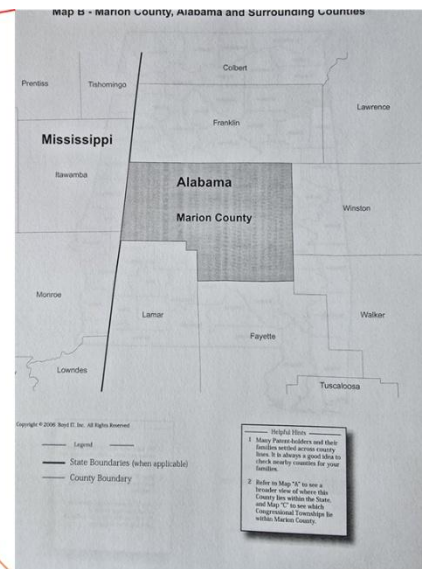
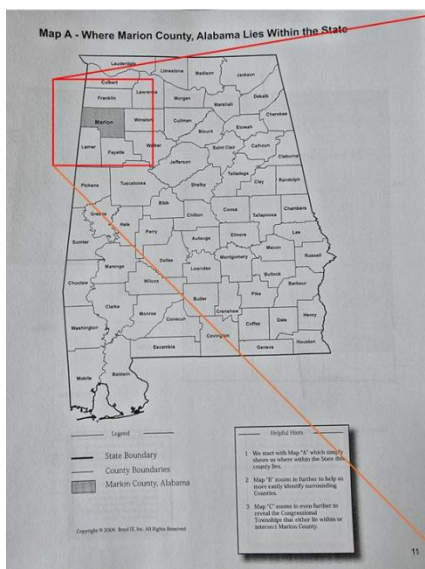
In 1870, Martha remarried to John Boyd (or Boyett, sources vary) and had 5 more children (Infant Boyett (1869 – 1869), Lucien Green Boyett (1871 – 1957), Ellen Boyett (1874 – 1941), John Robert Boyett (1874 – 1945), Melvinia Boyett (1879 – 1959)). She died in 1885 and is buried in Carter Cemetery (also known as Lewis Cemetery) in Hamilton, AL. When you look at Martha’s picture below, it definitely looks like she may have had some Native American DNA.



Where did the Lewises Live?

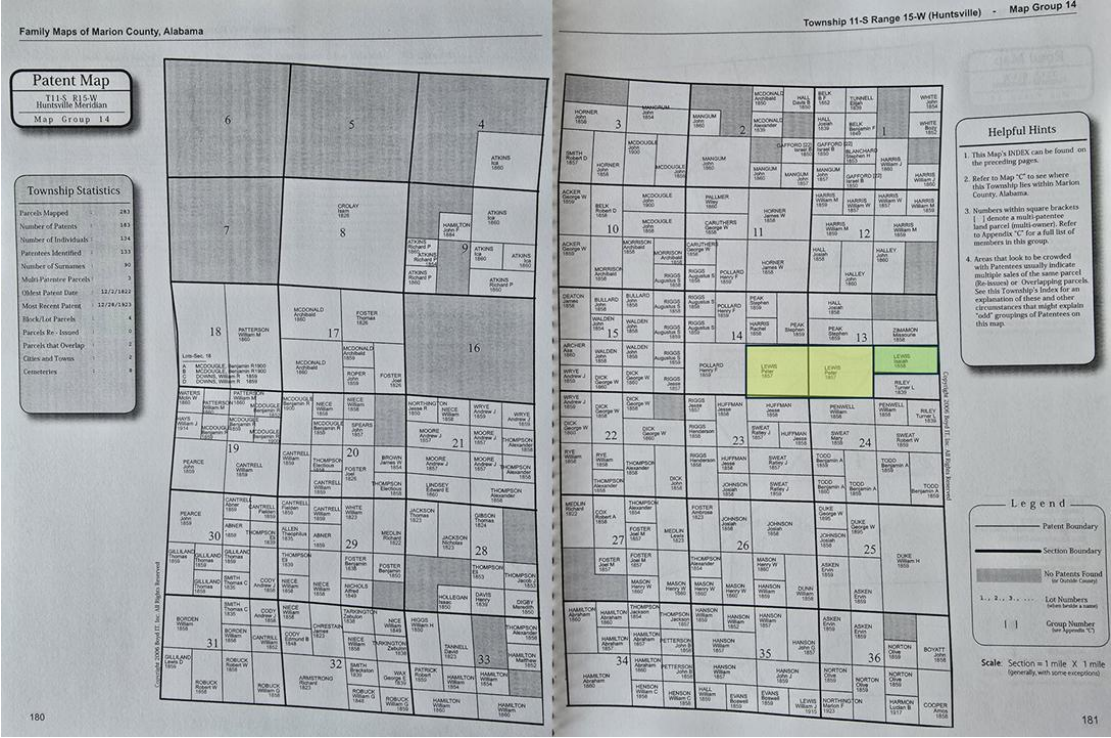
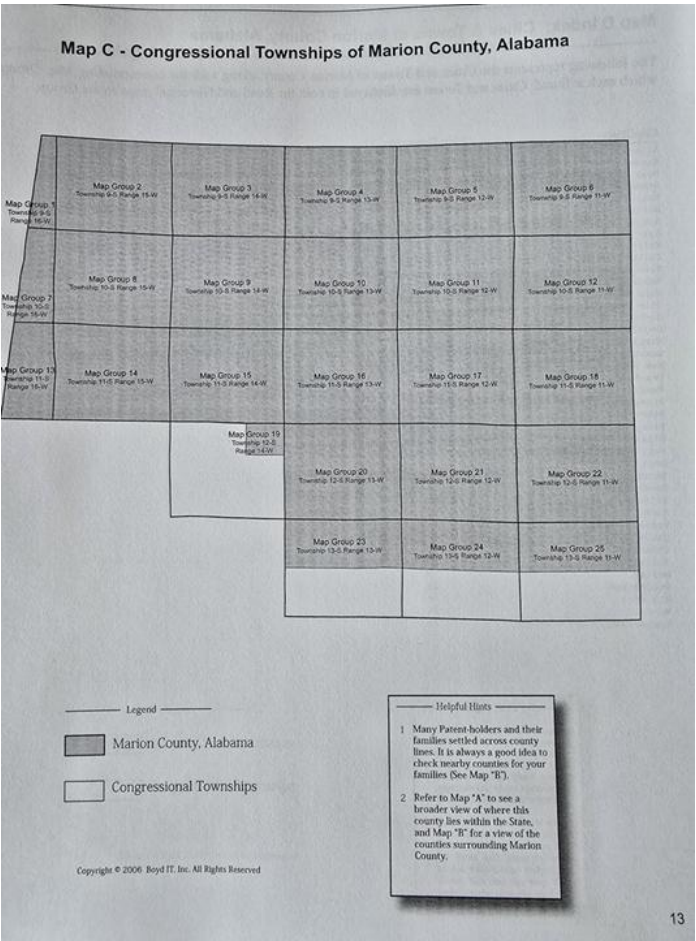
This next section of this story is mainly maps, as I have tried to locate where the Lewises lived. The black and white maps were from Source # 5 listed at the beginning of this story, and I will source others as I go through this section of the story. First, where is Marion County, Alabama?

The map to the right shows that Marion County is in the northwest of Alabama, bordering northeast Mississippi.

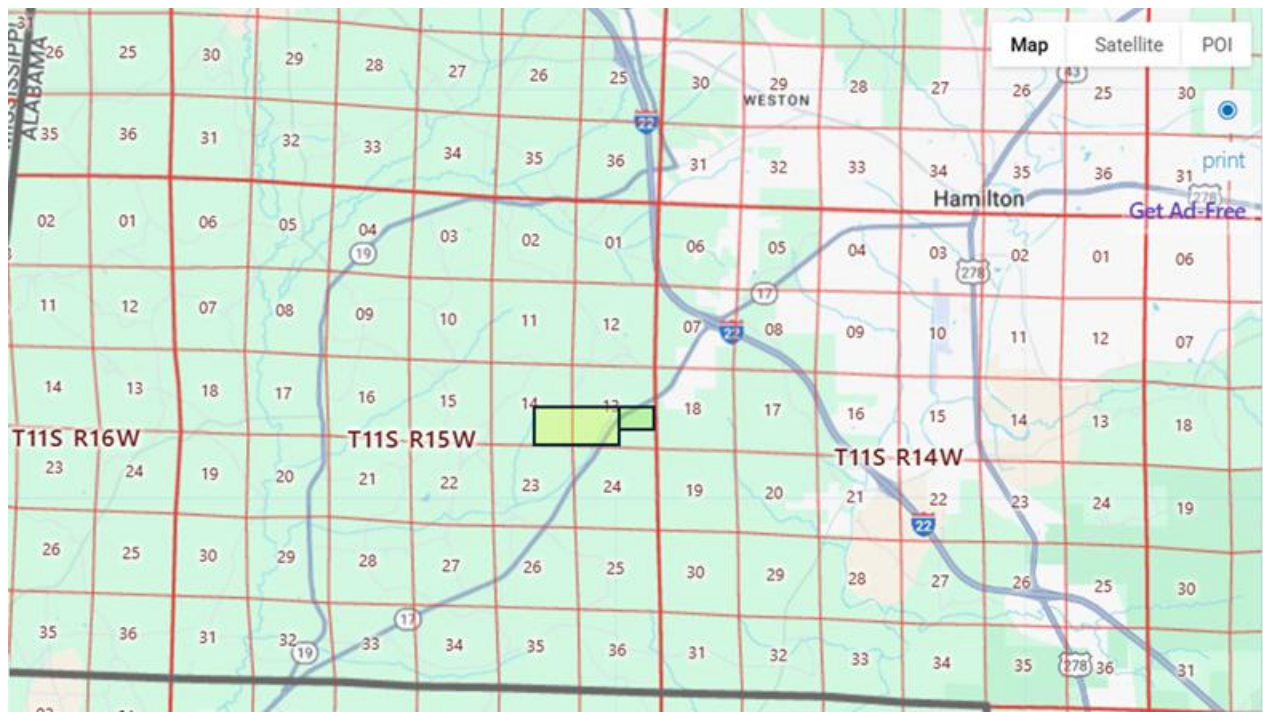


If we look strictly at the township map of Marion County, Alabama, we see the picture to the right.

The gray area is the actual county of Marion, but you can see that the Congressional Townships extend beyond Marion County's southern border into Lamar (on the western side of lower Marion County) and Fayette (on the eastern side of lower Marion County)



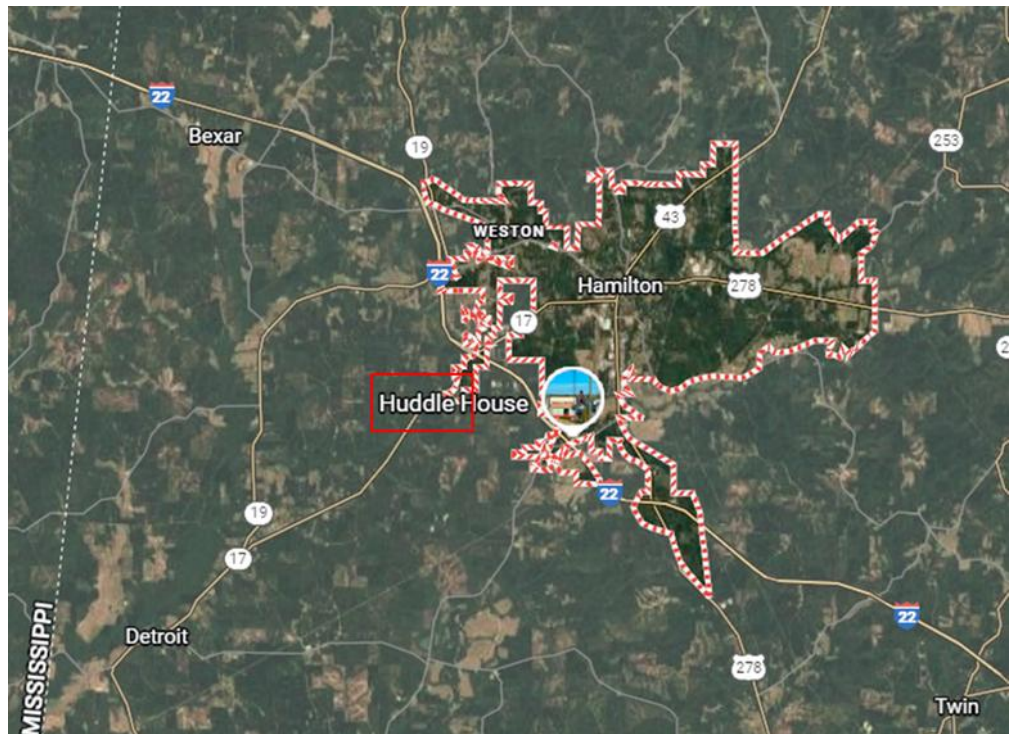
The map to the left shows the plots of land that Isaiah and Peter Lewis acquired in the 13th and 14th Township maps in 1857 (Peter) and 1858 (Isaiah). If we place these plots of land on a modern township map (see map on next page), we see:

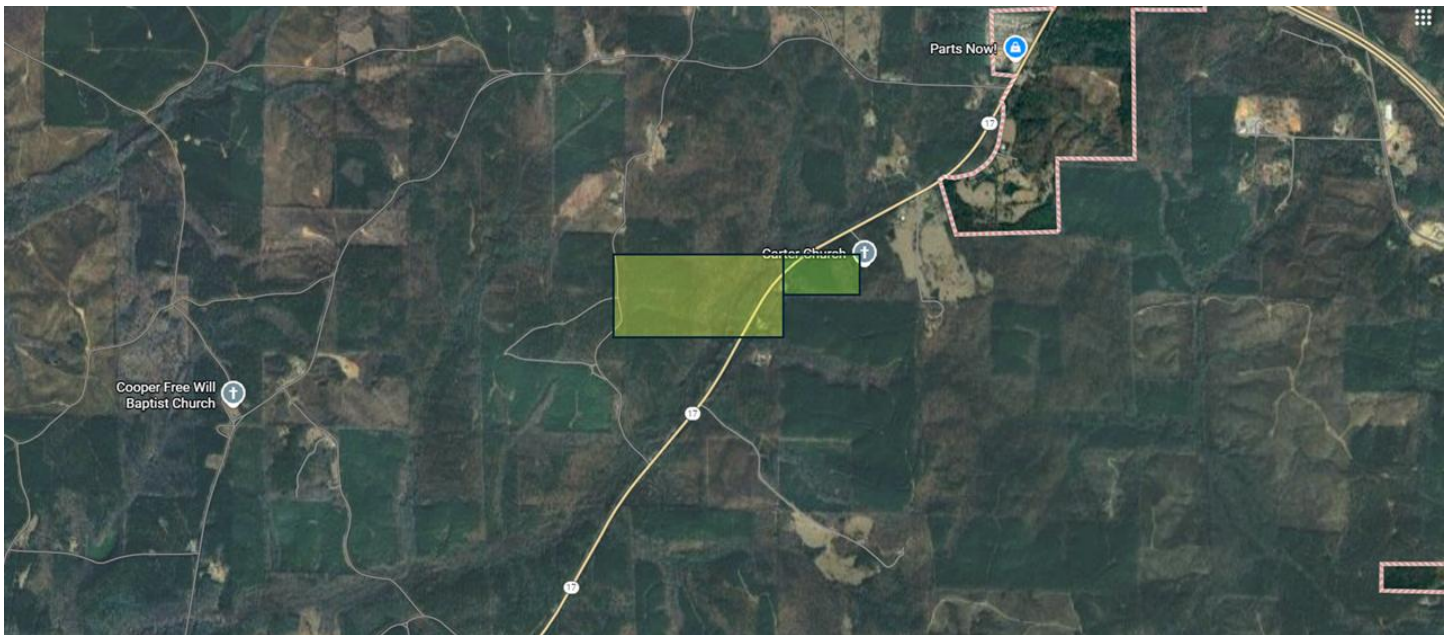


Source:

<https://www.randymajors.org/township-range-on-google-maps?x=-87.9207866&y=34.1181373&cx=-88.1099115&cy=34.0986556&zoom=12&fips=01093&labels=show&counties=show&plss=show>

We can see that Hamilton, AL is just northeast of Peter and Isaiah's land. On a modern Google map (to the right), you can see the Hamilton, AL city boundaries, and an area in a red rectangle (which unfortunately surrounds the "Huddle" in a location for the Huddle House (no idea why that was highlighted in this map). I will expand on this red rectangle in the next map to show where Isaiah's and Peter's land was.





Today, Highway 17 slices right through their land, and it doesn't look like there are any houses or farms on their land – just woods. Isaiah's land is on the edge of the location of Carter Church, which has a cemetery that is also known as Lewis Cemetery (see <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/21993/carter-cemetery>). There are lots of graves in this cemetery for our family:

- John Boley Lewis, Jr (1831-1909), Peter and Isaiah's brother
- Mary Jane Hutcheson (1833-1899), John Boley Lewis, Jr.'s wife
- Martha Rivers Bishop (1835-1885), Isaiah Lewis' wife
- John Boley Lewis (1856-1936), Isaiah Lewis' son

And this finishes up this long story that has taken several months to research and compile! It verified a lot of information that I was researching, but also introduced a whole lot of new questions.