

Collins, Mordecai ^[1]

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by Whaley W. Batson, 1979

22 Mar. 1785–25 July 1864

Mordecai Collins, cabinetmaker, was born probably in Virginia, of unknown ancestry. His name first appears in [Rowan County](#) ^[2] records on 3 Dec. 1809, in an entry stating that Collins purchased from John Scott 103 1/2 acres of land at a price of \$200. This land lay on both sides of Reedy Branch, a prong of the Brushy Fork of Abbotts Creek in what is now [Davidson County](#) ^[3]. The next entry regarding Collins, which establishes his trade, is in the Rowan court minutes of 6 Nov. 1810, recording that he took as apprentice John Swisegood "to learn the Cabinet and Joiners trade." Five entries in the Salem Community Store Journal of 1814–15 list accounts with Collins and purchases of locks, handles, glass, stain—articles used in cabinetmaking. This store was located in the [Moravian](#) ^[4] community of [Salem](#) ^[5] only a few miles from Collins's land.

To date, there have been six pieces of furniture—all corner cupboards—attributed to Collins. No known signed Collins piece has been found.

By 1816, Collins and his wife, Christina, had moved to Floyd County, Ind., and had purchased three tracts of land in the Greenville township. These purchases were made on 14 Apr., 9 May, and 25 June 1817. Additional transactions were recorded in Floyd County through 1843. There are no indications that Collins continued his cabinetmaking in Indiana; his land transactions indicate that he was primarily farming.

On 25 Aug. 1816, the Rowan County records show that Collins sold the 103 1/2 acres he purchased in 1809 to William Ledford for \$450, a 125 percent profit. Land inherited by Christena from her father, David Byerly, was deeded to Lucy Byerly on 26 Nov. 1825, and this transaction finalized the relocation from North Carolina. A late North Carolina reference to Collins appeared in *Salem's Weekly Gleaner*, 6 Jan. 1829: "Collins, Mordecai" appeared in a list of names on letters unclaimed at the post office.

Collins and his wife, Christena Byerly of Davidson County, had at least six children. The family was among the organizers of St. John's Lutheran Church in Floyd County, Ind., and Collins was buried there in the churchyard.

References:

Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (Winston-Salem), for references from research files.

The Swisegood School of Cabinetmaking (1973).

Additional Resources:

"State of North-Carolina: Davidson County." *Western Carolinian*. December 16, 1823. 4.
<https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84026486/1823-12-16/ed-1/seq-4/> ^[6] (accessed January 10, 2014).

History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties vol. 2. Cleveland, Ohio: L. A. Williams & Company. 1882. 283, 290, 567. <http://books.google.com/books?id=dMg4AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA283#v=onepage&q&f=false> ^[7] (accessed January 10, 2014).

Subjects:

[Artisans](#) ^[8]

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Authors:

[Batson, Whaley W.](#) ^[11]

Origin - location:

[Davidson County](#) ^[12]

[Rowan County](#) ^[13]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#) ^[14]

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LINKS

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/collins-mordecai> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/rowan> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/davidson> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/moravians> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/salem> [6] <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84026486/1823-12-16/ed-1/seq-4/> [7] <http://books.google.com/books?id=dMg4QAAMAAJ&pg=PA283#v=onepage&q&f=false> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/artisans> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/furniture-industr> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/batson-whaley-w> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-11> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-13> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>