

Did you hear about...

Witchcraft in South Carolina?

Contributed by Theresa M. Hicks

On the 10th of November 1792, an account of the cruel beating in Fairfield County of three old persons over 80 years of age, who were credited with dealing in witchcraft, was published in the South Carolina Gazette. This would have been the case involving Mary Ingleman, the details of which are recorded in the court records of Fairfield County. She and old man Hending and his wife Sally Smith had been charged with laying evil hands on Rosy Henley and her sister and damaged many cattle in the eastern quarter of the county.

A bench of Witch Doctors sat in a trial held at Thomas Hill's 5 miles from the county capital. Adam Free, son of Lawrence Free (A German from Pennsylvania) and Mary Free, testified against his mother (Mary Ingleman - widow of Lawrence Free and wife of Jacob Ingleman). Jacob Free, grandson of Mary Ingleman, also testified against her saying that she had turned him into a horse and rode him 6 miles to Major Pearson's apple orchard on Broad River. Martha Holly alias Willing Haw [Willingham?] testified that Mrs. Ingleman had greatly afflicted her. Isaac Collins also testified that she had turned him into a horse.

Mary Ingleman sought legal redress. Mr. Yongue was the only magistrate in the county of Fairfield who would grant her a warrant. The warrant was issued against Sam Crossland who was convicted in the county court and fined 10 Pounds Sterling and costs. He left for the far west. She also prosecuted Joshua Durham who was found not guilty. The jury in this case was Hugh Gamble, Peter Curry, William Coggin, John Cubit, Andrew McDowell, Saml. Craig, Benjn. Halsey, James Aiken, Thomas Hill, John Hollis, William Bonner, and Dudley Curry.

Later, Philip Edward Pearson wrote about this and told of Mrs. Ingleman and of her high character. Others accused of witchcraft were: John Erric, Benjamin Owens, Hezekiah Hunt and his wife Mourning. Mr. Pearson said that witchcraft pretty well died off in Fairfield after the incident at Mr. Hill's.

Lancaster County continued a witch stronghold down to a later period. In 1825, Barbara Powers was accused of turning a girl into a horse and rode her to Cheraw. This case went on appeal and became well-known. The case of Mary Ingleman was settled in the lower court and is less well-known.

Lawrence Free and Thomas Owen(s) came to S.C. from Pennsylvania. The will of Thomas Owens, Craven County, S.C., 3 October 1781 leaves 37 acres in Peters Township, Cumberland County, Pa. to the use of the Baptists. He left his 250 acres in South Carolina to "my beloved wife Abigail," then to son Samuel. It's possible that Lawrence came to South Carolina from the same area in Pennsylvania.

An Indenture of 22nd August 1763 is of record between Lawrence Free of Craven County, planter, to Adam Free, Son and Heir apparent of the said Lawrence Free...for love and affection...100 acres part of 400 acres grant to said Lawrence Free 5 December 1760. The Plat was certified by John Pearson, Deputy Surveyor, 4 May 1763. Free signed in German. Mary signed (A) as her mark. Witnesses names were written in German. It was proved by Jacob Houkhouse and Frederick Henrick 5 November 1764 and recorded 31 October 1765. In this deed, the surname appears as Fries or Frick. On the 14th of May 1771, Adam Free memorialized 100 acres part of 400 acres in Craven County bounded: vacant and aforementioned tract...an original grant 5 Dec. 1760 to Lawrence Free who by enfeoffment 22 August 1763 conveyed to Andrew [sic- Adam] Free the Memorialist.

On the 12 th of October 1771, 150 acres was surveyed for Mary Free in Craven County on Owens Creek, bounded: Adam Free, Edwd. Flinton's, James Oglisby's [Ogilvie?], Thos. Owens. On 13th June 1772, Mary Free memorialized this 150 acres on Owens Creek bounding son, Adam Free, and Edward Hinton, James Ogilvie, Thos. Owens, and vacant land.

On the 1778-1779 Jury Lists, Jacob Ingleman was in the area Between Broad and Catawba Rivers; Jacob Free was on the East side of Wateree.

In the 1790 census of Fairfield County, S.C., Adam Free was enumerated with 2 males 16+ 3 males under 16 and 5 females and 3 slaves next door to Jacob Ingleman with 1 male 16+ and 2 females.

Fairfield County deeds continue with records of the Ingleman and Free families. The property of Jacob Ingleman was sold to Adam Free in 1793. In 1803, Adam Free and Margaret Free [his wife] deeded to Jacob Free 30 acres part of 100 acres originally granted to Mary Free on Wilkensons Creek and conveyed by Mary Free to Adam Free.

On the 12th September 1804. Adam Free, planter, deeded "to my grandson, William Moore the son of Jesse More [sic]"...a filley.

According to Mills' Statistics in 1825/26, Adam Free was 89 years old.

There were some cases of witchcraft in York County Mr. Rainey believed himself to be bewitched. Balsey Fox, a noted witch, lived in the "Black Jacks."

Possibly the last trial for witchcraft in America was the one involving Barbara Powers held in Lancaster County, South Carolina.