

Thomas and Abigail Owen

by V. L. Smith

Fairfield County, South Carolina

Thomas Owen was born in Wales, the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Owen. He is estimated to have been born about 1709. The Owen family had left Wales and settled in Pennsylvania along with others seeking religious freedom. Thomas's father died when he was 11. Thomas was raised by his mother along with brothers Richard, Samuel, Owen, John and sisters, Mary, Elinor and Katherine. In his mother's will dated 1741 she leaves him the money he borrowed from her in 1740. [chester.pa-roots.com/wills] Thomas is next found on the 1751 tax list in Peter's Township, Cumberland County, PA. Sometime during this time Thomas met and married Abigail ????. She probably came from a Baptist family as the Owen family were staunch Baptists. Thomas and Abigail were part of the Baptist Society in Peter's Township. Thomas owned 27 acres there.

Sometime around 1750-1751 Thomas's family along with other Pennsylvanians, Victor Neely, Charles Harris, Lawrence Free and others, came to South Carolina. [Townsend, SC Baptists] Some sources refer to Thomas and his friends as Seventh Day Baptists. Their differences with the mainstream church may have been part of the reason they left Pennsylvania. Also, Indian troubles were increasing in the area. Thomas settled in the area around the Broad River. He petitioned for land from the provincial government in 1752. Charles Harris went to Charlestown [sic] to do the asking for Thomas and others. In Thomas's petition he explains "...horses being tired, and the petitioner not able to come on foot..." [Holcomb, Petitions for Land...] as to why he sent Harris. Thomas got 200 acres for himself and his family. One requirement was that his wife and children must come to South Carolina within 18 months. Thomas had already had the land surveyed so he had probably been there for a while. By 1755 Thomas was petitioning for more land and had built a mill on the waters of Owens Mill Creek. This name didn't survive two generations. It was later called Mill Creek or Wilkinson's Creek.

Thomas and his fellow Baptists began a church called the Broad River Church. They met in the homes of Thomas Owen or Victor Neely. Morgan Edwards said they were a group of about 18 families and were very strict in their beliefs. [Edwards, 1772]

Thomas and Abigail had at least 4 children and maybe 9 based on his petitions for land. There are 5 sons documented in estate records or other documents. They are Eleazer, Jonathan, Lewis, Job and Samuel. There is possibly another son Thomas but it has not been proven. There were probably daughters but none have been identified.

Thomas Owen's will was written in 1781.[SCDAH] He names his favored son Samuel as his heir to the plantation and Abigail was to be the executor. The other children were to share the remaining assets.

In 1789 Abigail died from a fall off her horse. An inquisition was held to determine cause of death. Samuel inherited the plantation. [Fairfield County Will Book 1]

This information is based on years of research and the documentation mentioned is in the family of the writer or public institutions.