

3129 Sutton Place  
Burlington, NC  
June 30, 2002

Dear Wilsons,

Last week, the two of us spent several days looking for Wilsons in the South Carolina Archives and History located in Columbia, SC. We found a connection with our Mississippi Wilsons and found info that gives promise of our being able to go back at least another generation with further research. Here we plan to just hit the high spots that could help anyone who may be doing further research. Upon request, we will be glad to give details of what we found.

Our first Wilson ancestors came to Mississippi around 1847 and settled near Van Vleet in Chickasaw County. The parents were James Leroy Wilson (1794-1860) and Rachel Shannon (1798-1871). We know from Mississippi census records that they and their children were born in SC and concluded, rightly or wrongly, that they moved to Miss. directly from SC. Both James and Rachel Wilson are buried at Friendship Presbyterian Church near Van Vleet and their gravestones have survived the years.

In the SC Archives, we concentrated on the 1840 census and the deed records around 1845. Needless to say, we found many Wilsons, including a number of James Wilsons and J. Wilsons. We had to laboriously go thru the original census records for each possibility looking for a match with what information we knew to be true about the family--ages of parents and children, etc. We found census records for two families that had good possibilities--both in Fairfield County, SC. In the county right north of Fairfield (Chester Co.), we found a number of Shannons, so we felt we were in the right vicinity.

The second day in the archives, we 'hit paydirt.' We found the record of the deed that documented the sale of 460 acres of land in Fairfield Co., S. C., by James and Rachel Wilson to one James Cathcart in 1846. The deed record gave both James's and Rachel's names so we feel confident that they were our Wilson ancestors. It appeared that both placed their signature on the documentation (no X marks). Evidently, this was their home place that they sold before migrating on to Mississippi. Included in the documentation was a survey map of the plantation.

We next started looking more closely at documentation in Fairfield Co.--marriage records, will and estate records, county histories, land grants, etc. to see if we could discover either James's or Rachel's parents, but no luck. We ran out of time, so need to go back down to Columbia one of these days.

We should note that the above referenced survey did tell of the origins of the land sold. It was stated that one partial of land had been part of a land grant to one William Wilson in

1770. This William Wilson COULD be our James Leroy Wilson's father or grandfather. NO PROOF of that yet---will take further looking.

Anyone interested in more details on what we found, please let me know. If anyone want to do further looking in SC, those details would help.

Hope all are well and have a great Fourth of July.

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3129 Sutton Place  
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April 8, 2003

Dear Wilsons,

This is the third letter we have written you guys about the Wilsons of South Carolina. The first, dated June 30, 2002, was about a trip the two of us made to the SC Archives and History located in Columbia. The second letter, dated July 11, 2002, concerned census data associated with the SC and early Mississippi Wilsons. If any of you would like another copy of either or both of those letters, let us know by e-mail.

Last week, the two of us spent several very enjoyable days in SC trying to learn more about the Wilson family there. We believe there were at least two and maybe three generations of Wilsons in Fairfield Co. before our Wilsons came to Miss. It is the purpose of this letter to give you an overview of what we have found so far. More trips to SC will be required to tie it all together. Will write about that later.

Let's back up a little and start with the first Wilson family to come to Miss. This family was James Leroy Wilson and wife Rachel Ray Shannon, who moved from Fairfield Co., SC. To Chickasaw Co., Miss. around 1846 with at least seven children. Both James and Rachel signed the deed that documented the sale of their Fairfield Co. home & plantation in 1846. We believe that James and Rachel married around 1820 and by 1846 we believe all of their family had been born. Around 1823, there are two deeds, both in Fairfield Co., that tells the names of four Wilson brothers, and MAYBE the mother and MAYBE the father. The brothers and their wives are as follow:

James Wilson—Rachel Ray Wilson (Shannon)  
David Wilson—Mary Wilson  
William Wilson—Margaret Wilson  
John Wilson—Nancy Wilson

Also signing one of the documents was one Elisabeth Wilson, who COULD have been a sister, but also MIGHT have been the mother of the brothers.

Mentioned in one of the deeds was the fact that some of the land had been part of a land grant to one William Williams, who MIGHT have been the father of the brothers.

So we have the potential of another generation. What we now need to do is search more—in court records—for the settlement of William Wilson's estate.

In a book we glanced over we found the Wilsons listed as being "Scotch-Irish from Ireland and Va."

While in Columbia, we search for info on the Shannons. We found one Thomas Shannon and wife Mary who settled in Fairfield Co. in the late 1700's. It seems their home was around a stream called "Little River" which is in southwestern Fairfield Co. and not far from where the Wilsons settled. Records showed that Thomas and Mary Shannon had sons, Thomas and David; and that David had a son Thomas. The elder Thomas Shannon wrote a will in 1812 that was recorded in the Fairfield Co. will records. Rachel Ray Shannon was not mentioned in that will, and I believe she would have been if she were daughter of Thomas and Mary. It is our belief that Rachel was daughter of either Thomas, Jr. or David, and therefore, was granddaughter of Thomas and Mary. However, we need to do further looking to prove that.

In the deed of 1846 that James and Rachel Wilson made to sell their Fairfield Co. property, there was a surveyor's map and a description that placed the property near Jackson Creek. At the SC archives we asked for and were given an 1820 map of Fairfield Co. and on it we found Jackson Creek, which was just west of the county seat of Winnsboro; and just south of Jackson Creek the Wilson home site was designated. Armed with that info, we obtained a modern map of Fairfield Co. and were able to find a road that went thru or near the Wilson property.

In addition, we found information that leads us to believe that the Wilsons were associated with the Jackson Creek Presbyterian Church (later known as Lebanon Presbyterian Church). From what we read, the old church burned but the remnants of its stone walls still stands along with the old cemetery.

So—we drove out to Winnsboro, which is a short distance north of Columbia. The town was real interesting and full of history. There were a number of old homes that have survived since before the Civil War and many of them still well kept. Per “Sherman’s March Through the Carolinas” by Barrett, the Union leaders were so embarrassed over the devastation of Columbia, that they took step to protect Winnsboro from “bummers”. There were some burning and looting, but it was limited, and a large part of the town survived. We drove out to where we believe the Wilsons lived. It was much like the rural Alabama and Georgia that we all are familiar with. There was much timberland, mostly in pines. What was being farmed was in pasture. The land along Jackson Creek was low and had been in row crops, but what we saw was now growing up in weeds. We did pass an old dairy barn and a milking parlor, all now unused.

Out at the end of a blacktop road, just as it changed to gravel, we found the old Jackson Creek cemetery. Al walked thru it, looking for familiar names, but saw none. It did have the oldest stones we had ever seen in a cemetery, especially in the South. One stone was for a person who passed away in 1802, and there were many dated in the first few decades of the 1800’s. Somewhere there is bound to be a listing of those stones. We will look for one next time we go that way.

In Winnsboro, there is a library that has a small genealogy/history section. Also, on the main thoroughfare, Congress Street, there is a museum and a DAR library. This DAR library was closed. It is open only for a short time on Wednesdays and we were told it is best to call before coming down to be sure it is open.

Hope all have a great spring.

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