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THE PRESBYTERIAN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE SOUTHWEST

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas

PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE SOCIETY

February 22-23, 2019  
First Presbyterian Church  
Hot Springs, Arkansas

STORIES OF PRESBYTERIANS  
IN MISSION IN ARKANSAS

**Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest  
12601 Bee Cave Parkway #329  
Bee Cave, TX 78738  
832-566-9082**

**Dr. James S. Currie  
Executive Secretary**

June 2019

Dear Friends,

The history of a distinguished congregation in Arkansas. The story of Cumberland Presbyterians and higher education in Arkansas. The excellent account of a Presbyterian pastor tracing of family history that led to the discovery of interracial connections.

Transcripts of these three fascinating stories by the Rev. Lacy Sellars, the Rev. Dr. the Rev. Don Campbell, and the Rev. Dr. Michael Qualls, respectively, are included in this edition of the 2019 Annual Proceedings of the PHSSW. Meeting at First Presbyterian Church in Hot Springs, Arkansas, the Society was treated to gracious hospitality by the hosts and delightful presentations of Presbyterians engaged in mission in "the natural state". I hope and trust that you will enjoy reading them.

For your convenience a remittance envelope is enclosed to join or renew your membership in the Society. We are profoundly grateful for the generous support of both individual members (\$20/individual/year; \$25/couple/year) and church members (\$100/year). If you would like someone to come to a presbytery meeting, session meeting, or some other event to discuss the work of the PHSSW, please contact me and I will be happy to make the arrangements.

We are excited about our 2020 annual meeting. It will be held April 17-18 in Dallas. The exact site will be announced later. As is always the case, attendance at these meetings is free of charge. We would love to see you there!

Yours in Christ,

James S. Currie  
Executive Secretary

**Welcome to the 41st Annual Gathering of the  
Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest  
Friday & Saturday, February 22-23, 2019  
First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Arkansas**

Schedule

Friday, February 22

Your  
Stamp  
Helps the  
Cause

Board

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ngs" – Rev. Lacy Sellars (Pastor)

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ne Mississippi" – Michael Qualls (Memphis  
inary)

Saga" – Rev. Don Campbell (Honorably  
Presbyterian Pastor)

No Later Than Noon – Adjourn

***Please make sure your membership is up-to-date and  
that we have your mailing address so that you can  
receive copies of this year's presentations. The dates  
and place for the 2020 annual meeting of the PHSSW  
will be announced soon.***

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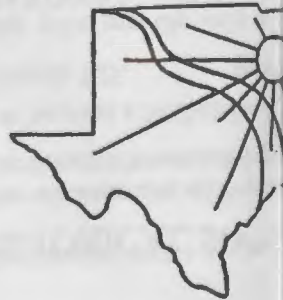
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History M



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First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Arkansas**

Schedule

Friday, February 22

3-5 p.m. – Meeting of the Board

6 p.m. – Dinner and Presentation: “A History of First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs” – Rev. Lacy Sellars (Pastor)

Saturday, February 23

8:30 a.m. – Coffee

9 a.m. – Presentation: “The Unlikely Presbyterians Bring Book-learnin’ Across the Mississippi” – Michael Qualls (Memphis Theological Seminary)

10 a.m. – “A Williamson Saga” – Rev. Don Campbell (Honorably Retired Presbyterian Pastor)

No Later Than Noon – Adjourn

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**A SELECTED HISTORY OF  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS**  
*A Church with a Heart in the Heart of the City*

Rev. Dr. Lacy Sellars, Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs

Welcome everyone! I am honored to welcome the members and guests of the Presbyterian Historical of the Southwest to First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Arkansas. Although you may not see my name on your rolls, I am aware of your organization and its mission and grateful that you have chosen to hold your 2019 meeting in our church. I look forward to telling you why we call ourselves the *Church with a Heart in the Heart of the City*.

First, however, I want to thank the members of our church, both past and present, who have collected our history, in words and pictures, and aided the research for my presentation. Having been the pastor here only eight years, I have depended greatly on the records others have kept over the years. In particular I thank, posthumously, Mary D. Hudgins, who wrote an incredible pamphlet titled, *A Thumbnail History of the First Presbyterian Church: Seventy-five Years of Christian Work, Faith, and Worship*, and Lula Beldin Haley, also posthumously, for her research paper, written in 1933, which Mary quotes frequently in her document. I also thank the anonymous female author who wrote a detailed history of our church prior to 1882, when the first session minutes were written. This anonymous author placed her document in the cornerstone of this Sanctuary when it was built in 1907-1908, but did not make a copy for us to enjoy through the years!

I also thank Bill Creason, who grew up in this church, and his sister, Joan Jones, who recalls their grandmother sitting in a wicker seat just outside the Sanctuary doors to my left, as she counted the Sunday School offering in a coffee can that she still owns, as people entered the Sanctuary for worship in the late 1930s. I thank them for picking up the phone whenever I would call with yet another question! I thank Nancy Britt for creating the special booklet: *Centennial Memories of Devoted Service 1876-1976*, copies of which I handed you this evening. Nancy took the words of both Lula Haley and Mary Hudgins, added many words of her own, and interspersed them with pictures of pastors and buildings. I thank Kathy White, still our Clerk of Session, for researching every newsletter since 1976 and recording our more-recent history since our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I

also thank Agnes Mathes, posthumously, and Jan Meyers for crafting and archiving the work of our Presbyterian Women over the years and placing them in our newly-constructed fire-proof closet, along with all our session records.

Instead of simply gathering and reciting words already written by these articulate historians, and focusing on what happened in our church, and when, my goal this evening is to ask why these events occurred. What has God been doing—indeed, what is God still doing through Christ’s servant, First Presbyterian Church?

### GOD AT WORK IN THE DETAILS

With this goal in mind, I will share with you four narratives, which I believe interpret the essence of Christ’s mission at First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs. The first took place only recently, in 2010, near the completion of my pastorate in Houston, Texas, where I was instrumental in successfully merging two churches in New Covenant Presbytery. Seeking a new call, I was in conversation with a few PNCs at that time, First Church, Hot Springs being one of them. One evening, upon returning home, I dumped my keys and pocket change into the basket on my dresser, as always, and for some reason noticed the image on a shiny-new quarter that stated: “Hot Springs, Arkansas.” I showed it to my wife, Darlene, and commented that I thought they only minted state quarters, not cities. Since we were scheduled to visit with the Hot Springs PNC in a couple of weeks, I placed the quarter in a special place and took it with us to the interview.

After agreeing with each other to move to the next stage of the call process, I showed the quarter to the PNC and asked them about it. They told me that once all the fifty state quarters had been minted, the Mint decided to mint National Park coins, in the order of their establishment—the first being Hot Springs National Park. Members of the PNC were astonished that I had received the quarter in circulation in Houston, since only uncirculated coins had been released in Hot Springs. I placed the quarter in the offering plate and asked the PNC to pray with me as we began our ministry.

Until this time, I had thought that Yosemite was our nation’s first National Park—and indeed it was. However, in 1832, the U.S. Congress passed legislation declaring that all 47 hot springs, plus a four-square-mile radius of surrounding land, were federal property and off limits to development because residents had allowed the environment around Hot Springs Creek, which now flows under Central Avenue, to deteriorate. Hot Springs became the first National Reserve, long

before the National Park system was established. All structures within a mile of the springs then became government property.

As years passed, however, the government proceeded to “go to sleep on its rights,” leading citizens to dispute ownership of property. It wasn’t until 1879 that a group of U.S. Hot Springs Commissioners finally finished their work of limiting the reservation to the surrounding mountains and began dividing the town into streets and lots.

By that time, however, First Presbyterian Church had been established by the Presbytery of Ouachita in 1876, three years prior to this declaration. At first we met in borrowed church buildings in the area. But in 1879, we purchased land and began constructing the original building (see the picture on page 9 of the booklet) on the other side of the cold-water creek, which today runs under Water Street, which you see from our parking lot today. Look at the steps still leading up the side of the ountain, to nowhere, from St. Mary’s parking lot. Those steps were part of Fire Station #3 and the Burton-Eisele medical clinic. This is where our first structure was located. The legislation of 1879 declared that the partially-finished church structure was being built on federal property!

Leave it to the Presbyterian Women, known then as “The Ladies Aid Society,” for coming up with a solution. They began negotiating with Major Alf Whittington, son of Hiram Whittington, for the purchase of our current property, on the north side of the creek, to be paid off once the church structure was completed. Major Whittington, however, generously donated the lot where we are now seated, and the structure you see here was moved to this side of the creek and completed.

My first point this evening is the unmistakable conclusion that God has placed us here. Through the work of fallible human beings, God founded our church, situated us where we needed to be, and taught us that God alone is working his purpose out. If we keep our eyes open, if we pray daily, and place God’s will above our own, First Presbyterian Church will continue to serve God’s purpose in Hot Springs, delivering the gospel to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

## LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR

The second story I want to share this evening is the story of Dr. W. H. Barry, whose picture you will find on page 2 in the *Centennial Memories*. How would

you like to work with Dr. Barry as your Clerk of Session? He looks rather gruff and opposing, doesn't he? But he got things done in Hot Springs! I'll leave it to you to read all of his civic accomplishments—such as starting a charity hospital.

But it was Dr. Barry's devotion to the poor and needy that formed our church's DNA, so to speak. In addition to the charter members, whose names you read below his picture—none of which I recognize—First Presbyterian Church also had an alcoholic in our membership. This “drunkard,” as the story is told, offended many people and caused considerable trouble in the church. Many session members wanted to remove him from the church, but Dr. Barry would hear nothing of it, and insisted that this man needed us and should remain in our membership.

One day, a session member heard that Dr. Barry had become ill and confined to bed. “This would be a good time to call a session meeting,” he thought, “and finally oust this “drunkard” from our church!” So, contrary to the Book of Church Order, the session met without notifying Dr. Barry. As the meeting began, an ambulance arrived, and attendants carried Dr. Barry into the session meeting on a stretcher. With Dr. Barry's vote, the session failed to remove this man. A few years later, the alcoholic was rehabilitated and made a good member of our church. Such is the DNA of First Presbyterian Church!

When you read *Centennial Memories* you get the impression that we have remained true to our founding story. First Presbyterian Church, though mostly conservative in theology and traditional in liturgy, has always been loyal to our Presbyterian denomination, and its pastors have always been well-educated and proud to serve in leadership capacities in the denomination.

On page 5 of *Centennial Memories*, you see a picture of Rev. J. S. Van Meter who received session permission to lease the local Opera House for the worship service for the 1892 meeting of the General Assembly of the PCUS. No church in Hot Springs owned a building large enough to host such an event, so no one registered a complaint that the worship of Almighty God took place in a secular opera house. Still, as you read on page 8, pastoring our church was often difficult. Rev. Van Meter had to tenure his resignation in 1893 because he could no longer endure the “thousands of afflicted visitors put upon him,” as he lived in the house next door to the church.

From 1893 until 1902, under the leadership of J. A. Dickson, the church experienced steady growth in membership with “little disruption of the tenor of progress.” But during the leadership of French Thompson, from 1902 – 1913, the

church realized that the original wooden structure, infested with the “thousands of afflicted visitors put upon them,” needed to be demolished and rebuilt. The planning and building of the structure, in which we sit this evening, took the majority of his tenure. The cost of the construction of this building was \$30,000. To the best of my research, the demolition of the wooden structure took place in December of 1906. Sabbath School and worship was moved to the Garland County courthouse. Construction of our current Sanctuary began in September 1907 and continued for more than a year, maybe more. It wasn't until 1910 that session minutes state that “mortgages were executed in order that the church might be completed and furnished.” You can see framed copies of the church's blue prints from 1907 in our Fellowship Hall, and by all appearances, the windows in the Sanctuary were frosted glass. More will be said about this later.

On December 31, 1911, New Year's Eve, members held a watch party to welcome the New Year in their new Sanctuary. Prior to midnight, lightening struck the building and started a fire. People rushed from the building, but no one was injured. However, members who were not present “shook their finger” at those who had gathered for a watch party, apparently thinking that the celebration was too secular in purpose. “Had they been there, they would have found out that those present all sang hymns and had prayers for the New Year.” Following the fire, the church met at Central Theater for over a year while repairs were made.

Yet, with our eye still on Dr. Barry, I want to brag on the early outreach of our church. Look at page 13 in the *Centennial Memories*. In 1946, First Presbyterian Church founded the Whittington Presbyterian Chapel—a 50 X 100 building that still stands today at—at a cost of \$8,000. We still own this property, at the corner of Newton and Walter, near the Whittington Park Apartments. In 1956, the chapel became Trinity Presbyterian Church, led by the Rev. Charles L. Ford. Today we lease this small chapel, at no cost, to Quapaw House as a residence where single-mothers may live with their babies while rebuilding their lives.

Then in 1949, we built the Forest Hill Community Chapel, still located at 411 Sellers Street, east of Oakland Race Track, for a cost of \$9,700. When the chapel closed sometime in the 1960s, we sold or transferred the property to Westminster Presbyterian Church, and Rev. Mosley started Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in this building. The property was deeded back to our church about 12 years ago, thanks to the legal work of Steve DeMott. Today AA meetings are held at Forest Hill Chapel seven days a week serving over 300 individuals a week.

In 1923, First Presbyterian Church took over sponsorship of Arkansas Troop 1 of the Boy Scouts of America from the Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club. "Troop One" is the oldest continually-serving troop in the State of Arkansas, and today teaches over two dozen boys to give their duty to God and our country.

In 1953, First Presbyterian Church, "realizing the rapid growth and development of South Hot Springs," contributed a large number of charter members and funds to the construction of Highland Presbyterian Church where several of our current members grew up and were confirmed. Highland concluded its mission and was dissolved in January 2011.

### DEVOTED AND FAITHFUL PASTORS

For the third narrative, please turn to page 7 in *Centennial Memories*. There you will see the picture of Dr. Robert S. Woodson, one of the shortest-tenured pastors of our church. Bill Creason was a young boy when Dr. Woodson was our pastor, and recalls that Dr. Woodson always preached in his uniform—being that the United States was about to enter World War II. Read in this document how the church voted to grant Dr. Woodson a leave of absence so he could fulfill his military service. Our church has always been very patriotic.

When I first saw this picture in 2010, when I became your pastor, I immediately recognized Dr. Woodson. When I was a boy of 8-10 years old, Dr. Woodson was my Associate Pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC. He and his wife lived in a house next to the church and retired there. Whenever I would wander into his back yard to say "hello," Dr. Woodson would give me apples from his tree to take home with me. When I unpacked my books, I reached for the Book of Church Order of the PCUS that belonged to my father, who died in 1976, and found a note written by Dr. Woodson to my father, welcoming him as a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church, with his signature! I was astounded!

My point? You may think that the ministerial call process is all computer dating and political match-making, and sometimes it is. But with prayer and obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the call process can also be a holy process, matching church and pastor. To some, the process is cumbersome and full of red tape, but to those of prayer, this process becomes holy in the sight of God. I'm convinced that God was smiling on me, even as a little boy, preparing me for my ministry in Hot Springs, and my other calls as well.

I invite you, during the break, to look at the pictures of each pastor this church has called since 1882. Read their brief stories in *Centennial Memories*. You can tell from the author's writing whom they favored, and whom they didn't. Still, First Presbyterian Church has known a host of fine, talented, educated, faithful, and prayerful pastors.

For years following the tenure of Dr. French W. Thompson, who guided the construction of this building, the church would host annual dinners celebrating his contributions to the church. You might think that such celebrations would hurt the feelings of the next pastor. Yet, in 1913, Dr. Chauncey E. Hickok was installed and became one of the longest-tenured pastors in our history, until 1926. BSA Troop 1 came to our church under his leadership. Also during his tenure, the Sunday School wing was constructed. Dr. Hickok was so admired across town that he almost could have been called "Pastor to the entire city of Hot Springs." You can find his grave, along with his wife, at the Greenwood Cemetery in Hot Springs.

Dr. Stuart Oglesby was called as pastor in 1927-1930 until he accepted a pastorate at Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Marion Boggs served our church from 1930 – 1939, and was elected as the Moderator of the Synod of Arkansas in 1937. Dr. Boggs departed our church to become pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock and was a strong voice for racial equality.

Dr. Walker Healey served our church from 1943 – 1947, during WWII, and during which time we commissioned the Whittington Chapel. Dr. James Millard began his tenure in 1947. Dr. Millard left our church in 1952 to teach at Austin Presbyterian Seminary, and in 1959 he became the Stated Clerk of the PCUS.

Dr. James Overholser was our pastor from 1952 until 1958. He was a uniting force in the commissioning of the Forest Hill Chapel and Highland Park Presbyterian Church, mentioned earlier. Dr. Overholser's wife, I can't find her name, published curriculum for the Board of Christian Education.

The most difficult days of our church's history, without a doubt, took place during the tenure of Rev. Adrian Kolean from 1958 – 1965. *Centennial Memories* mentions only "assorted disagreements." People have been quick to tell me about "assorted" deficiencies in Rev. Kolean's leadership skills, but I also know that this was the time when presbytery began to enforce our polity that ruling elders could no longer serve perpetually on the session, but must serve in graduating classes. In

whatever arguments resulted from this decision, the presbytery was forced to claim original jurisdiction, relieving (or firing) the ruling elders from session duty, and authorizing a new board of decision makers.

Since Presbyterians don't take well to being told what to do, the entire session of First Presbyterian Church, resigned from First Church and transferred their membership to the Orange Street Presbyterian Church—a declining UPCUSA (or “Northern”) congregation, which met in a beautiful Sanctuary on Orange Street, which was recently purchased by the Muses Creative Artistry Project. Even then, the adjacent parking lot was owned by the neighboring First United Methodist Church. The addition of some 100 new members proved to be a hardship for the small Orange Street congregation, so members purchased property at the “out-of-town” location at Central Avenue and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Expressway to create the present-day Westminster Presbyterian Church. I am told that member W.C. Brown was by-far the largest contributor to the new church, while his sister, Josephine, remained at First Church. My research also indicates that, perhaps, Orange Street Presbyterian had become a PCUS (Southern) congregation prior to the split at First Church.

To place all this history into perspective, it was while all this was taking place in the early-to-mid 1960s, that I was the little eight-year old boy playing in Dr. Woodson's back yard in North Carolina. Such a story should assure us that God is working his purpose out in all our lives if we will but stay close to God in prayer and seek God's will above our own.

### SEEKING GOD'S FUTURE

I could tell you many more facts and stories about the history of First Presbyterian Church, but time simply will not allow me to. There are many more pastors who have served with distinction, whom I have not mentioned tonight—and for that I apologize. Still I want to tell you one more story, rather mundane in character, but holy in essence, which I believe articulates the faith and character of First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs.

The story took place about seven years ago when Agnes Mathes and Bill Creason were trying to solve the mystery of the origin of the stained-glass windows. When visitors first step into our Sanctuary, they are stunned by the beauty and majesty of our stained-glass windows, especially on a sunny day when the colors illumine our senses. Now that Agnes had completed the construction of

our Columbarium, the windows became her next project—finding out where these windows were made, who selected the scenes, how much they cost, and when they were installed. Even after she and Bill Creason had scoured the session minutes, back to 1882, they could find only one small mention of the windows being installed—but with no particulars.

They knew that the Sanctuary was built around 1908 and that the stained glass was created prior to the early 1920s. We know this because the artistry of the lead and glass work changed substantially in the early 1920s. Still they could find no records about when and how they were constructed.

So, around 2012, Agnes Mathes and Nancy June Bryant tagged Kathy McConkie to drive them to a number of churches across Arkansas, looking to find other windows similar to ours, and perhaps finding the company that created them. After several Sunday-morning adventures across Arkansas, they attended worship at the Presbyterian Church in Stamps, where Nancy June had attended as a child. And behold, there were stained glass windows nearly identical to ours! Agnes asked the members about them, and were told that they were created by the Jacoby Art Glass Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Sensing victory, Agnes contacted the company. Though there were many records to research, there were no records of Jacoby doing work at First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs. And to this day, we are still seeking the origin of the windows; and we'll keep looking!

This story exemplifies the dedication, determination, devotion, and optimism of the members of First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, qualities that have existed ever since Dr. Barry showed up AMA at a session meeting to care for a friend and keep our church focused on the ministry of Jesus Christ.

This church has a way of living and serving together, correcting one another in truth and in love, welcoming the stranger, and comforting the sick and lonely. I think of a Sunday School class we host that welcomes residents from the neighborhood group home. Some members have returned to Sunday School because of the genuine welcome of Christ they encounter in the interaction of our members.

I think of our Deacons who touch every person in our church with love and welcome—along with an endless supply of flowers and food they distribute when our members need help. Few people walk out the back door of our church because of the genuine care they receive from our compassionate deacons.

I think of our Bargain Box Thrift Store, organized in 1968, which has raised and distributed over \$20,000 each year since its inception to nursing scholarships and mission outreach projects in Garland County.

I think of our music program which provides the best classical music in town — on Sundays and during Advent and Lent as we unite with the Muses Creative Artistry Project, welcoming students from the ASMSA High School across Whittington Avenue. I think of our weekly traditional worship service where people tell me they connect so lovingly with God's Spirit through Word and Sacrament.

I think of our youth program that reaches out to support parents and grandparents as they raise our children who come from broken and challenging homes. Our youth program reaches out to the neighborhood around us to make families and their children feel welcome.

I think of the St. Luc's School in Haiti, which we adopted last year, with the guidance and leadership of the Haiti Education Foundation. This project reminds us that Christ calls us to reach across seven seas as well as across the street to build God's home on our planet.

I think of our annual Whittington Fest Block Party, which we host each fall with our Catholic and Baptist neighbors who want to do more together to minister to our growing neighborhood. Our Building and Grounds Committee, in addition to fixing roofs and air conditioners, is also dreaming about a joint community center that we might build with our neighboring churches to reach out to the neighborhood. I think of our Thanksgiving Day Dinner that feeds not only the hungry in our neighborhood, but also encourages our members to have their family Thanksgiving Day meal with us.

First Presbyterian Church has a unique history that is fun to research and inspirational to tell. We have a mission to grow beyond our walls and welcome the stranger and visitor who seeks God's strength in their lives. Not only do we have beautiful facilities that remind people of God's love; we also have members who express God's love with their extraordinary hospitality.

And, whenever we may think that life is too challenging and more than we can handle, I simply hold up the picture of the gruff-faced Dr. Barry standing there with his pocket watch in his hand and reminding us of our DNA: "Time's wasting. People need our help. Let's find a way to help them, in the name of Christ."

*The Unlikely Presbyterians Bring Book-learning  
Across the Mississippi River*

A Paper for the Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest  
First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, AR  
February 23, 2019

Rev. Dr. Michael Qualls  
Memphis Theological Seminary

I would like to begin with a disclaimer. The irony does not escape me that I, of all people, should address a matter of historical significance to Arkansas. When the Cumberland Presbyterian General Assembly met in Little Rock, Arkansas, in June of 1990 it fell to the young congregation I had just planted to host. That out-of-state visitors may get a glimpse of local history and color, the ladies of the church organized a tour of historic sites and places of interest around town. They arranged for several passenger vans, secured drivers, and women from the church volunteered to serve as a “tour guide” on each bus. I was standing outside the Excelsior Hotel to see them on their way when the lady in charge approached me in a panic. One of the volunteers had fallen ill.

“Can you fill in for her?” she blurted, shoving a document into my hand to emphasize that I really didn’t have a choice.

So, conscripted into service, I became the substitute tour guide for a van load of Cumberland Presbyterian tourists. The document turned out to be an itinerary of about forty must-see points of interest. We would approach them one-by-one down the list and I was to explain the significance and give a little background information. The problem is that there was no information provided. The crux of the plan was that, since the ladies were all from central Arkansas, they would naturally know these things. I was raised in south Arkansas. I could talk about cotton plants, bobwhite quail, Pine trees—even a little about the Civil War battle at Rough and Ready Hill that occurred months after the war was over. But I had not availed myself of much knowledge of the capitol city, a fact that was about to become strikingly obvious. I bluffed my way through the “McDonalds where Bill Clinton stopped on his morning jog during the campaign” and the “home that is used as the setting for the Designing Women sitcom. I had a little grasp of contemporary news and culture. I was also able to recognize the capitol building from the dome and flying flags, but the lack of depth concerning any of these things was beginning to show as we moved through the list. About half-way

through the tour the next item read, Central High School. That's all it said, Central High School. My mind raced through the many factoids rattling around. Surely there is a file up there somewhere marked CHS. (Integration, I thought, something to do with integration.)

"On your right you will see the historic Central High School," I announced as we rolled to a stop in front of a dilapidated, six-story, blonde-brick building. It suffered great disrepair. Many of the windows were broken out. The lawn was overgrown. There were signs of vandalism. It looked like many long-abandoned buildings in an area of urban blight.

"Um, Central High School is known because it was here that racial integration of the public schools first occurred in Arkansas. The, uh, governor stood in the doorway and refused to let the black children enter. The National Guard had to be called out to force the issue."

From the back of the van a passenger, obviously an alert Alabaman, chirped, "That sounds like what George Wallace did down in Alabama."

"Yes, of course," I stumbled, "that's where they got the idea." That would be known today as "fake news" but it made as much sense as anything I could think of. I paused, wondering if the faint Cliff Notes in my mind bore any resemblance to actuality. (Could have been Wallace and Alabama. Could have been Washington and Appomattox for all I know), I spoke, hopefully only in my head. Did I mention I am not good with history?

Again from near the back a voice spoke (this time a lady from New Mexico). "It is a shame to let something of such historic significance go down like that. They should take care to preserve this history." It certainly DID seem like that should be true. I did not want my state to appear in a bad light.

"You're exactly right," I offered. "I believe they are considering now whether to raze the building and erect a monument on this site or to restore it to its original state." (I just made that up, but it sounded like something someone ought to be doing.) About that time the van began to roll again and, as we turned the corner, I looked ahead to see a massive red brick structure occupying nearly a full city block. The lawn was manicured, its ornate architecture obviously well preserved. Out front there was an attractive sign which read clearly: Central High School. It was still being used for public education. It still is by the way. So I breathed deeply and I began to prepare them for the next site.

“What we have just seen is Central High School West. What you will see next on your right is Central High School East.” There was a moment of silence while the passengers began to process the information. You could feel the awareness growing. I am sure it was confirming what they had suspected for some time.

“You don’t really don’t know what you’re talking about, do you?” someone asked.

“Exactly!” was all I could think of to say. And we laughed through the remainder of the tour. It is likely that other van loads of tourists got more accurate information. But none of them had more fun.

My hope is that you will enjoy yourself as we look at how the unlikely Presbyterians brought book learning across the Mississippi into Arkansas. Now, I’m sure I don’t have to tell you, but if I were you I’d check the sources I have listed to make sure this narrative bears some resemblance to a verifiable history.

## WESTWARD HO!

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century dawns, across the Mississippi river westward stretched a formidable and untamed land. There are few Anglo-European settlers in the territory of Arkansas. Although, to be truthful, this land was not yet Arkansas Territory. In fact it was not yet owned by the U.S. But real estate transactions were about to go down. In 1802 it was conveyed to the French from Spain. They immediately began to negotiate its sale to the United States.

Before we go further to discuss the westward migration and subsequent contribution of our Presbyterian forebears let us acknowledge and confess the inherent bias that is presumed when we do so. Presbyterian history moves outward from the reformation through Calvin and Zwingli and John Knox—through England, Scotland, and Ireland specifically. Our focus, while here on the American continent, will be an Anglo European story. We do well to note the fact that the settlers who will take center stage in this story were not the first Arkansans. There is a fascinating rich history, and much to be learned, in the stories of the several Native American tribes who occupied this land. Their roots stretch back millennia to the paleo period when their hunting expeditions would have likely involved stalking the Woolly Mammoth. While there are some bright spots which we can lift up, and lift I will, we must confess that the advance of the white man was

almost always to the detriment of the native inhabitants. Let us not be blind to the reality. While we laud our progress we must do so with humility and recognition of the inherent inhumanity that accompanied those advancements. It is precious little but I'd like to begin by acknowledging the contributions of the American Indians to our heritage, including the name of the state derived from the rough phonetic adaptation by early French settlers of the Illinois-language name for the Quapaw tribe, Akansa.

In 1803 Thomas Jefferson became the first American president gain a reputation as a real estate whiz. He did so after being elected. The intent was to gain New Orleans, thus an open waterway trading port. But if you watch "Storage Wars" you know that if you want the good stuff you have to buy the whole storage unit. As it turned out, there was more good stuff tucked away than either the sellers or the buyers had imagined. The great Louisiana Territory contained the western watershed of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. The uncharted territory of the Louisiana Purchase encompassed 828,000 square miles from the gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border making it the greatest land bargain, at less than \$.03 per acre, in U.S. history. Doubling the territorial sovereignty of the U.S., it was also discovered to hold a vast treasure of natural resources and productive land. What is now Arkansas was divided from "Orleans" in the south and became party of a vast Missouri Territory. In 1810 a special census revealed a little over 1000 settlers in Arkansas, most of them of French descent, living along the Mississippi River and the lower portions of the Arkansas and White rivers. As one historian notes the land was domiciled by "French, Indians, and a few Americans."(McDonnold, 189) Then, in 1812, President James Madison set aside six million acres (roughly two million of which were in Arkansas) to incentivize soldiers to enlist in the War of 1812. Like a lot of the good intentions with the VA it didn't work exactly as planned. Few who received these grants actually ever occupied the land they were awarded. Many ultimately lost it to tax debt and the land was reclaimed and sold at extreme discount, as might be expected, to politically well-connected citizens for speculation. Nonetheless, this land grant program sparked a westward migration in the decades that followed. By 1840 the white population is estimated at around 98,000. Well over half of them are squatters.(Bolton, 398) In the Old Testament account of the ancient Hebrews occupying the land of Canaan laws had to be enacted to set up boundary stones denoting ownership of land. Soon after laws had to be enacted to make it illegal to move your neighbor's boundary stones. With people moving into the neighborhood with the intent of owning property we'd better establish some boundaries. So in 1815 a team of surveyors was dispatched to begin to survey the Louisiana Purchase. At a point in a backwater swamp in the lowlands near the

delta town of Dumas Arkansas a surveyor set a pin which would mark the principle meridian and the southernmost boundary, the baseline, for all the Louisiana territory. Every square inch of land from there to Canada is measured off that mark. My guess is that few of the residents of Little Rock who drive every day on Baseline Road have any idea from whence comes that strange name.

After the American Revolution, a flood of settlers scurried into the fertile lands between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River, pulled by the opportunity to buy land for a pittance. By 1810 Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky had been transformed from wilderness into a region of farms and towns. It was not until the conclusion of the War of 1812 that the westward movement became a significant outpouring of people across the mighty river and throughout the remaining continent.

Many of the rugged pioneers moved from the western and southern edges of the previous frontier. Things were getting too crowded in Kentucky and Tennessee. The frontier life was extremely challenging for migrating Europeans. Rather than watching their cholesterol and counting their calories, settlers on the 19th-century frontier were faced with a much more primary concern: making certain that they had anything to eat at all. Keeping hungry mouths fed on the frontier was a nonstop cycle of hunting and gathering, salting and smoking, canning and drying, scrimping and saving. Finding and preparing food on the frontier was a ceaseless, daily task that took the majority of a settler's time. Sickness, malnutrition, and starvation were very real possibilities for homesteaders. (Czjaka, 1)

Frontier life may have taken a toll on the general religious disposition of these hearty settlers. Some historians note that the isolation of the wilderness, while something they craved, also led to a hunger for addressing the spiritual need of the formerly devoted. Cut off from the norms of religious devotion and community a void was experienced. Raw and new frontier communities might be forgiven a laxness that came from leaving the patterns of established society behind when the pressures of surviving on the wilderness came front and center. There were homes to be built and defended; water sources to be protected, fields to clear, crops to raise, meat to be hunted, and infrastructure (fences, barns, roads, and bridges) to be built.(Townsend, 4) This was the circumstance, according to this perspective, that set the stage for large-scale revival of Christian devotion. A deep yearning for connection to God and others made the conditions ripe for the outbreak of religious fervor in the Second Great Awakening.

Other historians tell the opposite side of this same story. According to some reviewers, the abject spiritual poverty on the frontier and a kind of "lawlessness of the soul" engendered by the freedom of the wilderness created a deep need for repentance and renewal. "All of the historians agreed," writes Cumberland Presbyterian historian B. W. McDonnold, "to this base prevalence of infidelity. Some say nine tenths of the people were infidels. The general lack of regular preaching and the bad character of those who did preach, helped to sweep away faith from the country." (7) One missionary reported a common proverb that "persons who cross the Mississippi travel beyond the Sabbath." Even if they had been 'churched' before, with no new churches yet to join, and few if any ministers to encourage them, frontiersmen only slowly began to seek out religion. (Townsend, 4-5)

Having left behind all the conventions of civilization, including regular religious worship, the frontier Presbyterians needed to be given opportunity to address their deeply held spiritual convictions OR called out and awakened to their unrighteousness so that they could repent. Whether one favors one narrative or the other it is plain to see how revivalism with its emphasis on experiential religion and inward piety would fit the bill.

As always, the latest technology filled the gap. Enter the circuit riding preacher and the Camp Meeting.

Responding to the popular piety of the Second Great Awakening, Presbyteries in Kentucky and Tennessee began to delegate ministers to enter Missouri Territory to begin to 'ride the circuit'. Riding horseback, or occasionally in a buckboard, these ministers covered hundreds of square miles, often fording flood-swollen rivers or enduring torrential downpours . It was an arduous task taken up by (a determined few). So spread out were the settlers and settlements, and lacking monetary resources, that the only practical form of proclamation and shepherding depended on these circuit riders-- itinerant preachers and lay exhorters who could read the Bible and hold hymn sessions, (and gather settlers in a region to one place for a series of intense worship services known as camp meetings.) Ridiculed by their eastern colleagues in long established churches, "they braved bitter storms, disease, poverty, and early death to bring the Gospel to the most isolated settlers."(Townsend, 5)

## BIRTH OF A FRONTIER DENOMINATION

Meanwhile east of the river a new manifestation of Presbyterianism was taking shape. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church is a Presbyterian body born out of the Great Revivals of the 1800's known as the Second Great Awakening. Scottish Presbyterians brought with them to America the Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God, composed primarily by English Puritans. This style of worship greatly reduced the set forms inherited from Calvin's liturgy in Geneva and further elevated the central role of preaching. The spiritual revivals on the American frontier followed much of the traditional form of worship, but they emphasized conversion of the heart. The preacher became the central actor in the drama of a worship service oriented toward a response of individual transformation that was both intellectually and emotionally consuming. The influence of Pietism, experiential religion that combined objective truth or Biblical doctrine with an added dimension of a more subjective inward experience, was prevalent among the frontier revivalists.

Many Presbyterian ministers played a role in these revivals. The revival caused disagreement within the Presbyterian Church (USA) both over the mechanics of the revival and over allowances the pro-revival faction was willing to make in order to secure ministers for its rapidly expanding following. This rift of Revival/Anti-revival Presbyterians developed roughly along the lines of the Old Side/New Side controversy that preceded it. The Westminster Confession contains an exceptions clause. This allowed for exceptions to both educational requirements and the required subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith for ordination in extraordinary circumstances. Some argued that the revival, itself, triggered the exceptions clause for it was indeed an extraordinary circumstance.

In the midst of the revival movement, many people were embracing Christ and communities of worship were springing up rapidly. Church leaders felt an urgency to provide qualified ministers who were prepared and able to lead in that context. They also understood the unique circumstances of those who were being called; people, in some cases, with extraordinary gifts for ministry but with limited access to traditional formal education. This contextual awareness led some American Presbyterians to develop innovative practices for the training of clergy such as the so-called log-cabin colleges and saddle bag seminaries. The intent was to maximize the ministry potential for those called to meet the specific needs of their context. It is in this context that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church emerges from a true missiological concern.

On February 4, 1810, Rev. Samuel McAdow, Rev. Finis Ewing, and Rev. Samuel King met near present day Dickson, Tennessee, and reorganized Cumberland Presbytery, previously dissolved by Kentucky Synod of the Presbyterian Church essentially for invoking the "extraordinary circumstances" clause to license and ordain ministers. Though unintended by these founders, this action would birth a separate denomination. These ministers were Presbyterian advocates of frontier revivalism. The newly established Cumberland Presbytery continued the practice of worship that moved persons to experience salvation as an emotional response to the grace and mercy of God through strong preaching and prayers.

The notion that the Cumberlands, named for the region of Kentucky and Tennessee where the revivals broke out, would be "unlikely" to promote "book-learning" is obviously this writer's attempt at tongue-in-cheek sarcasm. It highlights a popular but mistaken perception that, because they were among the frontier revivalists, the Cumberlands were Presbyterians uninterested in education. Precisely the opposite is born out in the recorded history. The misperception comes because of the success of the frontier revivals that in part necessitated and in part resulted from an innovative flexibility of ministerial preparation.

The emphasis on an adequately prepared and well-educated clergy has driven the effort toward innovative theological education. The denomination has kept alive the notion that providing quality education for ministry is a must for everyone who is called, even if that means creating unconventional ways to do so. As both the frontier culture and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church matured, and as the opportunities for education became more readily available, the requirements for ordination were gradually increased to ultimately include both a college and a seminary degree. "Even then," writes Dr. William Rustenhaven concerning an alternative educational preparation for ministry, "the tradition of flexibility was not forgotten." Exceptions were provided for those persons who exhibit suitable capacities for service who could not reasonably be expected to attain a seminary degree for a variety of reasons. Many manifestations of this missional adaptability existed among reformed churches on the American frontier. The robust endurance of an alternate route to ordination among Cumberland Presbyterians is, however, a rather grand distinction among Presbyterian/Reformed Churches. In my present capacity I am privileged to direct the contemporary manifestation of this in The Program of Alternate Studies.

## THE CUMBERLANDS AND "HIGHER EDUCATION"

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church has never abandoned an emphasis on educated clergy as we shall see. As if to put a point on that intention the very first presbytery, convened on the occasion of its organization, Feb. 4, 1810, set forth requirements that "all licentiates before they are set apart to the whole work of the ministry, or ordained, shall be required to undergo an examination on English Grammar, Geography, Astronomy, Natural and Moral Philosophy, and Church History." (Presbytery Minutes) In the second meeting in the spring of 1811 a resolution establishing a presbytery library was approved. Each minister, licentiate and candidate was asked to contribute \$5 to the cause. Among the first books purchased that same year were Campbell's Lectures, Ferguson's Astronomy, Addison's Evidences, Watt's Logic, Manners and Customs, Study of the Bible, Stewart's Philosophy, Natural Philosophy, and Guthrie's Grammar. In its third presbytery meeting the ordained ministers pledged to each procure \$10 to extend the opportunity of formal education for a candidate, Phillip McDaniel.(Presbytery Minutes) By November it is reported that the entire amount of \$57.10 to cover tuition and board was raised.

Early in its history the Cumberland Presbyterian Church envisioned a comprehensive program of education for the masses. Many of its early ministers on the frontier were also teachers. One General Assembly recommended a school system to embrace "schools in the bounds of every congregation," and "a presbyterial school in the bounds of every presbytery."(Presbytery Minutes) Under this sort of program numerous schools were launched. Often these were the earliest schools established in the communities in which they were located' They met an unmet need.(Campbell, Thomas H. Good News...) While not all succeeded, not all are even catalogued, a cursory look is impressive.

In 1820 one of the founders, Samuel King, along with other Cumberland Presbyterians established a mission school with the Chickasaw Indians near what is now Aberdeen, Mississippi. In the winter of 1821 Finis Ewing, another of the founders, established a school for ministerial students in his home at New Lebanon Missouri. This is thought to be the first effort toward a School of Theology west of the Mississippi. In 1824 a formally educated Cumberland Presbyterian minister, D.W. McLin, opened a school for ministerial candidates in Enfield, White County, IL. These were more-or-less informal efforts to provide a modicum of "contextually defined higher education". The first official college of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was Cumberland College, authorized in 1825 at Princeton, Kentucky. It would go on to become Cumberland University, move

locations, and house schools of law, engineering, and theology. Always known for its quality education Cumberland University graduates have made significant contributions in fields of education, law, ministry, and politics. It is safe to say that this was the flagship educational institution of the Cumberland Presbyterian church, but certainly not the only one. In his doctoral dissertation, Henry Bascom Evans discovered references to eighty-four schools and colleges the denomination had established by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.(Evans, 290-299) Even with the caveat that some may be counted twice due to changes in name or location, that is an impressive number for a young church. Which brings us back to Arkansas.

### ACROSS THE BIG RIVER

A young Cumberland Presbyterian named Jacob Pyeatt may have been the first Cumberland Presbyterian to cross the Mississippi, literally. He and his family would migrate, along with a few other families into Arkansas in 1811. Some time prior to that, in 1810 or 1811, he made what appears to be a reconnaissance run to scope out the Arkansas territory. The story is preserved in the archives of the Washington County Historical Society.

"Riding a good horse and carrying a fine gun, he left North Carolina, came through Kentucky to the site of Memphis in Tennessee. There was but one family living there. This settler had built a house, improved some land, and owned a large sized skiff. Pyeatt remained several days with this man. While preparing to leave, the man proposed to exchange his land, improvements, and boat for Mr. Pyeatt's horse and gun. Mr. Pyeatt is reported to have replied that he would not give his horse for the property, much less his gun."(Carnahan & Cruze, 47)

This incident reflects the bull-headed determination that is in the DNA of the Cumberlands...and also our utter lack of clear-minded decision-making. We could have owned Memphis! Thankfully this is not a treatise on the Cumberland Presbyterian contribution to wealth accumulation, good business sense, or real estate development. Apparently Pyeatt liked what he saw. He returned to the area on a flatboat in 1811 along with his brother, Jacob. They were accompanied by their wives and two Carnahan brothers, James and Andrew. All had professed faith under the ministry of the father of the revival movement, James McGready. McGready was a graduate of the log cabin seminary of a well-known Presbyterian, William Tennant. McGready sparked the revival of 1800 in his congregations of

Red River and Gasper River Meeting Houses in Logan County Kentucky. Pyeatt joined the Cumberland Presbyterian church at its first organization and was one of the members constituting the first Cumberland Presbyterian church ever organized in the then territory of Arkansas.

The entourage made their way up the Arkansas River to Arkansas Post. The following year they decided to go further upriver. Pushing past the current location of Little Rock to a little spot near Crystal Hill they set about to establish a homestead. Later that same year the father two of them, a circuit rider named John Carnahan, held a sacramental meeting and preached what is believed to be the first protestant sermon on Arkansas soil in the home of Jacob Pyeatt.(McDonnold, 189) Evidently Carnahan had joined his family in the settlement because at the next meeting of Cumberland Presbytery in October, 1812, John Carnahan was ordered to form a circuit on the Arkansaw (misspelled in the record), "in the bounds of those settlements in which he lives, and report to Presbytery his success when he returns."(Presbytery Minutes) He continued to labor in Arkansas for the next two decades joined sporadically by ministers from elsewhere in the church and ultimately by Arkansans who heard to call to the difficult life of itinerate frontier preaching. After a few years Carnahan was transferred to McGee Presbytery which included the territory of Arkansas. Although I suspect him to be a historian after my own heart, prone to exaggeration, an anecdote from McDonnold's history illustrates the perils facing these pioneer preachers.

McGee presbytery set apart two young ministerial candidates, Reuben Burrow and R.D. King, to send them as missionaries to Arkansas. King was very sick and had to be "held up, a good lady plying camphor in the meantime, while they ordained him..." They rode 500 miles through uninhabited wilderness, slept without shelter, and forded swollen rivers. All this they did, just to be able to constitute an intermediate meeting of Arkansas Presbytery to receive candidates and organize the work.(191) Other accounts tell of a minister traveling on foot with saddlebags flung across his shoulder for hundreds of miles through treacherous terrain. Their horse had died and there was a preaching appointment to attain. Braving almost unimaginable hardships, the stories of valiant servants riding the circuit are a humbling, if fascinating, read.

In 1827 Arkansas Presbytery met in Lawrence County, Arkansas Territory. At this meeting a Presbyterial Fast was ordered "for the purpose of praying the Lord of the Harvest to send more laborers into His vineyard and to leviat and overrule the difficulties in which some of our presbytery were involved," and to "bless the labors of all his ministers and to revive His work of grace in

general.”(Arkansas Presbytery Minutes) Apparently, they put feet to their prayers. The same year, 1827, again due to overcrowding (sic.), the Pyeatts, the Carnahans, and other Cumberland Presbyterian families moved from Crystal Hill to northwest Arkansas. They organized the Cane Hill Church in 1828. (Campbell. Arkansas Cumberland Presbyterians)

“If any society is to progress, it must educate its young.” This introductory statement by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program on its website is followed by this one. “The first bright spot in Arkansas’s educational history began with the founding of Cane Hill College...”(Department of Arkansas Heritage) Much has been written about Cane Hill College so I will be brief. Oct. 28, 1834 Cumberland Presbyterian officials met to consider organizing a school in Cane Hill, about 20 miles southwest of Fayetteville. In about six months classes began in a two-room log school house that also served for the congregation’s worship and as a community center. In keeping with the ethos we have herein outlined it is widely assumed that the principle impetus for the school was to prepare young men for the work of ministry. In early years recruitment seemed geared around this purpose as were the widespread pledges of financial support. Fifteen years after its inception, Cane Hill School was chartered by the Arkansas State Legislature, empowering the school to award high school diplomas and changing its name to Cane Hill Collegiate Institute. (Edmisten & Basham, 8)

Of interest, at about the same time just over a mile or so away a log school was built for girls and elementary children of both genders. Known as “the school at the lower end of the Hill,” Elm Grove School provided the essentials of education not extended to females at Cane Hill College. In December 1852, a charter was secured by the state of Arkansas and Cane Hill Female Seminary became what is thought to be the first state chartered school for girls. (Richardson, 354-358)

“On December 15, 1852 an act was signed by the Arkansas state legislature that approved four year college degrees at Cane Hill. The name was changed at this time to Cane Hill College.” (Historic Cane Hill. [historiccanehill.com](http://historiccanehill.com)) In 1859, the Rev. Fontaine Richard “F.R.” Earle was named president. In May of 1861 classes are suddenly suspended when President Earle and most of the student body head out to join the losing side of the War Between the States. Cane Hill is the site of a Civil War skirmish prior to the well-known Battle of Prairie Grove. In 1864, all but one building was burned down by occupying troops. The college was rebuilt and reopened in 1865. In 1875, the Cane Hill Seminary for Women and Cane Hill College were merged making Cane Hill the first co-educational college west of the

Mississippi. In 1885 the campus was burned by an arsonist, then rebuilt and reopened the next year.

The competition for student enrollment in Northwest Arkansas with what would become the state's University is one reason cited for the struggles and ultimate closure of Cane Hill College. The church records indicate that the Cumberland Presbyterian leaders were seeking a campus to relocate a state-centered school with more accessibility to the larger church. The choice of a more centralized sight was not an easy one. A special meeting of Arkansas Synod in April, 1891, was called for the purpose of selecting a new sight for a state Cumberland Presbyterian college. Delegates heard proposals from two locations, one in Hope and the other in Clarksville. It was a close and contentious vote. The new sight was determined by a roll-call vote. Each delegate was to answer the roll by stating their preference "Hope" or "Clarksville" and then each was given five minutes to explain their reasoning. (Minutes Arkansas Synod) Soon after, Cane Hill College shuttered in Washington County and a new institution, Arkansas Cumberland College, opened in Clarksville as its direct successor. It began with only one stately building, Cumberland Hall, which had been the site for the first deaf school in Arkansas. F. R. Earle became its President. In 1906, another close vote, this time at the General Assembly, transferred the college to the Presbyterian Church USA in a reunion. In 1920 the name was changed to College of the Ozarks and today is an impressive private university we can all be proud of, the University of the Ozarks.

The subject of this paper encompassed contributions the Cumberland Presbyterian Church made to higher education in Arkansas. The title insinuates that it details how the "unlikely" Presbyterians brought "book-learnin'" across the Mississippi. This vernacular of the commoner better captures the essence of the evangelical ethos which propelled these pioneers, preachers, and pedagogues to the unfolding westward front. It is important to picture this contextually. Just as we learn to exegete a biblical text by seeking to understand the world behind the text, so must we view the frontier education, and frontier religion for that matter, on its own terms first. The "higher education" of these rudimentary schools is not to be compared with all forms of higher education. The frontier-style emphasis for clergy and others is to be judged, not according to some ideal paradigm anywhere, but as a realistic response to the needs and realities of the context. The missiological question is: Were they prepared to live out their spiritual and their human potential in this context?

When I think of the challenges of this context a very contemporary experience comes to mind. Haiti has been in the news again of late. It is a formidable and untamed land. In the rural mountains around a small town called Fond des Blancs hundreds of worshippers, scores of children and young families, gather under metal roofs in buildings made of cinder blocks or metal sheets or open air. They sing and pray and listen for the word of God.

The leaders of these congregations are the six members of the Haiti Council of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Their engrafting into the family-tree of Macadow, Ewing and King is an intriguing tale. It began in a very missional way. A handful of mission-minded folk led by a Cumberland Presbyterian pastor first went to Haiti in 2010 to help build houses. The only thought was to be the hands and feet of Christ in a part of the world with much need. Many other self-giving missionaries followed. With each a new and positive facet of the body of Christ was revealed. Meanwhile, a local missionary-minded pastor, Jean Thomas, identified several (six) gifted and committed young Haitians for what he called the "Caleb project." He mentored them for a few years in the tools of the trade—what we might call homiletics, theology, biblical exegesis, leadership, and pastoral ministry. From the beginning the idea was for each of them to ultimately choose a village to make their permanent home. They would develop the community as they preached the gospel and developed a local congregation of believers. But here's the thing. Along the way they prayerfully discerned that they didn't just want to go, they wanted to be sent...as ministers of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Program of Alternate Studies was called in. We often are when the answer is, "there is just no way." If the tuition still only cost \$57.10, and it doesn't, all the ministers of the Haiti Council couldn't raise enough to pay for one. The World Bank estimated in 2018 over 6 million of Haiti's population of 10.4 million (or 59 percent) live below the national poverty line of \$2.41 per day. But suppose they could afford the costs? Could they manage the rigors of the pedagogy of Princeton or Yale or MTS given the language and cultural barriers? They do better with English than I do with Creole, but still could they? Even if we could somehow overcome these obstacles not any one of them will be granted a visa, even to visit outside their country. We have been trying for three years to get the government to allow one of them to attend a General Assembly meeting. Young men who leave for a visit often do not come back to Haiti. So what can we do? We innovate. I, personally, traveled to Haiti to teach twice and dispatched others to supplement the training they could access in-country. I sat with these students around a crude wooden kitchen table and scattered on the floor in a small living area. By the way, we partner with our missions agency and donors to pay all the expenses, including gasoline money to get from point A to point B. When added

all up the total tuition received from this endeavor is \$0. That's a decimal point with as many zeros as you want to add behind it. And I don't care. Some 1800 miles off the southern U.S. coast the winds of the Spirit have scattered seeds of the gospel and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and they have taken root and sprouted in the most unlikely of places. The rhythmic singing of gospel songs, in Creole, ring through the hills each Sunday as congregations gather to joyfully praise God. And in each of these six communities there is a school which meets each weekday in the church house since no free public education exists in Haiti. With great challenges these pioneers, preachers, and pedagogues are doing a tremendous work for Christ in a wilderness akin to what Jacob Pyeatt would have found when he first crossed the Mississippi. When someone tells this story 200 years from now I pray it will have been half as fruitful as the story I have just told about the unlikely Presbyterians bringing book-learnin across the Mississippi. For we, who have so much and know so much, also have so much to learn.

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**The Samuel Williamson Story**  
by The Reverend Donald K. Campbell, II

**INTRODUCTION - How I became involved**

My ties to the Williamsons are strong. My maternal grandmother was a Williamson. I married a second cousin Ann Williamson, whose grandfather was my grandmother's brother. And their father, Arthur Starr, was a brother of Samuel Williamson. So my children are not only siblings but each other's third cousins, on the Williamson side.

To help keep you from getting lost as I tell my story I am going to use a system developed by one of my McCain relatives because the first names appear over and over again down through the generations. The name of the first person in a family line to come to America is preceded by one digit, .1; the children of the next generation are .11 through .18 if there were eight children; the third generation children would be .111 or .181; and so on through the years. Thus the first Williamson was **.1 - James**; his second son was **.12 - Samuel** whose seventh child was **.127 - Samuel**. I have used **bold Roman** type for the legal Caucasian line. Because there is a probable other line through an African American slave, those names are in *bold italic*, for instance **.12711 - John** and some generations later **.1271126 - Gladys Williamson Golston**.

**HOW THIS STORY STARTED**

My younger son, **.128(10)243 - Malcolm**, attended, and now is Professor of Molecular Biology at Davidson College, Davidson, NC. I had heard one of our Williamson relatives once was its president, but no one I talked to seemed to know when this had happened or who the Williamson was.

In the spring of 1988, while visiting Malcolm and his family, one afternoon I had some free time. I made an appointment with the College archivist. When I asked her about this President Williamson rumor, she verified it, saying **.127 - Samuel Williamson** was the second president of the college, serving from 1841 until 1854. When I asked what information they had on him, Jan reported it was very little, but invited me to look at, and copy, anything in the slim file. She also said there was a portrait on him in the library, and she gave me a copy of it.

There were only two sheets of paper in the folder. One was a letter from **.1273322 - Jim Winn** of Houston, TX quoting a passage from Washington, Arkansas: History on the Southwest Trail, by Mary Medaeris which reported that after **.127 - Samuel Williamson** left Davidson he was called to be the first pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Washington, AR, and brought with him a slave named **.12711 - John** who in 1882 founded in Washington a school for black children, Haygood Academy. The second sheet was a reprint of an article written by Sue Eakin in Alexandria Daily...Town Talk, Alexandria-Pineville, LA. She had traveled to Washington to inquire and write about a school of which she had

heard but concerning which she had very little information. Driving into town, she saw an older black man, rolled down her car window and asked if he knew anyone who could tell her something about a school called Haygood Academy. His reply was, "I can. My grandfather founded it." She went to his home and her article was a report on their conversation.

Her informant said, among other things, that indeed his grandfather, *.12711 John*, had been brought as a slave from North Carolina to Arkansas by the Presbyterian minister and missionary, *.127 - Samuel Williamson*, as had John's mother and added, "It is said that the missionary was the father of John's mother." When I read that my reaction was, "We may have some black cousins in Washington, AR we never heard about." On my way back to Arkansas I stopped in Montreat, NC for lunch with *.128814 - the Reverend Lamar Williamson, Jr.*--my second cousin—who was a graduate of Davidson College. Lamar had either never heard the rumor of a relative presiding over the institution, or had not bothered to check it out. When I told them of my discovery Lamar's immediate response was, "The next time I come to Arkansas let's go down to Washington to pursue this lead and see if we can find some of the Williamsons."

In February, 2000 Lamar's sister, died. At the reception following the funeral Lamar said, "We are here. Now is the time I want to go to Washington."

I phoned ahead to the head of the Washington State Park, to see if he knew of any black Williamsons. He did not, but suggested we should go to the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives in Washington for they have many records about this part of the state. After the staff member showed us various records I asked if she knew of any black Williamsons in town. She said, "Of course. I taught with one and under one. My former colleague, *.1271126 - Gladys Williamson Golston*, lives here in town." I asked if she knew her well enough to inquire if we might go to Ms. Golston's home to meet her. Her response was "Come on over," and she told us how to find the house.

When we arrived Ms. Golston's brother, *.1271125 - Elmore Williamson*, and her nephew, *.12711214 - Andy Williamson*, were also there. After the introductions, and my explanation of what we were doing and how we stumbled on a lead we wanted to pursue, I showed them my copies of the two documents from the Davidson archives, and a copy of the portrait of *.127 - Samuel Williamson*. In a little bit Mrs. Golston excused herself and came back from her bedroom with a large framed photograph of her grandfather *.12711 - John Williamson*. There was a striking similarity in the looks of the two men! The Washington Williamsons wanted to know about the white side of the Williamson family. When I asked Gladys if the quotation in the Alexandria, LA newspaper article jibed with the oral history of their family she said, "Yes. But you didn't talk about it." She said she would very much like to pursue the matter, "For I don't know the name of my great-grandmother (the mother of John)."

After visiting in the Golston home, and seeing some of their pictures and memorabilia, including the cornerstone of a building from Haygood Academy, we visited

the white cemetery. There we found the large tombstone of the **.127 – the Reverend Samuel Williamson**, who died in 1882, and his wife, Jane Adams Williamson, whose name is engraved on one side of the monument. She died in 1880. We also went out to the location of Mt. Moreh (sic) Church, CME, now closed, and a cemetery where many Williamsons were buried--but no stone for **.12711 – John** or his wife, Sarah. We left Washington deeply moved by the gracious welcome of the Washington Williamsons who had no warning of our coming, and were excited about following clues to see where they would lead us.

## ARRIVAL IN THE CAROLINAS

**.1 - James Williamson**, was born in 1713 in Ulster, Ireland. His family remained there only a short while. One motivating factor in the mass migration of “Irish Presbyterians” was passage of the Test Acts of 1704 and 1705 during the reign of Queen Anne. No one who subscribed to the Presbyterian Church could any longer hold any military or civil position. Between 1731-1768 one third of the Protestant population left Ireland. We do not know the year in which **.1 - James** arrived. Many of these so-called Scotch-Irish went to Pennsylvania, staying only briefly before joining the great Scotch-Irish migration southward, 1760-1780, settling in the Piedmont section of the Carolinas.

140 families came to the Bethesda Settlement, eight miles from the Catawba River, in York District, South Carolina. Among them was **.1 - James** grandfather of **.127 - the Reverend Samuel Williamson**. There were no villages in this region. First residents settled in loose, communal or clannish, family-related groups called “clachans” developed around the Presbyterian kirks, or meetinghouses. Each congregation generally encompassed a 5-10 miles radius, with 20-50 families. Bethesda Church was organized in 1769. **.1 - James** served awhile as an elder in Purity church, Chester (organized 1770), but he returned to Bethesda in his latter years.

These Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were looked down on by the Anglican Church and the colonial authorities. They were a buffer between the Cherokee, Shawnee and Creek Native Americans on the west, and the Charleston officials who ignored them. Local militia units or “Beat Companies” became a sort of police force for law and order, and to keep the Indians and slaves under control.

## FIRST GENERATION

**.1 - James Williamson**, York District, SC. is described as a planter and patriot in the American Revolution. On 11/22/1766 he bought, from Rebecca Kuykendall, 300 acres on the South Fork of Fishing Creek. For many years the Williamsons sold and bought various parcels of land. The Williamson property, the site of the Battle of Williamson Plantation, fought in 1780, is now part of Brattonville State Park, York County, SC and is available for people to tour. It lies within the Bethesda community of York County, SC. There is a house

on this property where .1 - **James Williamson** was apparently still living in 1787.

.1 -**James** and his unknown wife had ten children, five daughters and five sons, the second of whom was .12 – **Samuel**. There is no record of the names of the daughters but they were described as “exemplary members of the Presbyterian Church.” Two sons became ministers, two were elders and one a deacon.” The five sons all fought in the American Revolution.

## EXCURSUS ON THE BATTLE OF WILLIAMSON PLANTATION

The Battle of Williamson plantation  
(also called Battle of Huck’s Defeat)

(Based partly on an article by Sam Thomas, York County Historical Society, September, 1995, partly on an article written for The Herald, Rock Hill, SC sometime after 1992.)

Despite their resentment of the British royal house, because they had pretty much been left alone due to their isolation, most Scotch-Irish were lukewarm toward the idea of independence in 1776. The backwoods people hated the aristocrats of Charleston as much as they did the British.

But the conflict between the Backcountry and the Crown boiled to the surface in 1780 in what a Hessian officer called the “Presbyterian Rebellion.” Charleston had fallen to the British on May 12. Most of the state was firmly under British control except for an area called the “New Acquisition”, now York County. There was strong anti-British feeling in the Presbyterian congregations. There were Tory raids in which Presbyterian churches were often burned. In 1780 every male citizen of South Carolina could be compelled to serve as a loyalist soldier.

In the summer of 1780, following the British occupation of Charleston, there were a series of raids into the area, first by Banastre Tarleton and later by Lord Cornwallis. Captain Christian Huck, who had been a prominent lawyer in Philadelphia, came south with Tarleton and Cornwallis and was sent, with a force of British Dragoons and Tory militia, into York and Chester counties. One primary target was to capture or kill three prominent individuals and their followers--William “Billy” Hill, John McClure and William Bratton. Huck destroyed Hill’s Iron Works.

One of Huck’s objects was to burn the church and, if need be, the congregation of the Rev. John Simpson, a Presbyterian minister, in the Fishing Creek district, who supplied services for the Bethesda Church from 1769 through the Revolutionary War, and who was an outspoken leader. On Sunday, June 11th Huck found Simpson had escaped, so he laid waste the county, burned Simpson’s house, and then Hill’s Iron Work, probably the best provider of tools, cannon and ammunition in the Carolinas. It was a desperate time for South Carolinians. To protest and attempt to stop them, more local leaders assembled than did even at Kings Mountain and Cowpens. There were probably about 90 to 500 in the

rebel force and 500 in the Tory.

On July 11, 1780 the British found William Bratton was not in his home. Mrs. Bratton refused to tell where her husband was. One of Huck's men threatened to kill her with a reaping hook, but John Adamson, a Tory captain, intervened. Mrs. Bratton sent a slave to warn her husband of the British presence. The British moved up the road to the home of **.1 - James Williamson** where the main part of the British force (plus or minus 400 British cavalry and a number of Tories, mounted) encamped for the night. Sentinels were posted but the guard kept negligent watch and the British lay in fancied security.

The rebel force learned of their presence, and were well informed about details of their lay-out from a rebel spy who was captured but escaped, also from a Tory who was blind in one eye and had a horse and a dog, each with a blind eye. He ran across the Patriot scouts, but they told him they were Tories separated from their unit, and he could not see well enough to realize who they were. The Patriots pushed on to the **.1 - James Williamson's** home, arriving before daylight on the 12th. They split their force (about 75 men), some going to the north of the house, the rest to the east. At daybreak, as the British were climbing out of their bedrolls, the attack began. The British were thrown into panic. (It is said the first British soldier killed, a sentinel who was asleep on duty, was shot by **.12 - Samuel Williamson**.) Captain Huck, trying to rally his troops, was shot and killed. The battle lasted a little over an hour. 25-50 British were killed, several times that number wounded, and 29 captured, several of whom were later hanged, for mercy was not freely given in the Backcountry.

The Battle of Huck's Defeat, or Williamson Plantation, was not a major affair in military history, but it was a turning point in public opinion in the Carolina Backcountry. They saw the enemy was not invincible. It was the first success by loosely-knit rebels over British forces in the South since Charleston, 1776. This battle set into motion a series of skirmishes that led to the Battle of Kings Mountain in October, 1780, and to the Battle of Cowpens in January, 1781. This forced Cornwallis to move north to Yorktown, VA and to the battle there in October, 1781, which forced his surrender. The Continentals had fought for four years in the north without success. Within six months in the south the tide was turned.

## SECOND GENERATION

**.12 - Samuel Williamson**, born in 1759, married Ann Starr in 1778, also had ten children, the seventh being **.127 - Samuel**. **.12 - Samuel** was elevated to the bench of elders in 1795. When he died in 1815 his estate appraisal was (in 2001 dollars) \$58,430 over half of which was in "twelve negroes". He had five daughters and five sons.

## THIRD GENERATION (of the ten)

**.123 - Reverend John Williamson** 1786-1842, pastor of Hopewell Church, Mecklenburg

County, NC.

**.127 - Samuel Williamson**, born in 1795- moved to Hempstead County, AR in 1857.

**.128 - Arthur Starr Williamson** (my ancestor), born in 1796 moved to Mississippi in 1845 or 1846.

#### A. Early life and education of **.127 – Samuel Williamson**

He was born eight years after the Constitution was ratified, two years after Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in South Carolina so cotton took on new life. It was a period of national stress and strain...and hard work. He was 11 years old when his mother died, 20 when his father died at the end of the War of 1812.

His early academic training was under the Reverend Robert B. Walker, pastor of the Bethesda Church, S.C., and then under the Reverend James Wallis, President of Providence Academy in NC and for some time before his death a member of the board of trustees of the University.

**.127 - Samuel** taught a country school in Sumter County, SC to raise enough money to continue his education. He enrolled in the College of South Carolina (now University of South Carolina) as a senior in 1817. He graduated in December, 1818 with a B.A. and the honor of Society Valedictorian was conferred on him. After leaving college in 1819 he became Principal of Bethel Academy in York County.

It is not known when he became interested in the ministry, but he apparently gave up his job as Principal in order to study theology under Dr. James Adams, living in the Adams home 1820-22. This was the usual way to prepare for ordination since Columbia Theological Seminary was not founded until 1823. On April 13, 1822 he was licensed to preach by Concord Presbytery, and in September he married Jane Caroline Adams, daughter of the Rev. James S. Adams. In early 1823 he supplied the Beersheba Church for his brother **.123 - John** while waiting for a call from a church. On May 24, 1823 he was ordained and installed as pastor of Providence Church in Mecklenburg County, NC.

#### **FOUR MAJOR INFLUENCES IN THE FORMATION OF .127 – Samuel Williamson**

##### A. His brother **.123 – John Williamson** (1786-1842)

Nine years older than **.127 – Samuel**, he was licensed to preach in 1811 when he was 25 and ordained at 27 to be pastor of Waxhaws Church in North Carolina. When he was only 26 he began buying slaves and acquired more after his first wife died. In 1818 he was called as pastor of the Hopewell Church and continued in that role until his death. In 1819 he owned 504 acres of land and in the 1820 census reported 15 slaves. By 1840 he owned 39. He had remarried and in 1830, as pastor of the Hopewell Church, built an "elegant" brick home where he and his wife pioneered in education, founding the first school for girls

in that part of the state. In 1835 he was on the Board of Trustees and Building Committee of what was to become Davidson College. He was still a Trustee when, four years later, .127 - **Samuel** was persuaded to teach at Davidson College. In 1841 he was chairman of the Board of Trustees which, after having trouble finding a replacement for the first President who resigned, elected .127 - **Samuel**, the only remaining faculty member, to become President. He died in 1842, leaving three executors of his estate, one of them being .127 - **Samuel** who, when John's widow died in 1845, became guardian of their minor children. They moved into the President's home in Davidson and remained there for at least seven years. When in 1854 .127 - **Samuel** was fired as President of Davidson, he and his family moved into the brick home build by .123 - John.

#### B. The Reverend James S. Adams (1779-1842)

His parents moved from Pennsylvania to South Carolina in 1756 where he grew up, the fifth of eleven children. When he was only 16 years old he was licensed to preach. His first wife died without children. By 1801 he had remarried and also been called to be pastor of Bethel Church where he remained until his death. In 1818 Bethel Academy employed .127 - **Samuel** to teach, and the following year, while being tutored in theology, the young man moved into the Adams home which in the 1820 census reported 12 white males, 7 white females and 13 slaves. In 1822 .127 - **Samuel** completed his theological training and married one of the daughters, **Jane**, who received as a wedding gift a 785 acre plantation in the Hopewell community. The next year Dr. Adams had .127 - **Samuel** supply the Beersheba Church until he received a call to be pastor of the Providence Church. When James Adams died in 1842 the obituary described him as a "Temperance Advocate". When Mrs. Adams died three year later she left her daughter **Jane** two slaves who were children.

#### C. The Presbyterian Church

It is impossible to understand .127 - **Samuel Williamson** apart from the Presbyterian Church. The first Williamson to come to America, .1 James, was an elder in the Bethesda Church, then Purity Church, then returned to Bethesda. The second generation, .12 - **Samuel**, was an elder in the Bethesda Church where at least two of his sons, .123 - John and .127 - **Samuel**, were educated in the academy and eventually became ordained Presbyterian ministers. One daughter, .12(10)5, Anna Matilda Williamson married Colonel John Edward Stitt, an elder in the Providence Church. One of .127 - **Samuel's** brothers-in-law, James Hall Adams, graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1833. Three of .123- John's sons became Presbyterian ministers and a daughter married one, producing three grandsons who became ministers. While President of Davidson College, .127 - **Samuel** was pastor of the College Presbyterian Church. After leaving the College he moved into .123 - John's old home and the Hopewell Church wanted him to remain there as pastor, but he turned that down to go to Washington, Arkansas.

The Presbyterian Church was a close-knit community through blood-ties, marriage and educational arrangements. This was especially true in the Piedmont part of the Carolinas, but also in northern Mississippi and then into southwest Arkansas. In the

genealogy I pulled together for A Williamson Saga there were 28 "reverends". If there were some way to register all the elders, deacons and women leaders in the years before women could be ordained, it would be overwhelming.

#### D. Slavery

I am also struck by the interplay between religious life and culture—what H. Richard Niebuhr described in Christ and Culture. The impact slavery/segregation had on the Presbyterian Church (and other denominations) and on .127 – **Samuel Williamson** has to be considered as much as the influence the Church had on this institution.

In light of the social concerns of today's church, I was jolted by the participation of all these ministers in the practice of slavery. Furthermore, knowing the financial circumstances of most clergy today, as I got involved in this story I wondered how these ministers could afford to own slaves. But a history professor at Davidson told me it was quite common, prior to the Civil War, for Presbyterian and Episcopal clergy to be rather wealthy planters and slave owners. The Williamsons did not operate on the scale of the vast holdings along the coast, nor even at the top of the scale in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas or southwest Arkansas, but in the mid-range. Someone has written that to be considered a "planter" it was necessary to own 25 to 100 slaves. The Williamsons seem to have just made it into that category.

In the 1790 census .1 – **James** had six white people in the household and two slaves. In 1815 the estate of .12 – **Samuel** included 12 slaves. In the 1830 census .123 - John reported 2 white males but no white females in his household yet 11 slaves. In the same census the Reverend James Adams (where .127 – **Samuel** lived as a student 1818-1822) reported 19 whites in his household and 12 slaves (3 of the females were under 15, 2 between 15-26). In the 1840 census, .123 – John reported 5 whites and 39 slaves, while .127 – **Samuel** had 9 whites and 11 slaves. For the first time the name of .1271 – **Susan** appears. On May 16, 1846 "Samuel, a servant of James Torrence, and his wife, .1271 – **Susan**, a servant of .127 – **Rev. S. Williamson**, moved their membership from the Hopewell Church to Davidson, and received permission to have their .12711 – *child* baptized after the evening sermon."

In the 1850 census .127 – **Samuel**, then President of Davidson College, reported 4 white males and 6 females with 19 slaves, including .1271 - **Susan**. His nephew, .1233 – John Doby Williamson, who was living in the President's home, owned 26 slaves, including 3 women described as "M" (Mulatto). The 1852 roster for the Davidson Church includes as members Samuel, a servant of Mr. Torrence, and .1271 – **Susan** and Isom, servants of .127 **Rev. S. Williamson**.

On April 2, 1857 the Washington, Arkansas church session received as members: .127 – **Samuel's** wife Jane and **three children**, plus the following servants: Sam and .1271 – **Susan**, Abner and Marie, Dinah and Harriet. The same six were on the roll in 1860.

The 1859 Hempstead County tax assessment for .127 – **Samuel** was \$15,190

(2001 equivalent - \$321,724) of which \$11,550 was in slaves. In the 1860 census he reported owning 28 slaves. In 1861 the value of his slaves had dropped to \$9,500. By this time Isom had gone off to be a servant for **.1273 - James Adams Williamson** in the Confederate army.

On May 30, 1862 **.127 - Samuel** wrote to **.1273 - James A.** that **.12711 - Susan** has been sick for several weeks with a "Scrofutas tumor on her neck". There are several references in 1862-1864 letters from **.1273 - Col. James A.** to Isom, who had been his servant until he was finally sent back to Washington because he was not well. In an 1863 letter **.127 - Samuel** reports to his son on "My white family", and then goes on "Our negroes have had a great deal of fever and some cases bad but none fatal, all are slowly recovering."

In 1865, with the disappearance of slaves and the drop in land value, the Hempstead tax assessment for **.127 - Samuel** was \$1,902 (compared to \$15,190 in 1859)

In The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass he reports that in Maryland, in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, slave owners who were religious treated slaves more harshly than those who were unchurched—and that the cruelest two slave owners he observed (though he did not work under them) were Methodist ministers. There were instances, in the Williamson and Adams families, of kindness toward, and concern, for certain individual slaves, but on the other hand families were broken up by sales and settling estates and there is no record of any manumissions.

Most of the people whose stories I am telling were serious about trying to be Christians, yet they did not see the evil in which they were involved, any more than I, when I was growing up, was aware of what segregation did to me and those who were made second-class. Nor was I aware of male chauvinism, or neglect of environmental issues. Instead of feeling self-righteous about people in the past I find myself wondering in what destructive movements I am currently so involved that I cannot see them. This brings home to me the reality of corporate sin, as distinct from individual wrongs.

#### DESCENDANTS OF SAMUEL WILLIAMSON

**.127 - Samuel Williamson** (1795-1882)

M. Jane Caroline Adams (1805-1880) in 1822. Seven children.

PROBABLE DESCENDENTS THROUGH **.1271 - Mulatto daughter (probably before 1822), possibly Susan**

**.1271 - Susan**

m. **Samuel** servant of Mr. James Torrence

**.12711 - John Williamson** (1846?-11/28/1920) Oral tradition is that he had four or five brothers, but their names are not known. It was illegal

in North Carolina to teach slaves to read, but not in Arkansas where he lived after he was ten. But the 1870 census reports this man, 24 years old, could neither read nor write. In 1871 he joined St. Luke CME Church. This is the man who in 1882 took the initiative for a school for black children, resulting in Haygood Academy. Oral tradition is that when his children were in school during the day, at night they taught their father to read and write.

m. 4/18/70- Sarah White (1853-5/22/1921) They had seven children including:

**.127111 - Reece Bradley Williamson** (5/2/1871-5/22/1953) Never married. Became principal of Haygood Academy.

**.127112 - The Rev. Elmore Miles Williamson** (9/3/1873) CME minister.

m. Rebecca R. Allen (2/17/1877) They had five children including:

**.1271121 - Llewellyn Williamson, Ph.D.** Principal of Lincoln High School. He was the source of information in the 1976 Sue Eakin article in the Alexandria, Louisiana paper.

They had three children, including:

**.12711213 - John Williamson.**

m. Thelma Tyus. They had six children including:

**.127112132 - John Williamson, Jr.** (9/29/1950 - )

**.1271126- - Gladys Williamson** (10/20/1911-3/9/2002) this is the person we visited in February, 2000. She was a teacher in the Washington public schools.

m. John Golston. No children.

## DESCENDENTS THROUGH JANE ADAMS

**.127 Samuel Williamson** (7/12/1795 - 3/12/1882). Buried in Presbyterian Cemetery,  
m. 9/1822 Jane Adams

**.1271 - ?**

**.1272 - Ann Eliza Williamson** No children.

m. 1861 Joseph Doby

**.1273 - Col. James Adams Williamson** (3/1829-11/25/1906) Buried in Columbus, AR cemetery .

m. 1863 Carrie May Muldrow No children.

m. 1873 Mrs. Annie Jane Pearsall Trotter Johnson.

**.12731 - Annie Williamson**

m. J. F. Johnson. Moved to Memphis.

**.127311 - Emma Miller Johnson**

m. Jim S. Wilson. No children. Lived in Columbus.

**.127312 - Eliza Johnson**

**.12732 - Samuel Adams Williamson.** He never married.

**.12733 - Mary P. Williamson.** Lived in Memphis. .

m. William. F. Hamilton

**.127331 - Annie Elizabeth Hamilton**

- .127332 - Mary Hall Hamilton**  
 m. William Honley Winn  
**.1273321 - William Hamilton Winn (7/21/1935 - )**  
 m. Kathryn Ann Towns  
**.12733211 - Mary Elizabeth Winn (3/2/58)**  
**.12733212 - William Honley Winn (10/6/59)**  
**.12733213 - Donna Lee Winn Chapin (2/23/62)**
- .1273322 - James (Jim) Earl Winn (6/26/1937 - )**  
 m. Mary Elizabeth Smith  
**.12733221 - Elizabeth Ann Winn Runge**  
 (12/10/65 - )  
**.12733222 - Cary Carolyn Breslin Winn**  
 (10/7/67 - )
- .12734 - James Adams Williamson, Jr.** Lived at Columbus.  
 m. Marguerite Stuart. No children.  
 m. 6/15/1963 Mary Elizabeth Smith    apparently, no children.

- .1274 - Mary Erecsavy Williamson**  
 m. Hugh H. Wilson  
**.12741 - Samuel William Wilson**

- .1275 - John Stitt Williamson.** Died at 16 of typhoid, while a student at Davidson.
- .1276 - Jane A. Williamson.** Never married.
- .1277 - Martha B. Williamson** Never married.
- .1278 - Margaret Williamson**  
 m. Smylie Magill  
**.12781 - Samuel A. McGill (1876-1937).** Lived in Washington  
 m. Annie A. McRea

## HIS PROFESSIONAL LIFE

### AS AN EDUCATOR

In 1823 **.127 - Samuel Williamson** was examined for ordination by Concord Presbytery and installed as pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church, which had been founded in 1767. In 1829 he also took on Six-Mile Creek Church, and the following year helped form Sharon Church for the benefit of members who lived 4-10 miles away. The combined membership of the churches ranged from 186 to 240. His salary was \$600 a year (2001 equivalent of \$11,450).

In 1835, as Davidson College was being formed, he was asked to teach all subjects, except Latin and Greek, but he declined. He did help as a volunteer and went to Bethel

Presbytery in South Carolina to seek support for the college. In March, 1837 the college opened for students, with room for 72.

In 1839 he was elected a Professor at Davidson in the fields of: Mental and Moral Philosophy, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Chemistry, International Law, Geology "and other branches"! The historian of the college wrote, "There is no reason to assume that he knew much about any of these when he started, but this was the era of the generalist in college teaching." He resigned as pastor of Providence Church on March 11, 1840 and moved to Davidson. In July the President and one professor resigned, leaving him as the only faculty member, plus a tutor for the preparatory class. A first, unsuccessful, attempt was made to elect the Reverend Samuel Wilson as President, and again in 1841 without success. In July, 1841, by vote of supporting presbyteries, .127 – **Samuel** was elected President along with two new professors. A former student, years later, wrote that a young boy slave so regularly accompanied .127 – **Samuel** in his teaching rounds, assisting him in his labs, so that the students referred to him as the "vice-president." No name was given. I wonder if it was Isom who appears so often in the later story.

When, in 1842, .123 – John Williamson died, he left a bequest to the college. But in 1846 the production of a catalogue ceased for financial reasons. In 1847 Washington College in Virginia awarded .127- **Samuel** an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. Publicity for the college was a problem due to lack of money. In 1849 the faculty reported pranks carried out by students, but a home was built for the President, and a fourth faculty member was added. In 1850 a son .1275 – **John Stitt Williamson**, age 16 and a student at Davidson, died of smallpox. The President obtained vaccine and personally vaccinated every other student to stop the disease. By 1851 enrollment had declined from 80 to 54. By offering scholarships enrollment went up to 77 in 1852. But in 1853 there were fights and pranks among the students and two professors resigned. In 1854 a Board of Trustees motion that .127 – **Samuel** was "not qualified to discharge the duties of his office in part of government and discipline" was not voted on, but in August he resigned, although remaining on the Board. A new President was elected and the Synod of North Carolina voted to support the College. The next year, 1855, a bequest of \$300,000 (2001 equivalent of \$6,111,000) brought a dramatic change. Before the Civil War 700 colleges that had been started went out of existence for lack of finances but the future of Davidson was now secure.

After leaving the Davidson presidency .127 – **Samuel**, a guardian of two nieces, moved into the spacious house .123 – John their father had built. It was close to the plantation Jane Adams Williamson had been given. In 1855 he was stated supply of the Pleasant Hill and Steele Creek churches.

In December of that year he traveled to Washington, Arkansas, preaching for several weeks in the Presbyterian Church that had been organized in 1849 but had never yet had a pastor. By this time only one of .127 – **Samuel's** siblings remained in the Piedmont area. Two had died. Following a severe drought in 1845 people began moving away in search of better cotton land. Six had settled in Mississippi, but .127 – **Samuel** went still farther west

and in January, 1856 bought 400 acres near Washington in Hempstead County, Arkansas. In July the Hopewell Church, near Davidson, issued him a call but he turned it down to accept one from the Washington Church, and sold most, but not all, of Jane's land for \$4,200. In November-December, 1856 the whole household, including children and slaves, moved west with no mishaps, arriving in Washington in January, 1857.

### WHY WASHINGTON?

A path ran from the Mississippi River in Missouri southwest through Arkansas where the hills to the west met the alluvial land to the east, winding up on the Red River, beyond which there was a twenty mile lawless stretch before Spanish Texas. Washington was the last stop on that Trail, although there was a stretch of very rich, black soil on the way to the River, and this was attractive, 1830-1860, to people with slaves and cotton seed who were deserting the burned out soil in the Carolinas. By the time Arkansas became a state in 1836 Washington was providing more than its share of political leaders. When the "great raft" logjam on the Red River was broken, boats could transport slaves and cotton to and from New Orleans (land travel was often impossible) and plantations began to prosper. In 1846 Washington turned into a staging area for troops in the Mexican War. 1848-61, a female academy had been started and these were golden years for Washington. There were five hotels in the town serving wine from the east with their dinners, theatrical troupes played in the courthouse, and formal-dress balls were held on the plantations. New houses in town were Greek style, but small. The large homes were on the plantations.

### AS A PLANTER

In January, 1856 **.127 Samuel** bought 400 acres outside of Washington for \$3,200. By 1859 he had made 50 bales of cotton off 75 acres, and 3,000 bushels of corn cribbed. The combined income from these two crops was, in 2001 dollars, \$121,090. **.1273 – James A.** wrote "We are just getting over the bruises of our move in truth we have not yet a comfortable house but father commissioned getting timbers for his new house. . .and we live in hopes that we will have a house this next summer." The tax assessment in 1859 was \$2,500 in land and \$11,220 in slaves (2001 equivalents: \$55,700 and \$247,334). The value of slaves ran about 4.5 times as much as that of the land. In both acreage and slaves **.127 – Samuel** was in the mid-range of planters. When the Federal army was threatening to capture Washington he wrote his son he had no intention of fleeing with his slaves to Texas, as some of his neighbors were doing. In 1865 the land value had dropped to \$1,200 and the slaves were all freed.

By 1865 **.1273 – Col. James A.**, both a lawyer and farmer, had acquired 40 acres. By the time of his death in 1906 he owned 2,200 acres, 900 of them in cultivation.

## AS PASTOR OF THE WASHINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1857-1876

It took from 1836 to 1849 to get the Presbyterian Church organized. In 1850 a building was erected but it was served only by missionaries and visiting ministers. After .127 – **Samuel's** visit in 1855, he was in 1856 called as pastor for a salary of \$800 (2001 equivalent \$16,136). April 12, 1857 the session received as members his wife **Jane**, three daughters .1271 – **Anne**, .1276 **Jane A.** and .1277 **Martha** (but not .1273 – **James A.**) and his servants: Sam and .1271 – **Susan**. By the end of the year four more Williamson servants were on the membership roll. 1857-61 “was perhaps the period of the greatest prosperity of the church as to members and as to attendance on Divine Service. Funds were sent to the Choctaw Indians, to Foreign and Home Missions, the General Assembly and to help start a new church at Camden.” 1860 thirteen members were dismissed to form the Marlbrook Church which .127 – **Samuel** organized.

1861 the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America was formed. The next year a Sabbath School was opened. The congregation voted to reduce the pastor's salary to \$600 per year “on account of the removal of members, or their absences in the War.” A section of the Presbyterian Cemetery was set aside for soldiers and 75 were buried there. .127- **Samuel** was President of the Hempstead County Bible Society.

In 1865 and the years following “Dancing and Sabbath observance” were the key ethical issues in the church. In 1866 there are suggestions that .127 – **Samuel** was active in promoting education for the newly freed black people through the Freedmen's Bureau, but it was closed due to public opposition. In 1866 the church had 66 white members, and it was noted there were also 10 colored members, but their names are not given. February 15, 1867 .127 – **Samuel** performed the marriage of Scipio White to Charline Williamson (both colored). In 1871 he began preaching in Columbus one Sunday a month. The church sent Miss Lula Wier as a missionary to Cardenas, Cuba. In 1872 .1273 – **Col. James A. Williamson** (whose first wife had died in 1865) became a member of the church. He remarried in 1873 and his first daughter .12731 – **Anne Elizabeth** was baptized. In 1875 .1273 – **Col. James** gave land in Columbus and a Presbyterian church was built there. In 1876 .12732 – **Samuel James Williamson** was baptized. In August of that year .127 – **Samuel** was serving as moderator of the Columbus session, and before the end of the year he resigned as pastor of the Washington Church. In 1877 the Washington church elected .1273 – **Col. James** an elder but he declined to serve. The Rev. W. B. Crawford was called as pastor of the Washington and Columbus churches.

1880 census reported that .127 – **Samuel** had been unable to work for more than twelve months and was suffering from “softening of the brain”. On November 2, 1880 **Jane Caroline Adams Williamson** died as did .127 – **Samuel** on March 3, 1882. The funeral was held in the Columbus Church but he was buried in the Washington Presbyterian Cemetery.

In 1884 the Washington Church was host to Ouachita Presbytery. In 1902 someone wrote “The colored members that belonged to the Church have all left us, except one man

and his wife." He does not name who they were.

The History of Presbyterianism in Arkansas 1828-1902 said "For many years this was a very flourishing church and one of the most noted in the Synod—Washington being very prominent in the affairs of State and Nation. .127 – **Dr. S. Williamson** did much for the welfare of the church at Washington and gave tone and influence to the church and Presbyterianism by his scholarly attainments and blameless character, and made it intellectually and spiritually as it was naturally, a city set on a hill that lightened that entire section."

### HIS PERSONALITY

One student who knew him during his Davidson years wrote: "It was my privilege to be a member of his family for three years during my college course, therefore had every opportunity of learning his real character in the home circle. There he was amiability personified. He was ever gentle and dignified with wife and children. In social life, he was a delightful companion. He knew how to lead in conversation, to interest and to instruct. He knew also how to listen." A criticism by one of his students was that he pitched his voice too high in public speaking and never lowered it. Another wrote: "He was genial in disposition, fond of the society of the young, and capable of making himself agreeable to and influential over his pupils." Still another wrote: "I could have no safer--more friendly, or more willing adviser."

Sam Williams, who grew up in Washington, wrote, some years later, "He was a ripe scholar, a fine preacher, a conscientious Christian gentleman, and commanded the respect, the esteem, and the affection of people of all sects. I have read somewhere that there is such a thing as constitutional religion; that there is a certain temper and frame of mind naturally productive of devotion, and that certain people are born with the virginal principles of piety. Good old Dr. Williamson came as near being such a man as I have ever encountered in my wanderings through this vale of tears."

The grandson of a former slave .12711 - *John Williamson* wrote: "What my grandfather learned, he knew from his master--though he himself did not have the opportunity of attending school... Dr. Williamson inspired and encouraged my grandfather..."

### RECONSTRUCTION AND AFTER IN WASHINGTON

Mary Medaeris in WASHINGTON, ARKANSAS wrote: "Reconstruction was not too difficult for Washington; she had been sent a good carpetbagger to govern her, named Robert MacWhorter, who had fallen in love with Miss Delia Conway, and married her, and became respected by all. Washington also had her faithful Blacks! Archie Shepperson was elected Sheriff of Hempstead County; Richard Samuels was sent as representative...the Whites knew their Blacks would watch after them. They could not be so certain of any

turncoat or carpetbagger. A Freedmen's Bureau was set up in Washington with Edward Gantt as head. He had been a dedicated secessionist in 1861. . .but had become an ardent Yank after General Steele captured Little Rock. Gantt was the man they hated...The planters were all bankrupt. The fields were barren, the storehouses were empty. There was no livestock in the barns. The farm tools were worn out and the ...'shinplasters' and Confederate money...were worthless. There were still all those former slaves to think about. The white refugees had gone back to where they had come from but the Blacks had nowhere to go, and they had been told that they could now work for wages from their former masters. What wages?"

Some of the developments in this area, listed chronologically, include:

1866 - St. Paul's Methodist Church for the Colored was started.

Freemen's Bureau reports some planters wanted a school for blacks, but it was closed due to public opposition. There was discussion of establishing a Refugee and Freedmen's Hospital in Washington.

1867 - Freedmen's Bureau and state Superintendent of Education worked to build a school for blacks. The First Baptist Church (for Blacks) was organized.

1868 - June 28, - funds were sent for Lincoln Academy.

R. S. Hope, a nephew-in-law of **.127 Samuel** wrote from Chester District, SC that "the whites in South Carolina are arming themselves with improved rifles by the box load."

This apparently was not the climate at Washington. A Reconstruction Constitution granting power to Blacks was adopted, and Arkansas was readmitted as a state.

? years - Richard Samuels and Archie Shepperson (Blacks from Washington) both served in the state legislature. Archie Shepperson became a judge of the Hempstead County court; Bob Samuels, clerk of the county court; James Tyus, tax assessor.

?1869 - Male and Female Academies for whites did not reopen after 1865, so Alchyny Delony announced he would open a school for whites in his home.

1870 - Richard Samuels--one of three delegates from Arkansas-- helped found the Colored Methodist Church Episcopal on the national level.

1871 - First Negro school in the State was established at Washington [in First Baptist Church (black)]. It was taught by a Northern man. He was followed by Archie Shepperson as teacher and then principal, until 1905.

1874 - A constitutional convention wrote a new state constitution.

1875 - First railroad across Arkansas from Mississippi River started. Because Washington refused to let it come through, the town of Hope was started six miles to the south.

1876 - **.1273 - Col. James A. Williamson** was elected to represent Hempstead County in the Arkansas General Assembly.

1880 - The Census reported Washington's population as 780--its high water mark. (In 2002, the population sign reads 148)

1882 - **.12711 - John Williamson** challenged the Mt. Moreh CME Church to provide a school for black people.

1883 - St. Paul CME Church endorsed the founding of what was to become Haygood Seminary/Academy,(offering from primary training to Advanced Normal School, or

first two years of college.)

?year- Haygood became a boarding school--the only one of its kind between the Mississippi River and Marshall, Texas.

1890 – Professor George Tyus, the first black man in Arkansas with a college degree, arrived as Principal of Haygood Seminary.]

The first “Jim Crow” laws were passed in Arkansas.

1898 - .1273 - **Col. James A Williamson** was elected to represent Hempstead County in the Arkansas General Assembly.

### EXCURSUS ON HAYGOOD SEMINARY

1870 – Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized as a denomination.

1882 – Encouraged by .127 – **Samuel Williamson**, .12711 – **John Williamson** told his people at Mt. Moreh (sic) CME Church that they should organize a school to educate their boys and girls.

1883 – CME Church in Washington backed the school, starting with primary training and going through what was called Advanced Normal School, or the first two years of college. Oral tradition is that .12711 – **John Williamson** who was illiterate sent his children to school during the day, and at night they taught him to read and write.

1884 – The school came under the auspices of the Washington District Conference and became known as the Haygood Seminary.

1887 – Haygood came under the control of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

??? - Haygood became a boarding school—the only one of its kind between the Mississippi River and Marshall, Texas. Five two-story frame buildings were erected on campus one mile down the road from Washington to Fulton, and students from five surrounding state came to attend.

1890 – Haygood took a major leap forward when Prof. George Lawrence Tyus, a graduate of Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, the first black man with a college degree in Arkansas, came as Principal. A curriculum was set up for the education of black musicians, preachers and teachers. Charley Shepperson would graduate and become the early inspiration of his step-son, William Grant Still, the composer.

1894 – The first class to graduate included two Williamson children, .127111 – **R. Bradley Williamson** (later Principal of Haygood) and .127112 – **Elmore Miles Williamson** (later becoming CME minister and father, of, among others, of .1271121 – **Llewellyn W. Williamson** .

1896 - .127115 – **William Samuel Williamson** graduated, (later a CME minister and professor at M. I. College, Holly Springs, Mississippi.)

1900 – “The school was in its bloom in 1900. . . . It wasn’t much, but such as it was, it was about the best you could find in those days.”

1902 – Enrollment was 150. The ideas of Booker T. Washington encouraged industrial training.

1910 – George Tyus resigned to go to Texas College, Tyler, Texas. Pine Bluff offered money and Haygood moved from Washington. .127111 – **R. Bradley Williamson** became principle of the Washington school. After that little Conference money went to the Washington school.

1915 – There was a major fire, destroying the dormitory and laundry.

??? .1271121 – *Llewellyn Williamson* (born in 1908—later getting a Ph.D. and becoming principal of Lincoln High School) said when he was a student in the teens and early 1920s he studied Latin (Cicero and Virgil).

1921 – Williamson Hall was erected.

1927 – Haygood was closed. The buildings were bought for Lincoln public school.

In describing the impact on Washington made by George and Belle Shepperson, Tyus, and Haygood Academy, Charlean Moss Williams wrote in Washington, Hempstead “Their uplifting examples and influence, clean and moral living, have been a restraining force in keeping order and peaceful and friendly relations between the white and colored people. Be it said here that, to the credit of the Negro population of Washington, and the surrounding area, the town of Washington, Arkansas, through the one hundred and thirty-one years of existence, has never had a lynching.”

### EXCURSUS ON .1273 – COL. JAMES ADAMS WILLIAMSON, WHO REMAINED IN WASHINGTON

1845 – Graduated from Davidson College.

1845-51 – Worked on the farm his mother had been given.

1851 – Went to Charleston, S. C. to study law.

1852 – Admitted to the bar and began practicing law.

1857 – Arrived in Washington, lived in his parents' home and farmed with his father until 1861

1857 – Read law under General Royston while still farming.

1860 – Admitted to the Arkansas bar.

1861 – Enlisted as 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. in Hempstead Cavalry, which became part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Arkansas Mounted Rifles. He took with him Isom, one of the Williamson slaves, as a b o d y servant.

1862 – Fought in the Battle of Pea Ridge and later the Battle of Corinth, one of the bloodiest of the Civil War. Second Regiment elected Capt. Flanagan as colonel and **1273 - J. A. Williamson** as Lt. Colonel. When Flanagan was elected Governor of Arkansas, **.1273 – James A. Williamson** became Colonel.

1862-64 – Wrote a series of letters describing life in the Confederate army, and wooing Miss Carrie Muldrow.

.127 – **Samuel** writes him on May 30, 1862 “Our negroes all well but Susan she has something of a Scrofutas tumor on her neck that has kept her in for the past month. Your Sis A. was well ten days ago. . . Isom's money came safe & I will divide it as he desires.” On July 29, 1862

.1273 – **James A.** wrote his father, “Isom got up to the Regt about a week ago but had not entirely recovered and was complaining and not able to do anything and today I took him into Chattanooga & sent him by the train to Uncle Thos Adams & wrote uncle to keep him until he was entirely well.” On November 10, 1862 “Isom left me yesterday for home. He became so delicate that he was no value to me.”

January 13, 1863 “On 31<sup>st</sup> of Dec. I was in the most terrible Battle that I have ever

- participated in. [Murfreesboro]”
- 1863 – Married Miss Carrie Muldrow. He wrote her on October 24, “I was quite sorry to learn that so much of Arkansas had fallen into the hands of the enemy. I did not think they would cross Ark. River this winter, but it is no cause for discouragement.” October 25, he wrote “I hope your fears about coming under Yankee rule will all prove unwarranted. I do not believe the Yankees will come south of Little Rock far. . . . I still believe Hempstead County is about as safe a place as any in the Confederacy. . . I see from father’s letter that he has no intention of trying to get away in the event they do come.”
- 1864 – February 7, “I am about twenty miles from the crossing of the Mississippi River. . . We expect to cross the River tonight. . . We have traveled through some very poor country since I wrote you by Isom.”. . . April 7 “Miss Dickinson is now lecturing publicly advocating the amalgamation of the races. I believe that her course will be productive of good to us, by arousing the indignation of all people of integrity every where against her and the party she advocates.” In a battle at Resaca on May 14 between Chattanooga and Atlanta, **.1273 – Col. James A.** was wounded so severely they had to amputate his leg. In December he resigned and returned home and practiced law until Reconstruction, when he went into merchandizing.
- 1865 – His wife, Carrie, died in October.  
He was not interested in Confederate organizations. He told a friend “the war was a very sad reality to him and a great calamity to the country and he thought the more the memory of it faded from the minds of the people the better for all concerned.”
- 1869 – For first time, his name is on the membership roll at the Washington Church.
- 1873 – He left law and went into farming. He married a widow, Annie Trotter Pearsall Johnson, who had three children. He bought a house in Columbus, that has now been moved to the Washington State Park where it has been restored (as the Brunson House, named for its original owner), and is open to the public.
- 1874 - **.12731 – Anne Eliza Williamson** was born and the next year baptized in the Washington Church.
- 1875 – He gave land for the building of the Presbyterian Church in Columbus.
- 1876 - **.12732 – Samuel Adams Williamson, Jr.** was born. **.127 – Samuel Williamson** resigned as pastor of the Washington and Columbus Church.  
**.1273 – Col. James A. Williamson** is elected a representative to the Arkansas General Assembly.
- 1876ff – While he never joined the Columbus church, on at least three occasions the Session met in his home.
- 1879 - **.12733 – Mary P. Williamson** was born.
- 1880 – Jane Adams Williamson, mother of **.1273 – Col. James A. Williamson**, died.
- 1882 - **.127 – Samuel Williamson**, his father, died.  
**.12734 – James Adams Williamson, Jr.** was born.
- 1898 – **.1273 – Col. James A. Williamson** was again elected a representative to the Arkansas General Assembly.
- 1900 – He owned 2,200 acres of land, 900 in cultivation.

1906 - .1273 – Col. James A. Williamson died at age 77, after having been an invalid for four years.

## CONCLUSION

Having stumbled into this Williamson story I wondered if I would encounter denial or hostility from some of the descendants, either white or black, or both. To the contrary, I have found interest and cooperation. I learned that the black Williamsons held a family reunion in Washington every other year, with people coming from as far away as the West Coast. A reunion was coming up soon (it must have been about 2004). Gladys Golston invited me to attend and I readily accepted. It was a fascinating experience, and I was warmly welcomed.

On the white side, one of my cousins, .128812 - James Gaston Williamson, shortly before his death in 2002, suggested we do a blood test to see if we could get scientific verification that .12711 - *John Williamson*, son of Susan the slave, was the grandson of .127 - **Samuel Williamson**, and said he would pay for it. He sent a sample of his blood to the University of Arkansas Medical Center, and got one of the Williamsons from Washington, to do the same. We were disappointed when the report that came back said it was inconclusive. But the laboratory said they would freeze and preserve the samples.

In the meantime .1273321 - **William Winn** from Denver and his brother .1273322 - **Jim** from Houston, great-great-grandsons on the white side of .127 - **Samuel**, brought their families to a gathering in Columbus, Arkansas in 2005 and invited me to drive down to Hope, Arkansas to meet them. We really hit it off, starting a long distance friendship that has lasted for years. In 2015 Bill wrote me that one of his daughters, .12733211 - **Mary Elizabeth "Lisa" Winn**, had become interested in genealogy and the role DNA from saliva can now play in checking connections with much more accuracy than was possible when the blood test, in 2000, was run. And since Gaston was only a great nephew of Samuel, descending from .128 – Arthur Starr, whereas Bill and his children were .127s being direct descendants from .127 - **Samuel**, they would be one generation closer to any black cousins.

This set off a search for some black Williamsons who would like to participate. To my amazement, I found that not a single descendant from .12711 - *John* still lives in Washington. Bill Winn finally found the name of a woman who lives in Little Rock and her brother who lives in Texas. I tried to reach her by telephone and email, and sent letters to her at four addresses. Two came back marked "unknown". She never responded to either of the others. Knowing nothing about us, she was probably suspicious of our intentions and declined to participate. Bill was finally able to talk to her brother who agreed to give a saliva sample and returned it to the laboratory. That, too, was inconclusive, so Bill tried to follow up to be certain we had the right person. He telephoned, sent e-mail, wrote letters, and after tracking down a house this man owns in a small town outside Houston, persuaded his brother Jim to drive out there. He did locate the house, but it was unoccupied.

I had hoped we could get scientific proof one way or the other of the biological connection between .127 - **Samuel** and his descendants and .12711 - **John Williamson**, son of Susan the slave, and his descendants. Bill and Jim Winn have done everything we can think of to check this out. But I guess we have to acknowledge we haven't found it yet. I, personally, am convinced on the basis of the similarity in looks, the oral tradition in the black family, and the gifts as educators lived out on both sides of the Williamsons. It has been a fascinating story for almost three decades.

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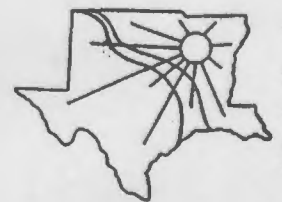
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