

HAMILTON COUNTY PIONEERS - THE WITT FAMILY

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Abner Witt, a native of Amherst County, Va., and a descendant of Huguenots (French Protestants), was one of the pioneers of upper East Tennessee. He finally made his way to Sale Creek, where he lived below the Indian boundary near his sons-in-law, Robert Patterson and Robert Gamble.

He was a grandson of Guillaume (William) Witt, who was born in France in 1675 and made his way to Albemarle County, Va. Guillaume Witt's father was John Witt and his mother was Ann Daux, daughter of a London merchant, Walter Daux. Guillaume Witt married Mary Daux.

To escape religious persecution in France, the Witts sailed in 1699 from Southampton, England, for the Virginia colony. Guillaume Witt was one of the founders of Manakintowne, about 15 miles from Richmond. His estate at St. Ann's Parish at Mankin County was known as "Roseland." In his will in 1754, he left one son a gray mare, a "great Bible," a pewter basin, one plate and "half my wearing clothes." Several slaves were also parceled out to the children. They were Charles who married Lavinia Harbour, Benjamin who married Marianna Chastain, Lewis, Abner who married Anna Churchill, David who married Sarah Harbour, Agnes who married John Key III, Sarah who married John Canaday, and Caleb. The Harbour sisters were children of Thomas Harbour and Sarah Witt.

Another son of Guillaume Witt, John, was born in 1710. His first wife was Elizabeth and the second was Lucy Littlebury. His children, in addition to the Abner who came to Sale Creek, were John, Littlebury who married Jane Barnett, Charles, George, Elisha who married Phoebe Dodd, William, David and Lucy who married Ben Carpenter. John Witt died at Amherst County, Va., in 1782. He left 10 shillings to be divided among seven of his sons. The other son, William, was given "all the lands and personal estate goods, chattels I die possessed with."

Abner Witt left Virginia several years after his father's death and ventured into the frontier of the future Tennessee. A store account receipt from May 27, 1787, from the State of Franklin bears the name Abner Witt. In 1790, he bought 200 acres in Greene County from Abednego Inman. This section was later formed into Knox County. In the Knoxville Gazette in 1797 there was notice that "Abner Witt offered the reward of \$15 for the return of a runaway negro fellow, named Jack." In November 1806, Abner Witt went alone into the Caney Fork region of Cumberland in Middle Tennessee. He remained there until August of 1807 when he returned to his family and made plans to join the Pattersons and Gambles in the future Hamilton County. They had moved there in December of 1806. Richard Waterhouse in his diary has this entry for July 3, 1813: "Left home down Tennessee Valley crossing Sale Creek to Abner Witt's, 24 miles."

Abner Witt's daughter, Elizabeth, had married Robert Gamble. Another daughter, Rhoda, who was born in the revolutionary year of 1776, married Robert Patterson in Knox County about 1794. Other children of Abner Witt were Jesse, John, Charles Wylie, Abner Jr. and Delphia who married Richard Rosencranz.

In 1823, in a deposition given by Robert Patterson after the death of Abner Witt, Patterson said he had been acquainted with Abner Witt "since 1787 or 1788, with Soloman Reed since about the time of Blount's Treaty with the Cherokee Indians where Knoxville now stands."

An Abner Witt was an early purchaser of property at Dallas when it was the county seat and was listed as one of the first 53 citizens of Chattanooga. This apparently was Abner Witt Jr.

Charles Wylie Witt, who was born in 1780, married Alabama Gibson about 1800, and they made their home at Sale Creek. The eldest son was named Gibson Witt. A daughter, Ann, married Jesse Pendergrass from a neighboring farm, and they moved to Cookeville. Other children of Charles Wylie Witt included James H. who married Jane Bryant, Abner Lewis who married Elizabeth Nolen, Almira, John P. who married Celia Moore, and Mary who married John Hodges. Two of the children married children of James

Varner. Rhoda married George Varner and Samuel H. married Jane Varner. The two youngest sons married Yeager sisters of Sparta. Charles Wylie Jr. married Phoebe Emiline Yeager and Allenson married Ann Yeager. Charles Wylie Witt died in 1835. His children sold the 100-acre homeplace for \$400 in 1846 to Lewis Patterson, a grandson of Abner Witt.

Some of the descendants of John Witt, older brother of Abner Witt, also made their way to Hamilton County. He had married Elizabeth Luttrell about 1769. Their children were Elizabeth who married William Luttrell, Jesse who married Alice Brown, John, Mary who married John Jarnigan, Sarah, Margaret, Charles, William and Abner.

Some Witts who resided at Georgetown traced back to Charles Witt, son of Guillaume Witt. William Hopkins Witt was born just before the Civil War near Georgetown, the son of Joseph N. Witt, a great-grandson of that Charles Witt. Joseph N. Witt was the son of Nathaniel Witt and Mary Cate and grandson of Joseph Witt and Sarah Kimbrough. Joseph N. Witt was a schoolteacher, farmer and postmaster at Meigs County. Fighting for the Union side, he was captain of Company G of the 3rd Tennessee Infantry. He married Charity Agnes Gamble and then Mary Whitmore. W.H. Witt lived the last 32 years of his life at Kennewick, Wash. after settling there in 1906. His wife was Caroline Brooks. A son, William Owen Witt, remained at Georgetown. Owen Witt operated the Witt Barber Shop on Runyan Road off Highway 58. He married Grace Allen. Their children were listed as Mrs. Claire Saulters, Mrs. G.F. Cope Jr., Mrs. George Hixson, Mrs. Noel Scaffa, W.O. Jr., J. Eugene, R.M. (Mike), Barney, Walter, Douglas, James (Tony) and Harry H.

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