

## HAMILTON COUNTY PIONEERS - THE WILKINS FAMILY

by John Wilson

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Anderson Smith Wilkins was one of the earliest settlers in the lovely Hickory Valley by old Bird's Mill Road and the old road leading south from Knoxville. He was the main organizer of the Concord Baptist Church, which is more than 150 years old.

The family traces back to James Wilkins, who had an 800-acre plantation on both sides of the Roanoke River at Butcher's Creek in Virginia. He had earlier been overseer on the plantation of Luke Smith, and he married his daughter, Arabella Smith, in 1752. Her first husband, Daniel Marrow, had died in 1749. Luke Smith and his father, Obediah, had extensive plantations. Obediah, son of John Smith, married Mary Cocke, daughter of William and Mary Flower Cocke. Richard Cocke, father of William, was in the House of Burgesses. His second wife was Mary Aston, daughter of Walter Aston Sr., who emigrated about 1625 from Langton, Staffordshire, England. He was the son of Walter and Joyce Nason Aston of rougham, Warwick, England. Walter Aston Sr. was also in the House of Burgesses. John Smith married as his second wife Hannah Daft, daughter of William Daft, a wheelwright from Eson, Rutland County, England. Luke Smith was married to Gilley Gromarin, a large landowner near Richmond. A ferry was established in 1779 across from "the lands of James Wilkins to those of Robert Munford on the opposite shore." The fare was two shillings. Drury Smith, brother of Arabella, was overseer for Munford, largest landowner in the area. She had another brother, Charles, and her only son by her second husband was named for him - Charles Smith Wilkins. He was born Sept. 26, 1755, on the south side of the Roanoke River in Lunenburg County.

In his will made in 1781, James Wilkins left his plantation to Charles Smith Wilkins. After the Revolution, C.S. Wilkins migrated to Rutherford County, N.C., where he was a justice of the peace and was in the Legislature. He first married Mary Mercer Thompson and they had two sons and two daughters. These were Richard who married Nancy Hamrick, Charles who married Lucy Morrise, Sarah who married John H. Tillinghast, and Frances who married Daniel Blanton. His second wife was Elizabeth Puryear, and they had a large family, including Anderson Smith Wilkins. The others were Mary Preyer who married Greenberry Palmer, Susanna W. who married a Randle, Elizabeth Price who married Drury Scruggs, Mariah, Harriet F. who married E. Eskridge, Drury, Smith, Thomas P., Zachariah who married Belariah Hill, Reuben who married Mary Dorsey, Hezekiah who married Sarah Eskridge, Josiah who married Jane Scott and then Sarah Roberts, and Peter D. Mary Wilkins Palmer died in 1842 when she was 42. Smith died in 1836 when he was 38. Maria, who was a twin of Josiah, died in 1836 when she was 26. Charles Smith Wilkins died in 1817 and Elizabeth died in 1837 at Cleveland County, N.C.

A.S. Wilkins, who was born in 1812, married Lavina Warlick. They left Shelby, N.C., about 1838 and settled the newly opened lands at Hickory Valley. Wilkins got a grant of 40 acres, paying a quarter an acre - \$10. The Wilkins family built their home about where the cloverleaf now is at the East Brainerd Road exit of Interstate 75. On a nearby knoll, the couple helped establish a Baptist congregation and burying ground. This was officially organized in 1848 as Concord Baptist. Drury Scruggs came to pastor the church. He was married to Elizabeth Wilkins, sister of A.S. Josiah and Zachariah Wilkins, brothers of A.S., also came to Hamilton County. David Warlick, brother of Lavina, moved to Hickory Valley and married Rebecca Blackwell. The Warlicks first lived at Harrison, then moved to Chickamauga, Tenn., and David set up a blacksmith shop. Then they bought a house across the road from Concord Church. A.S. Wilkins worked as a blacksmith also and he repaired wagons. His children were William Woodson, Luther Rice, Drury Dobbins, Barbara, Harriet Evelyn "Hattie," David Anderson, Charles Smith and Lucy V. Barbara married William Dorsey. Hattie married Thomas L. Landress. Lucy married James W. Cockerham and then William Younger.

When the Civil War broke out, three of the Wilkins sons joined the Confederate forces. Rice fell in the fighting at Fort Donelson in February 1862 and Woodson was also killed on Sept. 5. Woodson had been a young lawyer at Spring Place, Ga. He married Mary Anderson and they had a young son when he left for war with the Bartow Avengers of Whitfield County, Ga. Drury, who was a railroad contractor working with

Jarrett Dent before the war, worked at a salt works for the Confederacy after joining Brand's Battalion. The Wilkins family joined many of their neighbors in fleeing south as the armies converged at Hickory Valley. The Warlicks went to Houston, Fla., and David Warlick and a baby died of smallpox there. David Warlick died Sept. 28, 1863. The remainder of the family returned to Hickory Valley. Rev. Scruggs had eight sons fighting for the South. He lived until 1890, dying at the home of his daughter, Mrs. John Camp, in Rutherford County, N.C.

Hattie in 1866 wrote to her future husband of what the Wilkins family found when they returned. "I hardly knew the country. the timber had been cut down so much & so many houses gone. they left us our dwelling, smoke house, crib & four stables but they were all under the same roof & the frame of the shop but Papey is about to get it planked up again. They burned our church. I did hate that so much it hurt me as bad as if it had been our dwelling. It would have been burned too if there hadn't been a family in it that would stand up to them." The next year she wrote, "We have a good Rebel settlement & the Lincolns don't pester us nor we them." She said "Old Granma Grey is still here. She remained here too. She is also a good Rebel. There was three Yankees killed in her yard & their friends buried them right in her yard to aggravate her. She told them she didn't care for them no more than if they were them many hogs a lying there. I glory in her spunk." Hattie also described the great flood of 1867. "You wouldn't believe how high the waters were out here on Chickamauga with out you could have been here & seen it. Tenn. River backed nearly up to Graysville & up in our pond until it was nearly up to our crib & was about half way up in our stables & was over half a cross the land near the woodpile & was between 20 & 30 feet in the hole."

Anderson Wilkins lived until 1889. He never missed the Concord services, though he suffered from palsy and had to be carried into the church building in the latter years. Lavina died a few months later, and they are buried at Concord.

Drury married Mary "Molly" Eskridge, whom he met in Mississippi while working on the railroad. Their wedding was April 9, 1861. After the war they went from Mississippi to Hickory Valley, carrying their possessions in a wagon and with Molly going the entire 200 miles on horseback. Drury later settled at Duck Hill, Miss., where he operated several farms on 12,000 acres and had a thriving general store. David joined in the mercantile business at Duck Hill. He married Mary Julia Wear, a teacher.

Charles Smith Wilkins helped operate Drury's cotton plantations, then he returned to Chattanooga about 1885. He had a retail grocery and then in 1902 started a wholesale cracker and confection firm. He resided at 820 E. 9th. C.S. Wilkins helped organize Central Baptist Church in 1887. Known for his uprightness, his life "was frequently cited as an example of uncompromising honesty." At Central Baptist he was known fondly as "Uncle Charlie." C.S. Wilkins married Nannie Wallace, then Florie Dunnaway, then Lucy McCrary. The children by the first wife were Minnie May, Pearl who married Tom Reynolds, James D. who married Katie Fristoe, and Wallace who died young. By the second wife he had Charles W. who married Bertha Wood. By the third wife he had Lucy Lynette and Clyde who married Amelia Milligan. James moved to Greensboro, Charles to Miami and Clyde to Atlanta. C.S. Wilkins died in 1935.

William W. Wilkins, the son of Woodson, came to Chattanooga in 1886 with the Queen and Crescent Railroad. He later joined his uncle's business and was president of the Retail Grocers Association for two terms. He was also a stalwart at Central Baptist. He was the treasurer for 35 years and died suddenly in 1927 just after counting the church collection. He had a son, Lewis A., and daughter Mrs. A.J. Becker.

\*Read more stories by John Wilson at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>