

Laban Loftis

Loftis and the Descendants of Laban Loftis
By Jimmie R. Loftis and Bobbie H. Bryant



Laban Loftis was likely the eldest son of Job Loftis. He and his wife Elizabeth were born in MD circa. 1760 and 1769, respectively, according to 1850 Census of Jackson County, TN. She was probably Elizabeth Holcombe according to old estate records of Spartanbury (see below) showing property coming to “Laban Loftis and his wife Elizabeth from Jordan Holcombe of Prince George County, VA on lands owned by Jordan Holcombe in Tyger River area of SC.” They were married circa 1790 and lived in Greenville County, SC from August 1790 to November 1816 when they left by wagon train for Jackson County, TN.

Lands Bought By Laban Loftis – On 17 August 1790 a deed (Book D, pg. 322-323) was recorded for 150 acres situated in the District of Ninety-Six, north side of Saluda on the east branches of South Tyger River (SC State Plats, Vol. 3, pg. 327) and from Shadrack Murray with dower by his wife, Hannah, of Washington Co., NC to Laban Loftess of Greenville County, SC and said lands being bounded by Archer Holcombe...Deed for 50 acres from Jesse Baker was recorded in 1800 (Book F. pg. 390) which was part of an original land grant to William Lynch...On 9 March 1802 another 100 acres on Tyger River in Spartanburg County from William Easley and said lands of Henry Bates and Kinchen Holcombe and witnessed by Wood to Laban Loftis was deed for 125 acres (Book I, pg. 542-543) and said land was an original land grant to John Gowen in 1794 and bounded by lands of John Gowen, James Neill and William Davis and witnessed by Jesse Allen and James Gilreath. (Note: Gilreath was neighbor to Job Loftis in Newberry).

Lands Sold by Laban Loftis – In 1803 a tract of 100 acres on South Tyger River in Greenville County, SC and being an original grant to Shadrack Murray of Washington County, NC (became Greene Co., TN in 1796) and by him sold to Laban Loftis who sold same lands (50 acres was retained) to Archer Holcombe and witnessed by Joseph Dill, Joseph Barrett and William Chutee (Book G, pg. 277-278)...Laban Loftis sold 325 acres on 20 November 1816 to Joseph and William Barton (Book L, pg. 18-19). Note: Joseph and William Barton apparently divided this 325 acres with Joseph recording 225 acres on the S. & SW side of

Gap Creek Road and William recording 115 acres on the N. & NE side of Gap Creek Road. William Barton had bought 15 acres from John Gowen on 7 December 1816 (Book K, pg. 89-90). William Barton sold in 1856 to James Barton 300 acres on Tyger River with reference made to "the Labin Loftis corner" (Book Y, 317). The Bartons both owned considerably more acreage. Therefore, Laban Loftis owned a total of 425 acres in Greenville County, SC from August 1790 to November 1816.

The first settlers in upper SC were engaged in the culture of tobacco, corn and wheat as their principal agricultural pursuits. Wheat and corn mills where the grain was converted into flour and meal were built at the falls of water courses. Wheat and tobacco constituted the "money crop." But there was little need for money. Cattle, hogs, and poultry were grown for meat, sheep were kept for wool and flax grown for linen from which the thrifty housewife manufactured cloth for the family clothing. Tools, farm implements, and wagons were made at the plantation forge. Horses for plantation use, and some for sale, were raised. Only such things as sugar, coffee and spices were necessary to buy. Standards of living were not complex and wants were few. Living meant hard work, but these farm people had been accustomed to that for several generations back and did not complain.

These early settlers of Greenville County, SC knew nothing about the modern methods of cultivating the soil, and only a few years served to "wear out" the hill plantations which had been so eagerly sought. The older residents, who had witnessed this deterioration in the productivity of their lands, sold out to the newcomers at any price obtainable and moved on in search of something better. Being of the typical pioneer stock, always in search of new fields to conquer, they no doubt welcomed this opportunity to escape the few bonds of civilization which were beginning to tie them about.

In the aftermath of the War of 1812 and agreements with the Cherokee Indians in 1817, a flood of emigrants from the Carolinas moved westward into the new state of Tennessee. Thus, Laban Loftis and his wife Elizabeth with nine children moved by wagon train in late 1816 or early 1817 to Jackson County, TN. They probably headed north to Tryon, NC and then westward over the Smoky Mountains to East Tennessee and crossed the Holston River.

From there they probably continued westward over wagon roads which generally followed the old North Carolina Military Trace of 1788 (also called the "North Carolina Road" and the "Cumberland Trace") which began at the western terminus of Avery's Trace near the southern end of Clinch Mountain, located in what is now Grainger County. From there the original route lay in a southwesterly direction to the upper crossing of the Peleson (Clinch) River, later known as Glasgow's Ferry; thence westwardly, by way of Poplar Creek, Crooked Fork, Emory River, Obed River, Flat Rock, Northwest Foot of the Mountain (near the present site of Algood), Flynn's Creek, the upper crossing of Cumberland

River, and Dixon Springs and finally on to Nashville. Household goods often had to be sent by boat by way of the Clinch, Tennessee, Ohio and Cumberland Rivers from near Knoxville to Chattanooga to Nashville. However, as slightly alternative routes opened and ever-increasing numbers of emigrants flooded into the territory, many people undertook the wilderness journey without waiting for the periodical convoys escorted by the military. The military trace was gradually replaced by wagon roads such as the "Walton" and "Emory" Roads of 1795 and the "Cumberland Turnpike of 1802." The latter was a toll road of 12-15 feet in breadth which ran from the ford across the Clinch River below the mouth of the Emory and across the Cumberland Mountain to the forks of the road leading to Fort Blount and Walton's ferry.

A territorial military post had been erected in 1792 at Fort Blount on the old North Carolina Military Trace about two miles east of the Cumberland River crossing and near the big salt lick in Jackson County. After it ceased to be a military post in 1796. Capt. Sampson Williams converted the large, log blockhouse into a residence and operated an ordinary (hostelry or inn) there for several years. When Jackson County was established in 1801, the post village was renamed "Williamsburg" and designated as the first county seat on 8 July 1806. Abner Chaffin and Thomas Dill were two of the 193 petitioners which also reduced the size of the county to its Constitutional limit of 625 square miles. Gainesborough was established in 1815 to replace Williamsburg as the county seat and incorporated in 1820.

Laban Loftis and his family settled in Jackson County, TN about 10 miles southeast and upstream of present-day Gainesboro on Morrison's Creek which is a tributary to Roaring River which runs in to Cumberland River. Laban owned several tracts of land of approximately 275 acres on Morrison's Creek. The homestead stood until the late 1980's and was home to Gainesboro and Jeff Fox for many years. The Old Loftis Sugar Camp and grist mill stood behind the home in the bend of the creek. Laban's sons owned additional land adjoining him on Morrison's Creek and also on Blackburn's Fork River and Spring Creek which is near the Putnam and Overton County line.

Land was surveyed by "poles" which measures 16.5 feet to each pole. Also, a chain was used to measure the number of feet in a "pole" and those who carried the chain were called "chain carriers." William , Laban's son acted as his father's chain carrier when the land was surveyed.

Laban Loftis died 8 November 1850 at age 90 and his wife Elizabeth died 29 December 1859 at age 89. Both are buried in the Loftis Cemetery located approximately 200 yards up the creek from the Morrison's Creek Church of Christ in Jackson County, TN. Adjacent to the church building is another cemetery with more recent Loftis descendants buried there. The old church building, which also served as the school, once stood almost between the two and nearer the creek.

Laban Loftis reportedly donated one acre for the “Christian Church” about one mile upstream and across the creek from the present church building.

In 1854-55 a wagon train was formed at Gainesboro, TN of approximately 40 wagons headed westward. Lemuel Loftis (b. 1806 SC and son of Laban Loftis) ; Barton Loftis, (son of John Loftis); and William Loftis (son of John Loftis) were on this wagon train. Lemuel stopped about 4 miles from Maynard, AR; while Barton and William settled near Gainesville, Ozark County, MO. About two years later, Laborn Loftis, Jr. and John Loftis joined another wagon train headed westward. Laborn, Jr. stopped off with Lemuel and was living there in 1862, but later moved into MO and still later returned to TN. Lemuel left at the same time probably going further west. John Loftis was in Fulton Co., IL in 1839 but settled near War Eagle, AR where some of Laborn Jr.’s children lived also.

The remainder of the children of Laborn Loftis Sr. settled in Jackson County, TN. John L. “Jack” Loftis (b. 1791, SC) married Millie Dill and settled in the Spring Creek area. William Loftis (b. 1801, SC) married Betsey Loveall. He and Thomas Jefferson Loftis settled along the lower end of Morrisons Creek and Blackburns Fork, while James Madison Loftis settled on the upper end of Morrisons Creek.

Laban Loftis b. ca. 1760 (MD) d. 8 November 1850 (TN)	Married ca. 1790 (SC)	Elizabeth Holcombe b. ca. 1769 (MD) d. 29 December 1859 (TN)
--	---------------------------------	---

Children:

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| 1. John L. Loftis
b. 7 October 1791 (SC)
d. April 1842/44 (TN) | married | Ermilla Dill
b. 1800/1805 (SC)
d. 1880 (TN)
(Dau. of Archibald Dill –
a Revolutionary War Soldier) |
| 2. Female (b. 1791-1800 in SC) | | |
| 3. Polly Loftis
b. ca. 1798 (SC) | married | Thomas H. Smith |
| 4. William Loftis
b. 1/7 May 1801 (SC) | married | Betsy Loveall |
| 5. Lemuel Loftis | married | Martha Teel |
| 6. Thomas Jefferson Loftis | | Parlitha Gallion |
| 7. Elizabeth Loftis | married | Jesse Mansell |
| 8. James Madison Loftis
b. 13 February 1811 (SC)
d. 1902 (TN) | married
22 March 1832 | Sarah Elvira Dowell
b. 13 February 1811
d. 15 February 1897 (TN) |
| 9. Laborn Loftis Jr.
b. 25 December 1813 (SC) | married | Sally Bean |

LABAN JASPER LOFTIS AND THE SETTLING OF JACKSON CO., TN by the Loftis Family

Jackson County, Tennessee is located approximately 90 miles from Nashville, TN in the Cumberland Mountain area and about 12-15 miles from Cookeville, TN. Originally it was known as "Cherokee Land", the home of the Cherokee Indians before the white settlers forced them west into new territory.

A wagon train coming to Tennessee from South Carolina, bringing new settlers, arrived in Jackson County, TN sometime in 1816. On this wagon train was Laban Loftis, age 58, his wife Elizabeth, age 48 and 9 of their 10 known children. There may be additional children, but not known at this writing. Both Laban and Elizabeth Loftis had been born in Maryland between 1760 and 1770. However, they had made their home in Greenville County, South Carolina since their marriage in 1790, sometime after the 1790 census was taken.

All of their known children were born in South Carolina. Laban had owned 425 acres of land along the South Tyger River and Barton's Creek in the Greenville County area and had sold the last 325 acres in 1816 prior to his move to Tennessee.

Laban Loftis had land grants for the land in Jackson County, Tennessee. These land grants were given in payment to the Veterans, and their heirs who had served in the North Carolina Militia during the Revolutionary War. It also applied to the men who laid out the Congressional Reservation. It was North Carolina's way of paying these men and at the same time opening up and settling virgin territory.

Laban settled on Morrisons Creek at the mouth of Roaring River in Gainesboro, Jackson Co., Tennessee prior to 1820 census. Laban owned several pieces of land of considerable acreage on Morrisons Creek and built the homestead which is still standing today, (and occupied by Gainesboro Loftis Fox) and the Loftis Sugar Camp. His son owned additional land adjoining Laban's and covering Blackburns Fork and Spring Creek which is just this side of the Overton County, Tennessee line. William acted as his fathers chain carrier when the land was originally surveyed.

Interesting to not is the land was surveyed in those days, by "poles", which is equal to 16 ½ feet, our measure. Also a chain was used to measure the number of feet in a "pole" and those carrying the chain were called "Chain Carriers."

Laban Loftis died 8 November 1859 at the age of 90 and his wife, Elizabeth died 29 December 1859 at the age of 80. Both are buried in the Loftis Cemetery located on Morrisons Creek, Jackson County, Tennessee.

The Jackson Co. Family History Book
200 Years of Memories
presented by the Jackson Historical Society – 1996
Story of Laban Loftis
Pg. 242

Laban Loftis and his wife, Elizabeth Holcombe Loftis were both born in Maryland. They and their 9 children came by wagon train from Greenville County, South Carolina to the Morrison Creek area of Jackson County, Tennessee in 1816-1818. Laban was a farmer who also operated a grist mill. Some descendants of this family were: a physician (Dr. Henry Preston Loftis), a blacksmith (David L. Loftis), a foreign missionary (Zenas Sanford Loftis), a sheriff (Carsey Lynch), a county court clerk (Odell Bybee), and a state representative (Marion Copper Loftis). Several served in the armed forces during the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, and in Vietnam. A book titled LOFTIS AND THE DESCENDANTS OF LABAN LOFTIS written by Jimmie R. Loftis and Bobbie H. Bryant which was published in 1993 covers this family thoroughly.

The Loftis family descending from Laban is one of the largest families in Jackson County, TN.

www.ajlambert.com