

## JAMES WASHINGTON BURNETT | LEVINIA THORNTON

In 1838 in Greene County, Alabama, 23-year-old **James Washington (Wash) Burnett (1814–1871)** married 17-year-old **Levinia Thornton (1819–1900)**. Both of them were born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and had moved to western Alabama in 1821.

In our Burnett heritage,<sup>1</sup> our first ancestor to come to America was **John Burnett (1610–1686)**, who came from Aberdeen, Scotland, to Essex County, Virginia, in the 17th century. The great-grandson of John Burnett was **Benjamin Burnett (1732–1798)**, who married **Frances Barnett (1739–1812)**. She was a descendant of **William Farrar I (1594–1637)**,<sup>2</sup> who came to America in 1618, and thus is one of my earliest colonial ancestors.

Benjamin Burnett and Frances Barnett named their son **Barnett Burnett (1760–1841)**. He moved his family from Pittsylvania County, Virginia, to Spartanburg County, South Carolina, in the early 19th century and died in Spartanburg in 1841. His son, James Washington Burnett, migrated to Greene County, Alabama, in 1821, presumably with other members of his family.

Our Thornton heritage<sup>3</sup> dates back to **William Thornton (1615–1708)**, who came from Yorkshire, England, to Virginia in the 17th century. In family records, he is called “The Immigrant.” He settled in Richmond County, Virginia.

Five generations later, **Luke Thornton II (1743–1804)** moved his family first to southern Virginia and, after the American Revolutionary War, to Spartanburg County, South Carolina. In 1821 three generations of Thorntons—53-year-old **John Thornton (1768–1840)**, 26-year-old **Luke Thornton III (1795–1848)**, and two-year-old Levinia Thornton—resettled in Pickens County in western Alabama.

Levinia Thornton’s father, Luke Thornton III, married **Sarah Reynolds (1800–1870)** in South Carolina in 1816. Sarah wrote a will in Greene County in 1867, one year after her great-grandson, **James Charles Bryan (1866–1930)**, my grandfather, was born. She died three years later. In that will, she left each of her five children, including my great-great-grandmother, Levinia Thornton Burnett, one bed quilt apiece.<sup>4</sup> The rest of her modest estate was bequeathed to a woman friend with whom she lived.

James Washington and Levinia Thornton Burnett had seven children (four girls and three boys). The oldest was my great-grandmother, **Sarah Elizabeth Burnett (1838–1915)**.

James Washington Burnett died at age 57 in Greene County in 1871. His wife, Levinia Thornton, died 29 years later at age 80. They are both buried in the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery in Greene County.



*The tombstone of James W. Burnett says he was born May 28, 1814, and died August 7, 1871.*



*The tombstone of L. M. (Levinia) Burnett says she was born November 9, 1819, and died June 18, 1900.*

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### 1. OUR BURNETT HERITAGE

<b>John Burnett I (1610–1686)</b>	m.	Lucretia Johnston (c. 1629–1709)
<b>John Burnett II (1664–1718)</b>	m.	Amy Gatewood (1680–1749)
<b>John Burnett III (1702–1775)</b>	m. 1730	Catherine Newbill (1706–1789)
<b>Benjamin Burnett (1732–1798)</b>	m. 1755	Frances Barnett (1739–1812)
<b>Barnett Burnett (1760–1841)</b>	m. 1808	Elizabeth Campbell (c. 1787–____)*
<b>James W. Burnett (1814–1871)</b>	m. 1837	Levinia Thornton (1819–1900)
<b>Sarah E. Burnett (1838–1915)</b>	m. 1862	James M. Bryan (1837–1867)
<b>James C. Bryan (1866–1930)</b>	m. 1897	Jonnie Mae Parker (1871–1946)
<b>John H. Bryan Sr. (1908–1989)</b>	m. 1935	Catherine C. Wilkerson (1909–2002)

Our Burnett lineage begins in Aberdeen, Scotland. The first **John Burnett (1610–1686)** was from St. Michael’s parish in Aberdeen and came to Virginia in the mid-17th century. He lived in Old Rappahannock, Essex County, Virginia, where he died at age 75, in 1686.

Just before the American Revolutionary War, the third **John Burnett (1702–1775)** moved from Essex County to Mecklenburg County in southern Virginia, where he died in 1775. His son, **Benjamin Burnett (1732–1798)**, married **Frances Barnett (1739–1812)**, who descended from **William Farrar (1594–1637)**, an early-17th-century immigrant to the colony of Virginia. Benjamin Burnett and Frances Barnett moved later in the 18th century to nearby Pittsylvania County, and he died there at age 66, in 1798.

Benjamin Burnett and Frances Barnett named their son **Barnett Burnett (1760–1841)**. In 1808, at age 48, Barnett Burnett married his second wife, 21-year-old **Elizabeth (Betsy) Campbell (c. 1787–\_\_\_\_)** in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. In about 1813, they moved to Spartanburg, South Carolina, where their fifth child and only son, my great-great-grandfather **James Washington (Wash) Burnett (1814–1871)**, was born. In 1821 at age seven, James Washington Burnett migrated with some of his family, but not his father, to Greene County, Alabama.

\*Betsy Campbell is Barnett Burnett’s second wife. His first wife was Rhoda (unknown) (1772–1808).

Alabama, originally a part of the territory of Mississippi, became a state in 1819, and after that many settlers were attracted to the fertile farmlands in Greene County, along the Tombigbee River in western Alabama.

Greene County—with its county seat, Eutaw—bears witness today to a “Golden Era” during the two decades before 1860 and the Civil War. The Burnetts, as pioneer settlers, were cotton planters.

In 1837 James Washington (Wash) Burnett married **Levinia Mahala Thornton (1819–1900)**, thus merging two pioneer families that migrated to west Alabama from South Carolina. They had nine children; the oldest was my great-grandmother.

The nine children are:

**Sarah Elizabeth Burnett (1838–1915)** married **James Mordicae Bryan (1837–1867)**.

**Mary Ann Burnett (1839–1891)** married John Caldwell Bonds (1842–1912).

She is buried in the old Hebron Presbyterian Cemetery.

**Richard Barney Burnett (1841–1863)** enlisted in the Confederate Army at Eutaw, Alabama, on September 10, 1861, in Company E of the 20th Alabama Regiment. He is on record as sick in Knoxville, Tennessee, on April 30, 1862. He is last noted in a muster call in February 1863, fighting with his unit near Vicksburg, Mississippi. He died, probably at the Siege of Vicksburg, before surrender on July 4, 1863. He is buried at the Beulah Baptist Church in Greene County.

**James Luke Burnett (1843–1863)** enlisted in the Confederate Army on the same day as his older brother and in the same company. They fought alongside one another for about 18 months. He was wounded on June 26, 1863, at Vicksburg. While in the hospital, he signed with a mark his parole on July 16, 1863. He died enroute back to Greene County in a wagon with his father, James Washington Burnett, on September 15, 1863. He too is buried at the Beulah Baptist church cemetery.

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**Jane I. Burnett (1846–before 1900)** married Joseph W. Parmer (1835–1912).

In the 1880 census, their household includes a boarder, George Burnett (1851–1934), Jane’s 28-year-old brother, and nine children. Their fifth child, Josie Parmer (1870–after 1920), married, in 1897, Rufus M. Lamon (1860–after 1920) of Porterville, Mississippi. Rufus and Josie Parmer Lamon had a son, Louis Lamon (1898–1986), who was the father of Rufus Merwin Lamon (1923–1997), my third cousin, with whom I worked at Bryan Foods for many years.

**Fidella Augusta (Gustie) Burnett (1847–1909)** married John Caldwell Bonds, the widower of her sister, Mary Ann Burnett Bonds, after Mary Ann died in 1891.

**Cordelia C. Burnett (1853–1889)**

**George W. Burnett (1851–1934)** married Annie Lackey (1862–1891) and died at age 83 in Porterville, Mississippi.

**Mary Burnett (1858–\_\_\_\_\_)**

In the 1860 census, James Washington Burnett is listed as a 46-year-old planter in Union, Alabama, in Greene County. He had a net worth of \$16,500 and was the owner of 320 acres of land and 11 slaves. In 1863 the two oldest sons of his three sons died in the Civil War. On January 2, 1864, he filed claims with the government for the death of each son. On September 10, 1864, at age 50, James Washington Burnett enlisted as a private in Captain T. T. Tyree’s Home Guard, a group of reserves in Greene County.

James Washington Burnett died at age 57, in 1871. His wife, Levinia Thornton, died in 1900.

## 2. OUR FARRAR HERITAGE

<b>Henrie Farrar (1480–1549)</b>	m. 1513	Agnes Horsefalls (1480–1549)
<b>John Farrar Sr. (1524–1573)</b>	m.	Margaret Lacy (1520–_____)
<b>John Farrar Jr. (1543–1628)</b>	m. 1574	Cecily Kelke (1552–1628)
<b>William Farrar I (1594–1637)</b>	m. 1625	Cecily Reynolds (1601–1660)*
<b>William Farrar II (1626–1678)</b>	m. 1653	Mary Piggott Baugh (1627–1676)
<b>Thomas Farrar (1665–1742)</b>	m. 1686	Katherine Perrin (1667–1747)**
<b>Katherine Farrar (1700–1763)</b>	m. 1718	John Barnett (1689–1756)
<b>Frances Barnett (1739–1812)</b>	m. 1755	Benjamin Burnett (1732–1798)
<b>Barnett Burnett (1760–1841)</b>	m. 1808	Elizabeth Campbell (c. 1787–_____)
<b>James W. Burnett (1814–1871)</b>	m. 1837	Levinia M. Thornton (1819–1900)
<b>Sarah Elizabeth Burnett (1838–1915)</b>	m. 1662	James M. Bryan (1837–1867)
<b>James C. Bryan (1866–1930)</b>	m. 1897	Jonnie Mae Parker (1871–1946)
<b>John H. Bryan Sr. (1908–1989)</b>	m. 1935	Catherine C. Wilkerson (1909–2002)

The name Farrar is pronounced “fairer.” This ancestral line begins in West Yorkshire, England, in 1480. The founder of the Farrar family in America was **William Farrar I (1594–1637)**, who came to America in August 1618 on board the ship *Neptune*. William Farrar I founded a plantation called Farrar’s Island, located about 12 miles southeast of present-day Richmond, Virginia.

**William Farrar II (1626–1678)** was known as Colonel William Farrar. He served as a justice and a Burgess in Henrico County, Virginia.

William Farrar II’s third child was **Thomas Farrar (1665–1742)**, who was born at Farrar’s Island and in 1686 married **Katherine Perrin (1667–1747)**. Their daughter, **Katherine Farrar (1700–1763)** is my fifth great-grandmother and the last of my Farrar line of ancestors. Thomas Farrar, my sixth great-grandfather, died at St. James Northam in Goochland County, Virginia, in 1742.

\*Cecily Reynolds, my eighth great-grandmother had five husbands. William Farrar I was the third one. Cecily Reynolds is also the mother of Temperance Baley (1617–1652), who was the first wife of my double ninth great-grandfather Richard Cocke Sr. (1602–1665).

\*\*Katherine Perrin, my sixth great-grandmother, is the granddaughter of Katherine Banks Royall Isham, my double eighth great-grandmother. See *Isham Heritage* on pages 292–93.

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**3. OUR THORNTON HERITAGE**

<b>William Thornton (1620-1708)</b>	m. 1641	Elsie Bellington (1620-1646)
<b>Luke Thornton I (1642-1725)</b>	m. 1675	Ann Hall (1654-1725)
<b>Mark Thornton (1686-1721)</b>	m. 1712	Mary Bruce (1692-1721)
<b>John Thornton (1715-1800)</b>	m. 1741	Jemima Longworth (1724-1780)
<b>Luke Thornton II (1743-1804)</b>	m. 1762	Martha Rogers (1747-1810)
<b>John Thornton (1768-1840)</b>	m. 1789	Elizabeth Crow (1767-1855)
<b>Luke Thornton III (1795-1848)</b>	m. 1816	Sarah Reynolds (1800-1870)
<b>Levinia Thornton (1819-1900)</b>	m. 1837	James W. Burnett (1814-1871)
<b>Sarah E. Burnett (1838-1915)</b>	m. 1862	James M. Bryan (1837-1867)
<b>James C. Bryan (1866-1930)</b>	m. 1897	Jonnie Mae Parker (1871-1946)
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Our early Thornton ancestors are called our “Biblical Thorntons.” They are so designated because of the existence of a Thornton family Bible, which is in the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond.

The first of our Thornton line is **William Thornton (1620-1708)**, who is called “The Immigrant.” He was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1620 and died in Virginia at age 88. We are not sure when he came to Virginia but believe he settled in Richmond County in the northern neck of Virginia.

**John Thornton (1715-1800)**, the fourth generation of our Thorntons, was born in Richmond County, Virginia. His son, **Luke Thornton II (1743-1804)**, appears in Lunenburg County, Virginia (southern Virginia), in 1769 and in Henry County, Virginia (southern Virginia), in 1782. Probably in the late 1780s, after the American Revolutionary War, Luke Thornton II moved with his family to Spartanburg County, South Carolina, where he is recorded in 1790.

Luke Thornton II’s son, **John Thornton (1768-1840)** married **Elizabeth Crow (1767-1855)\*** in 1789 in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. In 1821 they moved

*\*In one posting on Ancestry.com Elizabeth Crow is said to be a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. If so, my heritage is 1/64th Native American.*

with their son, **Luke Thornton III (1795-1848)**, and granddaughter, **Levinia Mahala Thornton (1819-1900)**, to Pickens County, Alabama. According to my mother, John and Elizabeth Crow Thornton are buried in unmarked graves at the Unity Baptist Church Cemetery in Aliceville, Alabama (another account says they are in the Beulah Cemetery near Knoxville, Alabama, in Greene County).

Levinia Mahala Thornton was one of five children of Luke Thornton III and **Sarah Reynolds Thornton (1800-1870)**. Levinia is the last Thornton in that line of my ancestry. Incidentally, in family records Levinia’s first name is spelled in many different ways, including Lavinia, Louvenia, Linna, Linny, Lenau, Louvana, and Luvinia.

In 1848, at age 53, Luke Thornton III, my third great-grandfather, died and was buried in Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery in Greene County, Alabama. His tombstone, now over 160 years old, has survived. It is shown below with rather inelegant repairs.



*Left: Luke Thornton III's tombstone.*

*Above: Luke Thornton III's wife, Sarah Reynolds Thornton, outlived her husband by 22 years. She is also buried at the Beulah Baptist Church Cemetery, but her gravestone is a modern replacement.*

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### 4. THE WILL OF MY THIRD GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

#### SARAH REYNOLDS THORNTON

In 1867, three years before she died, **Sarah Reynolds Thornton (1800–1870)** signed a will leaving her property to a caretaker with whom she lived. She also left one bed quilt to each of her five children.

*In the name of God Amen. I Sarah A. Thornton of the county of Greene and State of Alabama being of sound and disposing mind and memory and being desirous of making proper disposition of the worldly effects with which it has pleased God to bless me do make and declare this my last will and testament in manner and form following:*

*Item 1st. I give bequeath and devise to Levinia M. Burnett, Wm. P. Thornton, Elisha M. Thornton, Luke L. Thornton and Martha Jane May one bed quilt apiece.*

*Item 2nd. I give devise and bequeath to Martha Jane Davis (with whom I am living and who has had the care of me for many years) all of my personal and perishable property of every kind consisting in viz 2 bed stands, beds and furniture, 8 chairs, one loom, two tables, cup board, trunk, chest, one bureau, one spinning wheel, one real, one buggy and harness, 3 cows & calves, two ovens, two pots, one pan shovel, tongs, fire irons, and one note against John Roebuck amounting to over one hundred dollars, personal or mixed to have and to hold during her like and should she die before these articles are worn out or destroyed they will be the property of her children.*

*Item 3rd. I hereby constitute and appoint my friend James T. Smith executor of this my last will and testament hereby revoking all others heretofore made by me.*

*Witness my hand and seal this the 15th day of April 1867.*

Sarah Reynolds Thornton died at age 70, three years after she signed this will.

Her husband, **Luke Thornton III (1795–1848)**, predeceased her by 22 years.