

MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON SR.*

b. 11/13/1878 Bolivar Co., MS

d. 8/10/1945 Washington Co., MS



JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON SR.'S PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS



F, G, H

See Family Trees on pages 402-04.

Note: No ancestors are known for Ida Princlla Morton.

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON SR.'S ANCESTORS

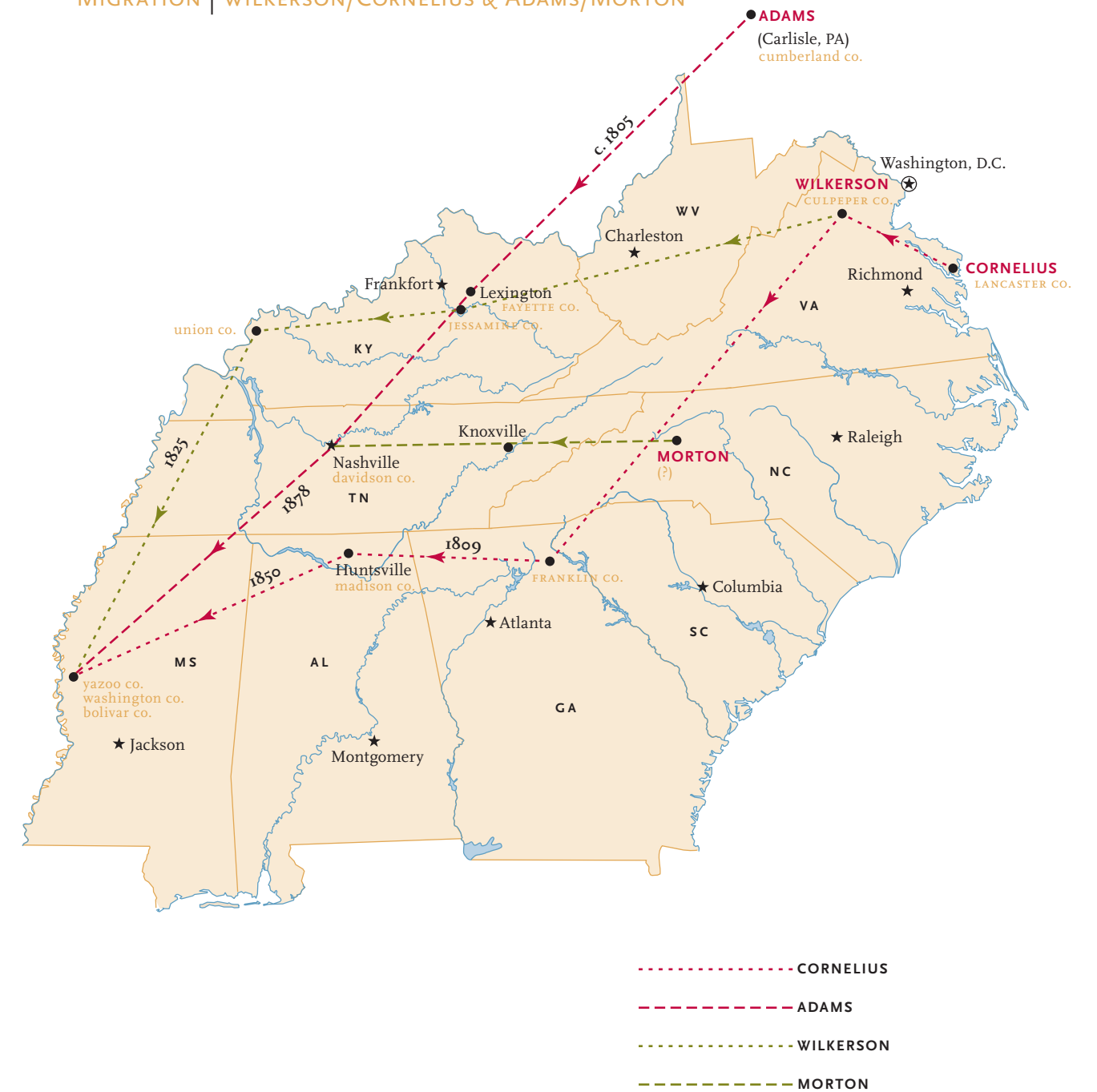
The patriarch of my Wilkerson family was **Peter Wilkerson (1782–1859)**, great-grandfather of Jefferson P. Wilkerson Sr. He was a Virginia-born land speculator, who came to the Mississippi Delta near today's Greenville, Mississippi, from Jessamine and Union counties, Kentucky, with his 18-year-old son, **Thomas Jefferson Wilkerson (1807–1868)**, in 1825.

Jefferson P. Wilkerson Sr.'s grandmother **Dorcas Elizabeth Cornelius (1830–1897)** was from Madison County (Huntsville) in north Alabama, where her family had moved from Franklin County in northeastern Georgia in 1809.

J. P. Wilkerson Sr.'s maternal grandfather, **John Marshall Adams (1814–1862)**, was born in Lexington, Kentucky. John Marshall Adams moved as an infant with his Pennsylvania-born father (an architect and builder) to Nashville, Tennessee.

His wife, **Ida Princella Morton (1822–1888)**, was born in North Carolina, but we know nothing of her ancestry.

MIGRATION | WILKERSON/CORNELIUS & ADAMS/MORTON



JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

My grandfather **Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. (1878–1945)** was named for his grandfather **Thomas Jefferson Wilkerson (1807–1868)**, who died 10 years before Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. was born. His middle name came from his family physician, Dr. Pinckney.

Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. was born at Black Bayou Plantation near Huntington, Mississippi, which was established in 1885 as a railroad town on the Mississippi River. His paternal grandmother, **Dorcus Elizabeth Cornelius Wilkerson Shelby (1830–1897)**, founded the town. Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson's birth date

coincidentally was the exact date of the first frost on November 13, 1878, the day that ended the first year of the worst yellow fever epidemic that ever occurred in the Mississippi Valley. It was an epidemic that created fear of the dreaded disease each year for the next few decades.



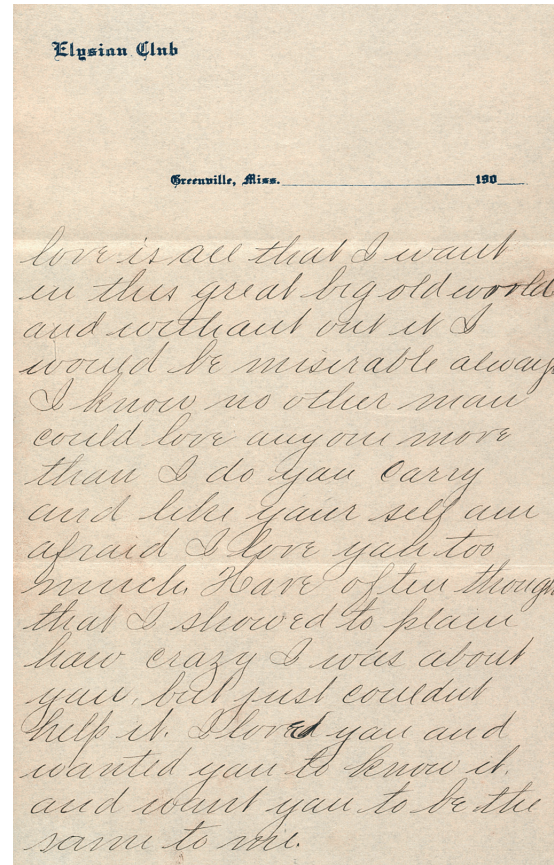
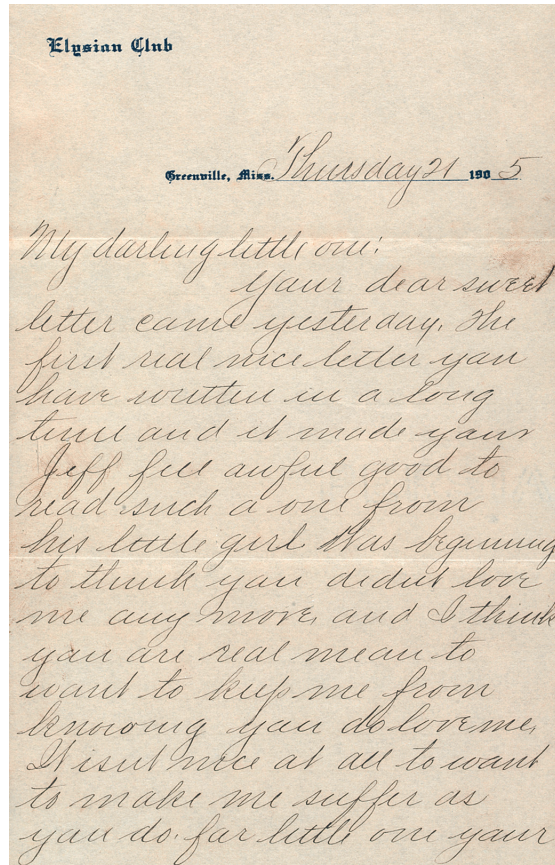
Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. with his sister, Princella Adams Wilkerson, in about 1884.

Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson was the oldest child of his parents, who had married on February 6, 1878, 10 months before he was born. He had two younger sisters, Princella and Josephine; a younger brother, Harry Lee; and twin sisters, Catherine and Elizabeth, who died as infants in about 1900.¹

As a young man, Jeff Wilkerson went to school in Nashville, where his father was educated and where his mother was born and raised. In fact, we believe he lived in Nashville through many of his early years. He also attended St. Thomas Hall in Holly Springs, Mississippi, where he played football and was a classmate of Hugh White (1881–1965), a two-time governor of Mississippi. I attended the second inauguration of Governor White when I was a 15-year-old in 1952.

Just after 1900, when his family's plantation, Black Bayou, was lost because of the relocation of the Mississippi levee, Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. moved to Greenville, Mississippi, about 12 miles to the south. There he was employed as a salesman at the Crawford Grocery Company. While living as a bachelor in Greenville, he resided at the Elysian Club² around the years 1902–05.

Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. probably met **Caroline Mosby Montgomery (1884–1957)**, my grandmother, at a rather young age, for their plantations, Black Bayou and Loughborough, were only seven or eight miles apart. On November 22, 1905, they were married at the First Presbyterian Church in Greenville, Mississippi. He was 27 and she was 21 years old.



The opening pages of a letter from Jeff Wilkerson Sr. to Caroline Montgomery before they married in 1905.

My mother, **Catherine Cameron Wilkerson (1909–2002)**, left several shoe boxes full of letters that were written by Jeff and Caroline during their courtship, in 1903–05.³ At that time, Jeff was living at the Elysian Club. Caroline was residing at Loughborough Plantation, but was in California from February 1904 to the summer of 1904, and Chicago in the summer of 1905. She was often away during the summer months because of the fear of yellow fever. Their correspondence is revealing, but leaves some mystery.

As newlyweds, Jeff and Caroline Montgomery Wilkerson lived in a house on Theobald Street, in back of the Presbyterian Church in Greenville, where my mother, their first child, was born in 1909.



A recent picture of the Wilkerson home at Clifton Plantation.

In 1912 Jeff and Caroline Montgomery Wilkerson purchased about 1,000 acres of farmland near Winterville, Mississippi, adjacent to Loughborough Plantation, where Caroline had lived. The farmland had earlier been a part of Loughborough Plantation and was called Clifton Plantation.

And so, at about age 34, Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson became a Delta cotton planter like three generations of family before him.

Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr.'s years at Clifton were all before agriculture became mechanized, and raising cotton in those days was a very labor-intensive operation. There were about 60 black sharecropper families who lived on Clifton Plantation. On average, each family could provide the labor to tend to about 15 acres. After Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. died in 1945, agricultural farm equipment almost totally replaced manual labor on plantations.

When Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. was 48 years old, he found himself at the epicenter of the greatest river flood in the history of the United States.⁴ Just eight miles north of Clifton Plantation, the Mississippi levee broke at a place called Mound Landing. The Wilkersons' house was inundated. The family escaped unharmed, but there was no crop that year. Their house would burn down three years later, in 1930.



Jefferson P. Wilkerson Sr., my grandfather, in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

My grandfather was a rather shy man of somewhat diminutive stature. I think my mother was the child who most resembled him.

My mother once told me that her father had a very special love for the Mississippi River. Curiously, however, he never learned to swim. Mother also said he was an excellent hunter and fisherman and those were the activities that most occupied him during the winter months. Unfortunately, at age 41, in 1920, he lost one of his eyes in a hunting accident.

In a report of that event, *The Democrat Times*, a local newspaper, called him “one of the Delta’s splendid citizens.”

My grandfather’s other favorite pastime, according to Mother, was listening on the radio to the Grand Ole Opry every Saturday night.

Jeff Wilkerson Sr. and his wife were known by locals as “Jeff” and “Carrie.”

We called him “Granddaddy” and her “Bama.” I was only eight years old when he passed away, but I do remember him from my visits to the plantation as a young child. He died suddenly of a heart attack in August 1945 at 66 years old. In his obituary,⁵ he is described simply as a Delta plantation owner.

He had arranged for Clifton Plantation to be sold by his heirs, his wife and four daughters, to his 30-year-old son, **Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Jr. (1914–1995)**, who returned home from World War II after his father’s death. Today Clifton is owned by Jeff Jr.’s wife, Ida (Iday) Judson Harrold Wilkerson (b. 1918), and is managed by Jeff Jr.’s grandson David Skelton (b. 1967), who is the son of Jeff Jr. and Iday’s daughter, Helen Weddell Wilkerson Skelton (1942–2004).



Me with Granddaddy in the late 1930s. My grandmother is holding the hand of my first cousin Early Spiars.

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62-67

1. PRINCELLA, HARRY LEE, AND JOSEPHINE

My grandfather **Jefferson P. Wilkerson Sr. (1878-1945)** had three siblings who lived to maturity. They produced no grandchildren. He also had twin sisters, Catherine and Elizabeth, who died in infancy in 1900.



Princesa Adams Wilkerson, c. 1890.

Princesa Adams Wilkerson (1880-1966), my great-aunt, was born in Bolivar County, Mississippi. In 1900 she married Hugh Stewart Hayley (1866-1946), an attorney, in Nashville, Tennessee.



Princesa Adams Wilkerson, c. 1900.



Hugh Stewart Hayley (between 1915 and 1920), Aunt Princesa's husband. The boy at the rear is probably his youngest son, John Henry Hayley.

Princesa Wilkerson and Hugh Stewart Hayley had four children, who are my mother's first cousins.

Hugh Stewart Hayley Jr. (1901-1905) died of malaria.

George Wilkerson Hayley (1902-c. 1972) was a photographer and world traveler. I met him on several occasions.

Catherine Stewart Hayley (1907-1992) was a close friend of my mother and I remember her quite well. In 1961 she became the legal guardian of William Hayley (b. 1946), the son of her first cousin. She married John Pelegrin (1904-____) in Stovall Mississippi in 1967. She died in a nursing home in Memphis, Tennessee, at age 84.

John Henry Hayley (1910-1929) died of an appendicitis at Sewanee at age 19.



A photograph, c. 1913, of Princesa Wilkerson Hayley with her two youngest children: Catherine Stewart Hayley at her left and John Henry Hayley at her right side. I believe they are on the steps of their home in Memphis.

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62-67

Aunt Princella married for the second time to Lawson Dunn Falls (1874-____), who founded the American Bag Company in Memphis, Tennessee. He died several years before Princella's death.

Neville and I visited with Aunt Princella when we were students at Southwestern at Memphis in about 1956. She lived at 232 Stonewall in Memphis, Tennessee, in a nice home. I recall her as a very stately woman. I especially remember that she served us sherry on the afternoon of our visit. She died at age 86.



Princella Adams Wilkerson Hayley Falls.

There is great mystery about my great-uncle, **Harry Lee Wilkerson (1885-____)**. My grandmother **Caroline Montgomery Wilkerson (1884-1957)** once said that he married a Jewish girl and moved to California. My mother remembered that



Harry Lee Wilkerson with my mother on his lap, c. 1910.

when Uncle Harry died he was cremated. His ashes were sent back to Mississippi, and my grandfather and Uncle Jeff spread them on Black Bayou Plantation. I never met Great-Uncle Harry.

My great-aunt **Frances Josephine (Jo) Wilkerson (1889-1967)** married a man named Hugh Foote (1886-____). They had no children. She divorced him for



My great-aunt Josephine, c. 1910.

infidelity. Hugh Foote was an uncle of Shelby Foote (1916-2005), the novelist and historian who wrote *Civil War: A Narrative* and starred in a PBS series about the Civil War. Great-Aunt Jo worked for many years in Rosenberg's Department Store in Greenville. She died of colon cancer at age 77.

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62-67

2. THE ELYSIAN CLUB

The Elysian Club was the residence of my grandfather **Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson (1878-1945)** in the early 1900s, while he was working in Greenville at the Crawford Grocery Company. He lived there for at least three years before he married in November 1905. All of his letters to Carrie Montgomery were written at the Elysian Club.



The Elysian Club appears in John M. Barry's book *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America*:

... the Elysian Club, that steely and columned building with its long porch, yellow brick walls, and the hedge in front where people hid corn whiskey during dances. The club was part of the fabric of Greenville. In summer, fans had blown air over 300 pound blocks of ice for cooling, and its card room was filled with memories of planters gambling entire loans they had just taken out to cover a year's crop.

In about 1900, my grandmother **Caroline Mosby Montgomery (1884-1957)** made her debut at the Elysian Club. The Elysian Club closed just after Christmas in 1927. It was a victim of economic devastation after the 1927 flood. It was razed some years later and on its site stands the William Alexander Percy Memorial Library.

3. COURTSHIP LETTERS BETWEEN JEFF AND CARRIE

Between 1903 and 1905, **Jefferson P. Wilkerson (1878-1945)** and **Caroline Mosby Montgomery (1884-1957)** wrote many letters to one another. What follows are selected excerpts from 15 of those letters.

Seven of these letters were written while Caroline was in California from February to July 1904. She was visiting there with her father's first cousin, Victor Montgomery (1846-1911) and his family. Two of the letters were written in August 1905, while Caroline was in Chicago. We do not know why she was there.

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery (at Loughborough), June 21, 1903

My own little (waif)

... I guess I will have to go in on the Capt [John Malcolm Montgomery, Carry's father] some night and tell him my wants. It doesn't look as if I am ever going to get a chance to see him alone anywhere, and I am anxious to have over with it.... Old Dr Smith was over home Sunday and Mama ... to him about my good fortune by having won the dearest little woman living. He seemed very much pleased and said lots of nice things about you. Had a letter from Sister [Princella Wilkerson Haley] yesterday telling me that Lady D Shelton informed her while in Memphis of our engagement and said she was furious because I hadn't told her. Every body seems to know of it, and say you are afraid to come to Greenville because you are scared.

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery (in California), February 21, 1904

Dear little Girl:

Here it is Sunday again almost two weeks since you left and not a line have I gotten from my little one since she left St Louis. Now don't you think you have treated me rather mean. Have stayed up town every night this week until after the night train from Memphis came in hoping to get a letter[,] but it seems that I have hoped in vain....

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62–67

Now little girl if I don't find a letter from you when I get back to the city tomorrow I will be almost tempted to think that you have forgotten me and don't intend to write at all. If you knew how anxious I am to hear from you don't think you would treat me so[,] I believe tis you and not I after all that don't like to write letters[.] Now little one if you will promise to do better in the future I won't scold you any more and will say good night. With all my love for your dear little self.

Jeff

**Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carrie Montgomery (in California),
February 28, 1904**

My naughty little girl:

It was naughty of you to want to fuss with me for calling you my own little girl while you are so far away. If you were here I would do lots of fussing. Just feel like fussing some....

Mamma came home Thursday night and kept me up until 3:30 waiting for the train.... She sent me the swellest box of candy you ever saw. Wish you were here so I could have given it to you. I appreciate it ever so much of coarse [sic], but I don't care any thing for candy as you know.... Mama think[s] lots of you Carry, and you are the only girl that I have ever heard her say very much about. Even Papa has said several nice little things about you....

Jeff

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery, April 13, 1904

My dear Carolyn:

... The old river is getting awfully high again but don't think it will get near so high as last year. The Gun Boat Nashville passes in the morning on her way to St. Louis. How would you like to take another trip to Arkansas City. Wish I could have it to do over. Think I have told all the latest so will say good night to my little one. With lots of love for little Carolyn.

Somebody

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery, April 27, 1904

My dear Carolyn

... I went to the game Sunday and saw Greenville win from Yazoo City. Gville has a real good team now. The opening series will begin here Sunday with Natchez. Sunday night I went around to see a few of the girls[:] among them Miss Susie and Kate Ireys.

... Now little girl you must not think me angry, and write me a real sweet letter real soon. With all my love for the dearest little girl on earth.

Jeff

Carrie Montgomery (in California) to Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville), May 3, 1904

Here are some pictures I finished—getting to be quite a photographer—Do you know who they are? Will write soon—leave in a little while for San Diego so farewell—I didn't know Mr Payne was coming until you said so—Don't believe it now—They havn't [sic] told me about it—

Au revoir mi amor

Carrie

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery, May 4, 1904

My dear little Girl:

Am feeling a little tired to night, after the dance at Shaw last night but am not very sleepy so will tell you about what a good time we had. About twenty five couples went from here on a special train which left at eight thirty. We all dressed here so went from the train to the ball room which was only a short distance from the depot. Several of the boys from Benoit came down with Miss Eason and went up on the train with us. Several more joined our party at Leland. In all I suppose there was at least a hundred couples at the dance. The ball room was beautifully decorated with flower[s] of all kinds and the floor was just fine. The music couldn't have been beaten. Cross Bros band from Mfs. [?] We danced until twelve then we marched up the street a short ways to the dining room and sat down to one of the swellest suppers I have ever eaten. Champaign [sic] flowed like water and we

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62–67

all of coarse [sic] got what was coming to us, and that was a plenty. After supper those who were able went back to the dancing room and made things lively until two oclock[,] when we took our departure in tears. We all enjoyed our selves very much[,] and the nice time we had will be remembered for some time....

... With lots of love for my own little girl

Jeff

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery (in California), June 14, 1904

My own little girl:

I have often thought off [sic] and remember very well the three dates you mentioned in your little letter. The first two I shall never for get. Both times we were at a dance together[,] I often think how pleasantly I spent each night[,] the one in Ark City [Arkansas City, Arkansas] especially. The 3rd of this June I started to write and ask you if you remembered our experience in the City across the river.

I can see you blushing now as you did the time we went down to Mr Rodgers room to drink the champaign [sic]. I remember very distinctly how you looked, and little one I loved you then almost as mush as I do now....

I went out to the June dance I told you about and had a great time. A pretty gay crowd was there so had to be gay myself to stay with the bunch. What do you think. It's reported that I have up a case with Miss Kate Irey. Have been caught in the Kandy Kitchen twice with her and every body has been talking about it. I can't go with a girl but what every body has lots to say about it.

Your father ordered some things over the phone yesterday. I took the order but don't think he knew who I was. Your Sis says she is thinking of going to Bon Acqua Springs [Bon Aqua Springs was a hotel in Hickman County, Tennessee] awhile this summer. I hope she will for I think Mama [Catherine Adams Wilkerson] will be there for awhile and know they will have a good time together. Sam is making all kinds of preparations for the encampment, so you had better come home and go. I do hope you will get home in time to go Carry. I will enjoy myself lots more if you are there.

It's getting most time I was getting another letter from my little girl so will cut this one off and write again real soon. With lots of love for Carry.

Jeff

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery (in Winterville), February 19, 1905

My own little girl,

... When I think of the troubles of others you can't imagine little girl how fortunate I feel[,] even if I am poor to have the girl I love love me, and Carry you don't know how happy your last sweet letter made me feel to have you say that you would wait forever for me, and would be true to me any where I went. You must never fear that I will tire of your love for tis that and to have you happy that I most long for. I don't believe there is another in the world just like you Carry and I pray god to watch over you and help you to love me as I do you until I am able to come and take my little darling for my own.

With all my love for you

Your own dear

Jeff

Jeff Wilkerson to Carry Montgomery, June 23, 1905

My own little Girl:

Your letter today was anything but encouraging to a fellow in my position, and must confess that the thought of having such a duty to perform as I is rather trying on one's nerves. I have thought about it a great deal and hardly know what is the best way out of it. Knowing your feelings as I do makes it harder still on me. Your father I feel sure won't consent[,] and I know how hard it will be for my little one to act against his wishes[,] but unless you make up your mind either one way or the other[,] it will be useless for me to say anything. Have wished several times that I had have asked him before Gertrude [Carry's second cousin from California] came. He no doubt will try to bring her in as an excuse.

Jeff

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62–67

Carry Montgomery (in Chicago/2714 Michigan Ave.) to Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville), August 13, 1905 [?]

Just wonder [?] what you are doing this beautiful Sunday.

Cousin Annie [?] & Cousin Sallie have gone to Church.

Elizabeth and Louise have gone in an auto with Mr. McHee out to Highland Park Club. Cousin Annie and I were wild to go but our conscience hurt us so we wouldn't go. Cousin Sallie is awful blue—last Friday—Louise and I became desperate, so we planned to jump the crowd.... So we went to Gemthus [?] for lunch. It is perfectly beautiful there. We certainly were out of our element, but no one could tell, for we acted like we were used to such always—We then went to the Ill. Theatre to see "Richard Carle," play "The Mayor of Tokio." It was simply fine—we got home about twelve o'clock....*

Elizabeth ... visited here once [?]. The McHees out on Grand Boulevard. There no one is allowed to build unless he is worth some few million—They came for her yesterday in their auto. She after much talk gained courage to tell of her three charming friends—They at once asked us out to six o'clock dinner yesterday. Of course we were in our seventh heaven. The idea of dining with millionaires—so Louise[,] Cousin A.[,] Elizabeth[,] and I decked [?] in our best and went out. They have the loveliest [?] home—perfectly elegant. We were treated just like home folks so felt perfectly alright—After dinner [?] was ... Mr. McHee had his auto brought around and took the crowd out to "The White City"—Honestly [?] it would be a pleasure to have money just to spend it like he does—he went in the City—You know its like the "Pike [?]" in ... We went in every thing ... the crowd [?]. Every thing we went in cost him from a dollar to two and a quarter....

Enjoyed your letter so much—please write often to your little girl. For I do love my Jeff so. I am going to write to your mother some time when things get quiet. Do you miss me much? I don't ... you do.

I haven't heard from Gertrude yet—wonder how she likes things—

Will write often. Wish all of my love for you—as usual—

Your own—

Little Girl

*A two-act farcical opera that opened in New York in December 1905.

Jeff Wilkerson to Carry Montgomery, August 28, 1905

My dearest little one:

Am on guard again tonight and know of no better way of passing away the time than writing to my little one. John has been telling me so much about his love affairs that I have grown tired of them and told him he could go sleep so I could be alone with my loved one and think of my own love stories.... Now little one about our future places. I [am] as all the others in favor of keeping house and feel that I will be much happier with my little girl all to my self... It would as you say cost almost as much to board as it will keeping house and I could never be satisfied boarding. I want a house of my own and will have one if it is possible. I went by to look at the house you spoke of and think it a very nice one. Don't think it is quite finished yet. I could get things from Crawford at cost, which wouldn't be very much[,] I feel sure we could live on seventy five and even if it cost a little more I would rather keep house. Just think little one how nice it would be to come home after work and have a place you could do as you pleased in instead of having to go in a single room and stay until the supper bell rings[,] eat[,] and go back in the room[,] or have to sit with a lot of people that perhaps won't be at all congenial[,] I don't think any one will hardly rent [?] the little house we speak of for a while yet, but if you want me will see what I can do about it.... Mama's address is 142 North Spruce Street Nashville Tenn. She left Memphis Friday. Papa was afraid he couldn't get back until after frost so desided [sic] not to go. You speak of coming back in Sept. as if you could get back. If you get back before Nov[,] it will surprise me very much. Things are not at all encouraging and fear the worst is yet to come [reference to the yellow fever epidemic], so my little one might just as well be contented. I feel lots better that you are away, but I do miss you so much and long for the good old wintertime when I can have my darling girl all to my self in a home of our own. Can't find any more papers so will have to stop. Will write again tomorrow if I get a chance. Good bye until then[,] Yours forever with love.*

Jeff

*He is on guard at a yellow fever quarantine camp to see that no one breaks the quarantine by going into Greenville.

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62–67

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery, September 10, 1905

My own little one:

Had two dear sweet letters from you today....

The idea of you thinking my folks will wonder if you are good enough for me. You ought to know better than that[,] and those that know you know that I am not worthy of such a dear little girl as you. No man is Carry, but I am going to do all that any one can do to make my self worthy of you and if my little one will only try and love me it will be all that I will want to make me happy. Must say good by [sic] so I can get this in the evening mail. Write me and tell me if you are really unwell[,] for I am anxious to know. With all my love for my little one and [?] only.

Jeff

Jeff Wilkerson to Carry Montgomery, September 21, 1905

My darling little one:

Your dear sweet letter came yesterday. The first real nice letter you have written in a long time and it made your Jeff feel awful good to read such a one from his little girl. Was beginning to think you didn't love me any more, and I think you are real mean to want to keep me from knowing you do love me. It isn't nice at all to want to make me suffer as you do, for little one your love is all that I want in this great big old world and without out [sic] it I would be miserable always[,] I know no other man could love any one more than I do you Carry and like your self am afraid I love you too much. Have often thought that I showed to [sic] plain how crazy I was about you, but just couldn't help it. I loved you and wanted you to know it, and want you to be the same to me.

I came home last night to write you, but found Mr Hood had invited some boys up to play poker so had to join them. The guests were L Helzim [?] W Robertshaw Sharkey H Bass and Knap Migget. We played until two oclock and I won one dollar and fifty five cents. To night is the night for the big time at camp ten & eleven.

Nearly every body in town went out....

Jeff

Jeff Wilkerson (in Greenville) to Carry Montgomery, October 12, 1905

My dear little one:

It has been so long since I have written you I hardly know how to start....

Will see Dr Toons as soon as I can tomorrow. Wouldn't it be awful if we couldn't get the house after having made all our plans. Will feel like swearing if we can't get it.

Am awful glad to know your father feels an interest in our affair.

Do you want me to make a list of the people I want to have invitations. I told Will and Mal to night that I wanted them to be in it, and they seemed delighted. Have forgotten who the others were, and how we had them arranged.

Have been congratulated by nearly ever body I met to day. Never shook hands with so many people in all my life.

Just know my little girl's ears have been burning all day. Every body tells me what a fine girl you are as if I didn't know it myself. It makes me feel awful good to hear our friends say such nice things about my little one and I am just as proud of her as can be. Guess I will hear from Mama this week and will bring [?] her list out on Saturday or Sunday and finish up the whole thing. Am afraid 500 invitations won't be enough.

Will call up tomorrow and let you know what Dr Toons says. Until then by by [sic]. With all my love for my own little one.

Jeff

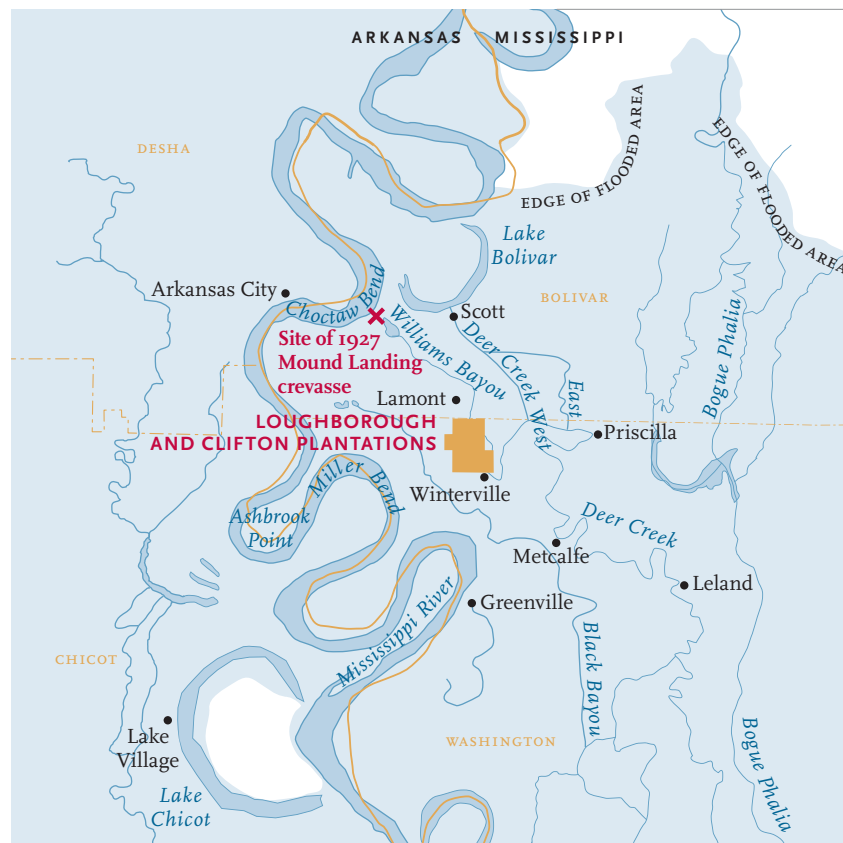
JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62-67

4. THE 1927 FLOOD

At 8:00 a.m. on the morning of April 21, 1927, the Mississippi River levee collapsed at Mound Landing, just eight miles north of Clifton Plantation, the home of my grandparents and my 18-year-old mother. The levee's breach, caused by rains that had fallen for months, unleashed a torrent of water with a force twice as great as Niagara Falls. My family was squarely in the middle of the greatest river flood in the history of the United States.

The crevasse caused by the levee break became a half-mile channel through which water poured into the Delta for months. The 1927 floodwaters eventually covered 27,000 square miles, an area five times the size of Connecticut. More than 130,000 homes were lost, and 700,000 people were displaced.



The impact of the flood on Greenville, near the home of my parents, is documented in an excellent article written by my first cousin Princella Wilkerson Nowell (b. 1948) for the Mississippi Historical Society. It is available on their website, Mississippi History Now.



Downtown Greenville on April 30, 1927, a few days after the levee break. Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

It is likely that my family was well prepared on the day that the levee broke. My mother told me that her family first evacuated to a two-story building in Winterville. After that, they went to Greenville, where they boarded a boat, the

Sprague, and traveled down to Vicksburg, which was on high ground. From Vicksburg, my grandmother and her five children went by train to Memphis, where they were refugees housed at Southwestern College for the next few months.

At Southwestern they stayed at Robb Hall, a newly constructed building at the college, which had been moved from Clarksville to Memphis in 1925. The president of Southwestern Memphis was Dr. Charles E. Diehl (1875-1964), whose wife, Catherine Bailey "Kate" Ireys Diehl (c. 1880-1955), was a dear friend and second cousin of my grandmother.

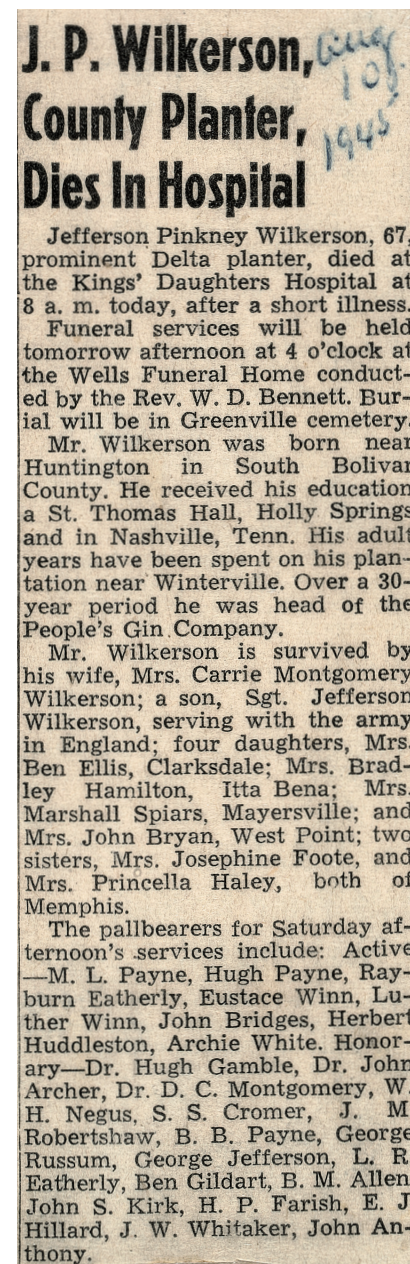
The floodwater began to recede in July 1927, and the family returned home in August. My mother said they found about three feet of silt on the floors of the house, but it was able to be restored.

Recovery from the flood was very slow, for bridges, roads, and ditches had been washed away, and 50 percent of the black laborers left to seek a better life in the North. The economy was in shambles, and the Great Depression was on its way, but my family survived it all.

JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON'S LIFE

PAGES 62-67

5. JEFFERSON PINCKNEY WILKERSON SR.'S OBITUARY



The obituary of my grandfather Jefferson Pinckney Wilkerson Sr. in 1945. He was 66, not 67 as reported in the newspaper.

F

THOMAS JEFFERSON WILKERSON

b. 6/1/1807 *Jessamine Co., KY*
d. 2/13/1868 *Bolivar Co., MS*
m.

PETER WILKERSON

b. 1782 *prob. Culpeper Co., VA*
d. 11/11/1859 *Bolivar Co., MS*

m. 7/23/1802
Jessamine Co., KY

POLLY MILLER

b. 1783 *Culpeper Co., VA*
d. 1807/15 *Jessamine Co., KY*

FRANCIS MILLER

b. 1748
Culpeper Co., VA
d. 10/16/1838
Jessamine Co., KY

ELIZABETH FREEMAN

b. 1763
Culpeper Co., VA
d. 4/5/1845
Jessamine Co., KY

m. c. 1782

H

JOHN MARSHALL ADAMS

b. 6/1/1814 *Fayette Co., KY*
d. 12/24/1862 *Davidson Co., TN*
m. 12/18/1839 *Davidson Co., TN*

RICHARD KEENE ADAMS

b. 11/1/1780 *Cumberland Co., PA*
d. 8/22/1818 *Davidson Co., TN*

m. 1801
Cumberland Co., PA

ELIZABETH WOODS

b. 1783 *Tyrone Co., Ireland*
d. 3/11/1832 *Davidson Co., TN*

[FATHER]

ABRAHAM ADDAMS

b.
d. 2/28/1858

(SEE H-1)

G

DORCAS ELIZABETH CORNELIUS

b. 12/28/1830 *Madison Co., AL*
d. 1/12/1897 *Bolivar Co., MS*
m.

DAVID CORNELIUS

b. 8/31/1800 *GA*
d. 5/10/1836 *Lawrence Co., AL*

m. 12/22/1824
Lawrence Co., AL

NANCY MILLER

b. 1809
d. 1/19/1860

ROWLAND CORNELIUS

b. 1755 *Culpeper Co., VA*
d. 7/12/1822 *Madison Co., AL*
(will dated)

ELEANOR WATKINS

b. 1777 *GA*
d. 1861 *Madison Co., AL*

m.

H-1

ABRAHAM ADDAMS

b.
d. 2/28/1858
m.

ABRAHAM ADDAMS

b. 1732 *Lancaster Co., PA*
d. 1803

m. 1757
Lancaster Co., PA

ELIZABETH MCGUIRE

b. 1737 *Lancaster Co., PA*

WILLIAM ADDAMS

b. 7/---/1705
Montgomery Co., PA
d. 5/26/1773
Lancaster Co., PA

ANN LANE

b. bef. 1710
d. c. 1773

EDWARD LANE

b.
d.

ANN RICHARDSON

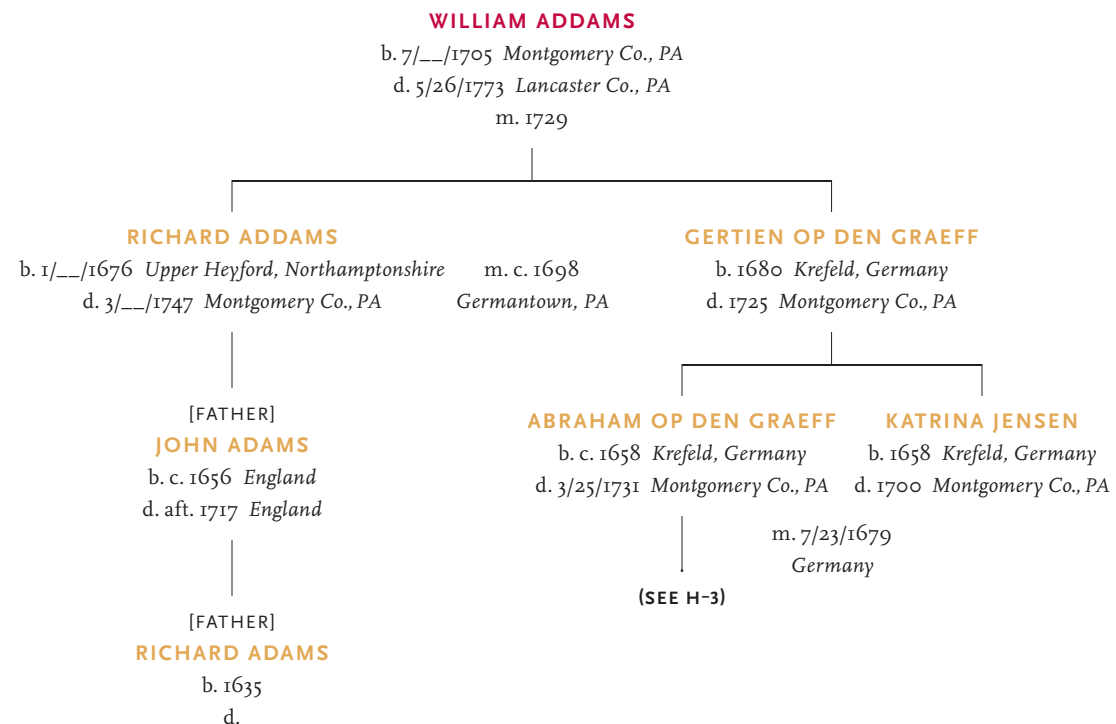
b.
d. aft. 1724

[FATHER]

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

b. c. 1635 *London, England*
d. 6/10/1719 *Philadelphia Co., PA*

H-2



H-3

