

**MILDRED "MILLY" WANSLEY**

**Wife of JOHN WANSLEY**

**of ALBEMARLE COUNTY, VIRGINIA and ELBERT COUNTY, GEORGIA**

**(Previously known as Amelia Barber)**

**FICTIONS and FACTS in WANSLEY FAMILY GENEALOGIES**

**by**

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**FICTIONS and FACTS in WANSLEY FAMILY GENEALOGIES**

**INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, AND CONTINUING PROBLEMS**

John Wansley was born 1738, grew up in Louisa County, Virginia, and lived at least 27 years in adjacent Albemarle County before moving in 1800 to Elbert County, Georgia, where he died in 1835. It has been widely accepted by current-day Wansley family historians that John Wansley's wife was named Amelia Barber, and most accept that she was the daughter of Patrick Barber of New Jersey and New York. However, there is no proof for either claim.

My research on "Amelia" began over six years ago by collecting and investigating information and stories about her that were published in the late 1970's and are now widely disseminated through the Internet. Since almost no one gives sources or documentation, my focus became tracking down the sources of the various stories and claims, and then trying to find if there was documentation that could support them.

What I subsequently found in primary records and historical documents raises serious questions about the validity of current claims about "Amelia" and about the quality of the research upon which those claims rest. The numerous errors, misidentifications, misrepresentations, unsubstantiated claims, and internal contradictions cast doubt on the reliability of the information that has been passed down.

This report details my research to date. It is only a start, an attempt to clear the underbrush, assess our position, and chart where to go from here. The research indicates a need to go back to the beginning, using current resources and modern standards of research, to discover who John Wansley's wife really was. Although there is more yet to learn, four points are clear from research to date:

- 1.) The name of John Wansley's wife was not Amelia, but Mildred, who went by the nickname Milly.
- 2.) Mildred was the only wife of John Wansley and mother of all his children.
- 3.) The claim that Mildred/"Amelia's" father was Patrick Barber of New Jersey and New York is only family myth and has no basis in fact.
- 4.) Mildred's maiden name almost certainly was Whitten rather than Barbour/Barber.

The following report discusses each point in detail.

**PART I: WHAT WAS THE NAME OF JOHN WANSLEY'S WIFE?**

***Proof that her name was not Amelia, but Mildred, nicknamed Milly***

John Wansley's wife is generally known as "Amelia Barber." However, there are no primary records or documentation to support this claim.

Albemarle County, Virginia, Chancery Court records prove that John Wansley's wife was named Mildred, not Amelia. The dates in the record show that Mildred was the mother of all John's children and was still his wife in 1798. She then surely would be the same woman as John's wife Milly (the standard nickname for Mildred) who joined Vans Creek Church in Elbert County, Georgia in 1801 or 1802. According to the Bible record of Thomas Wansley, John Wansley's wife Milly died 9 January 1829.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Milly was the common nickname for both Mildred and Amelia. [*History and Genealogy Unit, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT*] As we shall see, the mistake about John's wife's name revolves around several confusions with the nickname Milly by 20th century Wansley family historians.

Proof that John's wife was named Mildred comes from the Albemarle County Chancery Court suit of *Walter Goldsmith v John Dowell*, in which John Wansley and his wife Mildred Wansley testify on behalf of Goldsmith. [*Albemarle Chancery Court Case (ACC) ID 1801-004, Library of Virginia (LVA)*] In her 1798 deposition, Mildred Wansley testifies to events concerning her husband John Wansley, including a conversation that took place in their home in February of 1780.

There has never been any doubt or question that Sarah Wansley, born 6 Mar 1765, [*Beck Family Record, R692, NARA*] and Martha/Patsy Wansley were both daughters of the same mother, who was called "Amelia" in publications in the 1970's. Patsy herself reportedly said that she was the "youngest and Sarah the eldest." [*Katharine W. Otto, Genealogy of Martin-Price (1978), p. 2*] (The context implies youngest/eldest *daughter* not *child*. This interpretation is supported as true to the extent that primary records, such as marriage records and censuses, still exist.)

According to her grave marker, Martha/Patsy Wansley was born 1 March 1781. [*Mt. Hope Cemetery, Lumpkin Co., GA*] Thus, Patsy was born 13 months after the events of February 1780 in which Mildred Wansley testified she participated as John Wansley's wife. This would mean Patsy and by extension Sarah and all children in between were children of John's wife named Mildred Wansley.

Wansley children following Patsy were Thomas, born 29 Apr 1783 according to his family Bible records, [*Wansley, p.38*] and Larkin, born 1785 according to the 1860 Elbert County, GA census. Since Mildred Wansley's deposition as John Wansley's wife was dated 3 October 1798, she was also mother of Thomas and Larkin. Thus all of John Wansley's children were Mildred's.

John Wansley and his family moved from Albemarle County, Virginia, to Elbert County, Georgia in 1800. [*John Wansley Revolutionary War Pension Application, S32045, National Archives & Records Admin. (NARA)*]. In 1801 or 1802 John's wife Milly as well as other family members joined Vans Creek Church. [*Vans Creek Church records, Ordinary's Office, Elberton, GA*] (One date is for wife Milly and the other is for daughter Milly who married and left the church in 1803, with John's wife Milly remaining in 1804 church records.) Since Milly was the commonly used nickname for Mildred, there is no reason, and no evidence, to suggest this was anyone other than John's wife Mildred in Virginia 3 to 4 years previously. Mildred "Milly" Wansley's death was recorded in Thomas Wansley/Wanslow's family Bible as Milly Wanslow. [*Frank N. Wansley, From Rome to Ruckersville (1975), p. 41*] She died 9 January 1829, six years almost to the day before her husband John died 13 January 1835. Both died in Elbert County, Georgia.

Long before discovering this proof from the Albemarle Chancery Court records that John's wife's name was Mildred, I had found indirect evidence that her name very likely was Mildred rather than Amelia. After learning that Milly, as John's wife was called in later Georgia church and Bible records, was the commonly-used nickname both for Amelia and for Mildred, several factors pointed to the likelihood of her formal name being Mildred instead of Amelia.

First, in many years of researching primary records from the 1700's in and around counties where John Wansley lived, I do not remember ever seeing the name Amelia. However, Mildred was a name that did appear in the records, many of whom were shown to be called Milly.

Secondly, I did not find any descendants of John Wansley named Amelia, but at least two grandchildren carried the name Mildred. Son Thomas Wansley had a daughter Martha with a middle name of Mildred [*Doris Steed Smith, Wansley Line (undated), p. 4*] Daughter Sarah Wansley Beck had a daughter with the first name of Mildred. [*Smith, Wansley Line, p. 3*] Significantly, Mildred Beck went by the name of "Milly." [*Smith, Wansley Line, p. 3; confirmed by 1870 census, Elbert County, GA, as "Milly Gray."*] This seemed a good indication that John Wansley's wife Milly was also Mildred, rather than Amelia.

The Albemarle County court records proving John's wife's formal name was Mildred show this indirect evidence to be valid.

### **Origins of the name "Amelia"**

If John Wansley's wife was named Mildred, and she went by the nickname of Milly, where did the name Amelia come from?

The earliest mention I have found for John Wansley's wife as Amelia is in 1914-1916 in the first applications submitted for membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) under the soldier-ancestor John Wansley. These applications came from sisters Caroline Price Wilson (b. 1860) and Isabella Price Charters (b. 1864). [Member ID# 41757 & 60842, DAR Library, Washington, DC]. The sisters were great-great-granddaughters of John and Mildred through their daughter Martha/Patsy Wansley and her husband Benjamin Davis (my own direct ancestors). In 1928, a third sister, Sarah Price West (b. 1869), had an entry in Frederick A. Virkus' *The Abridged Compendium of American Genealogy*, which also gave the name Amelia for John Wansley's wife. [Virkus, Vol. III, (Genealogical Publishing Co., reprint 1968) p. 384. Entry begins with Sallie Wansley Price West.]

Information from early DAR records and from Virkus' *Compendium* is well known among genealogists to be highly unreliable. Neither the early DAR nor Virkus required proof, documentation, or sources for the ancestor information they published, and none of these Wansley-Davis descendants provided any. Since all these earliest reporters were of the same family, we cannot consider their concurrence as verified by independent sources.

On the one hand, the three sisters Isabelle Price Charters, Caroline Price Wilson and Sarah Price West might have cause to know this kind of family information. Their mother Martha Matilda Martin Price was the granddaughter of John Wansley's daughter Patsy Wansley and her husband Benjamin Davis. Martha Matilda grew up in the same household with her Wansley-Davis grandparents and was 30 years old when they died. On the other hand, however, significant parts of the Price sisters' scant DAR information have been proved in error (e.g., the death date and death place of Benjamin Davis the "Patriot"). As we shall see in later sections of this report, much of the information from the Price sisters' daughter/niece Katharine Wilson Otto is also unreliable, either proved in error, highly questionable, or unsubstantiated by primary records.

Interestingly, the names of the three sisters may give a clue to where the name Amelia came from. As with John Wansley's wife Mildred/Milly, all but one of the Wansley's daughters, and a number of Wansley descendants in the next generations, the three Price sisters went by nicknames. Isabelle was Belle, Caroline was Carrie, and Sarah was Sallie. (Carrie's daughter Katharine Otto was Kate.) Since John Wansley's wife went by Milly, it seems likely that Milly was the name by which the Price sisters knew her. Could it be the three sisters who assumed Milly stood for Amelia? Born in Georgia around the Civil War, the sisters came of age at a time when the name Amelia was popular in both fiction and fact, and certainly more common than it ever was in mid-18th century Virginia (as well as more euphonious to modern ears than Mildred). This is only speculation on my part, but combined with other information already discussed, the possibility does seem worth considering.

### **No second wife for John Wansley**

The complications around the nickname Milly took another turn with three Wansley descendants who published family histories in the late 1970's (discussed in detail shortly). The Price sisters do not mention that John Wansley had any second wife. However, authors Frank N. Wansley, Katharine Wilson Otto, and Doris Steed Smith, working with shared information, posit that John Wansley had a second wife named "Milly" after his first wife "Amelia" died. According to Frank Wansley in *From Rome to Ruckersville*, the reason for this assumption came from the following entries in the Bible of Thomas Wansley/Wanslow. [Wansley, p. 41] (Note that for some reason not yet clear, the John Wansley family went by Wanslow for several decades after moving to Georgia from Virginia where the name had appeared only as Wansley.)

John Wanslow, Sr. died January 13, 1835

Milly Wanslow died January 9, 1829

Polly Wanslow, daughter of John and Milly Wanslow, died September 1806

It must be remembered that the three Wansley family authors believed that John Wansley's wife was supposed to be named Amelia, based on the Price sisters' claims six decades earlier. (Author Katharine Otto was the daughter of one Price sister, and niece of the other two sisters). In addition, the authors knew that Milly was the nickname for Sarah Wansley's daughter Mildred Beck. [Smith, *Wansley Line*, p. 3]

However, these authors obviously were unaware that the name Milly also had been the common nickname for Amelia. Consequently, they presumed the Milly of the Bible record was a different woman from Amelia, and thus must be a second wife.

I have found no evidence that John Wansley had two wives other than this confusion over the nickname Milly. On the other hand, long before finding proof in the Albemarle court record, I did find indirect evidence that John had only one wife.

The Wansley family histories published in the 20th century do not mention that "Amelia" went by a nickname, yet it seemed likely she might. In John Wansley's family almost all the females went by nicknames. In John Wansley's will, he names four of his five daughters by their nicknames--Sallie (for Sarah), Patsy (for Martha), Nancy (for Ann), and Milly. [*Elbert County Record Book 1830-35, p. 482*] His daughter whose death is recorded in Thomas Wansley's Bible also went by a nickname, Polly (for Mary). Son Nathan's name was a nickname or shortened form of Nathaniel. Therefore, it would not be surprising for John's wife to go by a nickname also. Thus, there seemed no reason to think that John's wife Milly in Georgia records was a different woman from John's wife earlier in Virginia who was thought to be named Amelia, since Milly was the nickname for Amelia as well as for Mildred. It seemed implausible that John married two women whose nickname would be Milly, since unlike names such as Elizabeth or Mary, the nickname Milly and its formal forms were not that commonly found in the relevant time and place.

As explained earlier in this report, the name and dates in the 1798 Albemarle Chancery Court deposition confirm that John Wansley had only one wife who was mother of all his children. Her name was Mildred, with the commonly-used nickname of Milly. Thus, Mildred Wansley surely would be the same Milly Wanslow who joined Vans Creek Church in 1801 or 1802 and whose death is recorded in Thomas Wansley/Wanslow's Bible as 9 January 1829.

### ***Dealing with confusions about John Wansley's wife's name***

Not only the three Wansley family authors and the earlier Price sisters but also current Wansley researchers all call John Wansley's wife by the name Amelia. Thus, the exclusive use in this report of her real name of Mildred or Milly could get confusing, especially since Milly was thought (in error) to be the name of an alleged second wife.

It is clear from the submitters' and authors' previously published lineage lines and stories that their name Amelia refers to the same person as Mildred and that they just had the wrong name. For the remainder of this report I have chosen sometimes to refer to John Wansley's wife as "Amelia" (in quotation marks) or Mildred/"Amelia" in an attempt to be true to the fact that her proved name was Mildred as well as true to the context of previously published Wansley information that mistakenly calls her Amelia. The device of Mildred/"Amelia" does not mean that Mildred's nickname was Amelia, only that the writers who used the name Amelia were unaware that her true formal name was Mildred (with the nickname of Milly). I apologize to the reader for these somewhat awkward devices, and I sincerely hope they do not add even more confusion about John's only wife, Mildred, who usually went by Milly.

## **PART II: WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JOHN WANSLEY'S WIFE?**

The Price sisters who gave us the name of Amelia for John Wansley's wife also said that her maiden name was Barbour or Barber, again with no proof or documentation. Only one sister's information included any claim for the name of "Amelia's" father. In the submission to Frederick Virkus' *Abridged Compendium of American Genealogy* published in 1928, Sarah Price West's entry says that John Wansley's wife "Amelia Barbour" was the daughter of William Barbour of Albemarle County, Virginia. [*Virkus, Vol. III, p. 384*]

Yet Sarah Price West's own niece Katharine Wilson Otto (b. 1888) reported, and apparently also originated, the now widespread claim that "Amelia Barber's" father was Patrick Barber of New Jersey and New York. Given this discrepancy between the claims of aunt and niece, we at least have proof that any claim as to Mildred/"Amelia's" father was not long-time family knowledge written or passed down from Mildred or her children, but a construct of much later descendants.

We turn now to discussing the conflicting claims, beginning with the best known and most widely accepted, the claim for Patrick Barber as Mildred/"Amelia" Wansley's father.

### **CLAIM for PATRICK BARBER of NEW JERSEY and NEW YORK**

#### **Sources of the claim for Patrick Barber**

John Wansley's wife has been claimed to be the daughter of Patrick and Jane Fraser Barber of Princeton, NJ, and Orange County, NY. This claim is based solely on undocumented and unsubstantiated stories and was disseminated by Wansley descendants Frank Wansley, Katharine Wilson Otto and Doris Steed Smith who published family history books in the late 1970's. As explained in Part I of this report, the authors were unaware of John's wife's proper name of Mildred and nickname of Milly, and they call her "Amelia."

The most widely-known source for claims that Mildred/"Amelia" Wansley was Patrick Barber's daughter and for other "Amelia" stories is from Frank N. Wansley (1901-1983) in his 1975 book *From Rome to Ruckersville: Our Wansley History*. Although out of print, the book is still available in libraries, particularly in Georgia, and quotations from this book are widespread on Wansley genealogy web pages (though frequently not cited as such). The author warmly acknowledges, "No one has been of more assistance to me with this book than 'Cousin Kate,' and to her I am 'overcome' with gratitude." [Wansley, p. 37] "Cousin Kate" Katharine Wilson Otto (1888-1980) was a descendant of John and Mildred Wansley through their daughter Martha "Patsy" Wansley and her husband Benjamin Davis. Otto's own out-of-print and now hard to find book appeared in 1978 entitled *The Genealogy of Martin-Price with Barber Genealogy establishing data on Barber-Wansley connection with Beck, Davis and Allied Families*. A third author Doris Steed Smith (1908-1994) descended from John and Mildred Wansley's daughter Sarah Wansley and husband John Beck. Smith, who published her *Beck History* in 1979, contributed to Frank Wansley's book, and a manuscript Smith wrote called "Wansley Line" (undated) uses Otto's information, at times almost verbatim.

Thus, the three authors were acquainted and shared information, each it seems relying most heavily on Katharine Otto. Katharine Wansley Wilson was born 8 August 1888 in Dahlonega, Georgia. She attended a private school "for young ladies" in Baltimore, married Norwegian-born Olaf Otto in 1908 in lieu of college, and became a prominent socialite in Savannah, Georgia. [Smith, *Wansley Line*, p. 8] Much of Otto's work was done in the early 1900's and reflects both her social position and the glorification of one's ancestry common to her time. Although her mother Caroline Price Wilson published several abstract books of Georgia county records, Otto's work appears more fanciful than factual. Otto gives only generalized sources and does not document or reference her claims to sources. Not only in Otto's stories about John and Mildred/"Amelia" but also in her information about their sons-in-law Benjamin Davis and John Beck, I have found more wrong than right when compared to primary records and historical documents. Frequently the problems are due to Otto's misidentifying and confusing people of the same name, or ascribing a story to a person to whom it could not, or in all probability would not, have happened as claimed. These problems will be explored later in detail, as they have direct bearing on the validity of the three authors' claim of Mildred/"Amelia's" father.

#### **The "Amelia" stories - Overview**

According to the Wansley family authors, John Wansley's wife Mildred/"Amelia" was the daughter of Patrick Barber, whose family became one of social and political prestige in the northeastern United States. The first volume of *History of Princeton and Its Institutions* by John Frelinghuysen Hageman published in 1879 says, "Patrick Barber, Esq., came from Ireland to New York in 1749 or 1750. After a short residence there, he removed to Princeton [NJ]." While in Princeton, he signed a petition for a military barracks and subscribed for the building of the Presbyterian Church. About 1767, Patrick Barber moved to Orange County, New York, "where he received appointments to civil offices under the colonial and State governments, and his ashes repose in the family cemetery in Orange, NY." [Hageman, Vol. 1, p. 90] During the American Revolution, one son, William Barber, served on Marquis de Lafayette's staff. Another son, Francis Barber, served with George Washington with whom he became friends. A third Revolutionary soldier son, John Barber, had a daughter Catherine who married William James, whose later wealth is said to have rivaled John Jacob Astor. They also were the grandparents of psychologist and philosopher William James, and his brother novelist Henry James.

The story of how John Wansley met his wife Mildred/"Amelia" has two discrepant versions. Frank Wansley's *From Rome to Ruckersville* version, the widest quoted and best known, is that John met "Amelia" while he was "passing through" eastern North Carolina and stopped to ask directions at a home where she was "visiting"

from New Jersey. [Wansley, p. 6] Contrariwise, the story of their meeting told by Katharine Wilson Otto in her *Genealogy of Martin-Price* is that John, who was born in Virginia, was working as an overseer on Patrick Barber's estate in New Jersey. [Otto, p. 1] Thereafter, the versions converge to say that upon meeting, it was love at first sight, and since her father refused his consent, the couple eloped to get married. Patrick Barber, enraged that his daughter married so far beneath her, disowned her, struck her name from the family records, and disinherited her, leaving her and her children out of his will. The authors all claim Patrick's unreconciled anger as the reason why there is no documentation and no evidence to connect the Wansley's with the Patrick Barber's, and why no other researchers of the Patrick Barber family have ever found any signs of John Wansley's wife.

Not only is there no direct proof, but there is also no indirect evidence that Mildred/"Amelia" was Patrick Barber's daughter. In genealogy it is very common, especially when researching events prior to the 19th century in places where many records are missing or destroyed, to find no "direct proof" or documentation in primary records (such as wills) that conclusively identifies a person's parents and/or children. Even when a person's name is given as child or parent, if there are two or more persons of the same name at the right time and place, the burden of proof requires evidence to distinguish between the possibilities. When no "direct proof" exists, modern standards for genealogical research also accept "indirect evidence" of a parent/child relationship. [See *Genealogical Proof Standard set by the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG)*] This evidence still relies heavily on primary records and documents (that is, those made at the time of its happening, such as tax lists, censuses, deeds, marriage registers, etc.). In the case of indirect evidence, we search for the co-incidence of same time, same place, same associates among neighbors or together on records and other such evidence that would show a connection between the proposed parent and child. If by a reasonably exhaustive search the accumulation of quality indirect evidence is strong, if it does not contradict an irrefutable piece of direct primary evidence, if all other options have been researched and ruled out to a reasonable degree, and if we have distinguished adequately the identification of two or more people of the same name, then we can propose the likelihood of a parent or child relationship based upon indirect evidence, and hope as research continues and as new records come to light that more proof (for or against our proposed relationship) will come in time.

The information passed to us through the Wansley authors' stories does not meet any of the criteria for "direct" or "indirect" evidence. In fact, I have not found even loosely circumstantial evidence that Mildred/"Amelia" could be Patrick Barber's daughter. On the other hand, as we shall see, there is much that is documented which counter-indicates the claim to this prestigious Barber family in the Northeast, far removed from John Wansley in central Virginia.

People seeking their ancestry during the up-swell of genealogical interest in the latter 1800's and early 1900's commonly but usually mistakenly attached their family line to a glorified heritage based simply on matching pieces of family stories or even just matching surnames with illustrious persons, especially since genealogies of wealthy, prestigious and/or historically notable families were what was published and most readily accessible at that time. This practice is somewhat understandable in the days before technology, microfilm, the Internet, and ready access to catalogued records and document collections in centralized repositories. With such advances, both our knowledge of American Colonial life and the criteria for proper genealogical research have changed, but often families are understandably loathe to give up the legends, especially those of past fame and high prestige.

The Wansley family authors mention that John and Mildred/"Amelia" Wansley's eldest daughter Sarah Wansley Beck lived to age 94 [d. 1859 per Otto, p. 2] and relished telling stories of her childhood to her grandchildren. However, the stories attributed to or about Sarah (including the well-known Yorktown story) do not prove Patrick Barber or any other particular grandfather for Sarah, as we shall see.

In fact, we have good evidence that the claim to Patrick Barber originated much later than Sarah, because as late as 1928, the Virkus entry for Katharine Otto's own aunt Sarah Price West claimed "Amelia's" father was not Patrick Barber but a William Barbour of Albemarle County, VA. [Virkus, Vol. III, p. 384] This and the heavy reliance on Otto's material by Frank Wansley and Doris Steed Smith indicate that the claim to Patrick Barber may be of Katharine Otto's own creation. (Supporting this assumption is the fact that Otto makes some rather sensational claims, later proved erroneous, about my great-grandmother Davis' family which I have neither heard through the family nor found in any source other than Otto-related, yet she dubs them "family legends.") At the least, the 1928 Virkus entry for Katharine Otto's aunt shows that the claim for Patrick Barber as Mildred/"Amelia's" father was not long-known family history or story.

### **Problems with using family stories as fact**

Some of the "Amelia" stories, such as her marrying against her father's wishes leaving him angry and alienated, or her nursing a sick or wounded family member during the Revolution, or her daughter Sarah meeting George Washington, could have elements of truth in them, even if distorted by time, faulty memory, confused identification, misinterpretation or embellishment. Nevertheless, in themselves they do not indicate or prove Patrick Barber or any other particular parents for Mildred/"Amelia." The challenge is in trying to unravel story elements in order to discern which parts (if any) are supported by documented facts and which parts are unsubstantiated interpretations or claims that run counter to proved facts.

An example of the problems with using family stories as fact comes from Doris Steed Smith's "Wansley Line":

"The end of the [Revolutionary] war came shortly and John Beck returned home and sought out Sarah [Wansley]. The occasion of the meeting being a picnic attended by both Sarah and her sister Martha and Martha's fiancé Benjamin Davis...An elopement was planned and carried out and at seventeen Sarah Wansley became Mrs. John Beck. The date was June 5, 1783, Albemarle County, Va." [Smith, *Wansley Line*, p. 12-13]

In fact, Sarah Wansley was 19, not 17, when she married John Beck in 1784, not 1783. Sarah was born 6 March 1765 and married John Beck 5 June 1784, according to the Beck Family Record that Sarah submitted with her pension application in 1856. [Sarah Beck Revolutionary War Pension Application, File R692, NARA]

Secondly, Virginia laws regarding marriages of persons under 21 were strict, and violators were subject to harsh punishments (discussed in detail later). As we shall see, these laws make it highly unlikely that Sarah and Beck circumvented these laws by eloping, especially not within their own home county.

The most glaring discrepancy between Smith's story and fact is that at the time of Sarah's picnic and ensuing marriage in 1784, Martha Wansley and her "fiancé" Benjamin Davis were only 3 years old. (Each was born 1781, according to their grave markers in Lumpkin County, GA.)

As in that story, there often may be kernels of truth. Benjamin Davis may well have been at the Wansley family gathering, since records for John Wansley show he and family of Benjamin Davis shared significant mutual acquaintances and probably knew each other at least by 1760, if not long before. However, using family stories as historical fact is unreliable as to what happened, to whom, and when, as this case shows.

Another example from Doris Steed Smith is this sentence: "At the age of 90 [Sarah Wansley Beck] thought nothing of ordering her horse to be saddled and riding to the home of a grandson to spend the day." [Smith, *Wansley Line*, p. 13] However, according to Smith's birthdate for her, Sarah was also 90 years old when she applied for a widow's pension. Sarah's application states that "in consequence of old age and infirmities" she was unable to appear in open court, making her ability at that point to ride blithely on horseback for a day of visiting highly dubious. [File R692, NARA] (Details of Sarah's pension application are discussed below.)

A third example of how family stories are unreliable sources for factual information is a story told in slightly varying forms by Wansley, Otto and Smith. They all mention a gold ring given to Mildred/"Amelia" by an aunt (or alternately, great-aunt) which "Amelia" used as a wedding ring, then gave to her daughter Sarah to use as her own wedding ring. The significance of the gold ring is that it was supposed to be a gift from "Amelia's" Aunt Elizabeth, who the authors say was "Lady Egerton," the sister (or aunt) of Patrick Barber. According to Sir Egerton Brydges' edition of *Collins's Peerage of England* (1812) an Elizabeth Barbour married John Egerton, Esq., first son of the Hon. Thomas Egerton of Tatton Park, Cheshire, England. [Collins, Vol 3, p. 200] However, other than the Wansley family authors' statements, I have found no recognized biographer or genealogist of either the John Egerton or Patrick Barber lines who even suggests, much less claims, any relationship between the two families, the one of British nobility, the other of Scots-Irish Presbyterians. So even if Mildred/"Amelia" were Patrick Barber's daughter, she would not have a gold ring from "Aunt Lady Egerton." Mildred/"Amelia" may have had a gold ring, possibly from an Aunt Elizabeth (perhaps even Elizabeth, wife of Walter Goldsmith, whose close relationship to the Wansley's we discuss later). But once a presumption is imposed upon a story, and in this case the "Lady Egerton" element was attached, then gradually the core story can get obliterated. The version told in Frank Wansley's book (the most-widely read and quoted of the three authors' books) says nothing about an Aunt Elizabeth, only an aunt Lady Egerton. [Wansley, p. 22]

Handed-down family stories are much like extended versions of the child's game "Telephone" or "Gossip," where a sentence or short story whispered ear to ear around a circle rarely ends up the way it started and often bears no resemblance at all. Expand this to a story passed down by multiple generations over 150 to 200 years, then intertwined with numerous stories of other ancestors and their kin, and it is no wonder that historians consider such "received wisdom" as usually no more than "received myth." [*Personal correspondence July 2008 with C. Ashley Ellefson, Emeritus Prof. of History, SUNY*]

### **The "Amelia" Stories - Discussion**

#### **The stories of Patrick Barber as "Amelia's" father**

There is no documentation or substantiation other than story for the claim that John Wansley's wife Mildred/"Amelia" was the disinherited daughter of Patrick Barber of New Jersey and New York. The absence of evidence does not seem to bother Katherine Otto, Doris Steed Smith, or Frank Wansley, the earliest disseminators of this claim. Otto heads a chapter, "The genealogy of Amelia Barber, elder daughter of Patrick Barber and Jane Fraser, which was omitted from Mrs. Hastings' Barber genealogy because that genealogist knew nothing of her existence, due to the circumstances below." [*Otto, p. 1*] (Otto goes on to explain the "circumstances" were her unsourced stories that Barber disowned "Amelia" for her lowly marriage to John Wansley, struck her name from all family records, and left her and her children out of his will.) Mrs. Russel Hastings to whom Otto refers published during the early to mid-1900's almost eighty pages of her well-documented research on the Patrick Barber family in the scholarly and widely-respected *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*. Mrs. Hastings, a member of the *Record's* Publications Committee, is still considered the expert on the Patrick Barber line, and also wrote extensively on the Barber-related William James family. Indeed, she did not find any evidence of John Wansley's wife nor does she make reference to any unnamed missing Barber child.

Researcher and Wansley descendant James B. Evans writes in his paper entitled "John Wansley/Wanslow, Senior and Amelia Barber" (2001), "Other than family tradition there is no independent documentation for Amelia Barber...This issue is a sensitive subject. Mrs. Wray [Doris Steed] Smith wrote, '...Amelia Barber was not named in her father's will. It was because her father objected to her marriage to John Wansley. We are good proof that they married!'" [*Evans, p. 1*] That logic leaves much to be desired.

Problems with logic are also embedded in the stories themselves. For example, Otto says, "Patrick wiped Amelia's [i.e., Mildred's] name off his records," yet no Barber researcher has mentioned any such strike-outs in the surviving letters, family Bibles, and records. Another story says that in 1781, twenty years after Mildred/"Amelia's" marriage to John Wansley, she traveled to Yorktown, VA, to nurse her "brother" Major William Barber, son of Patrick Barber, after an injury he sustained in the Revolutionary War. There is no evidence in letters, diaries or family papers of Patrick Barber's family that supports this story or indicates any contact between Mildred/"Amelia" and members of Patrick Barber's family. (This story also has proved errors, as discussed below.) Especially among prestigious families, "family secrets" such as a disowned daughter usually find their way into public knowledge, either passed down in their own family stories or discovered in old family papers by scholarly researchers.

As for John Wansley's wife and her children being left out of Patrick Barber's will, I have seen a number of 18th century wills in which fathers, incensed by their offspring's actions or choice of spouse, use their wills to underscore their displeasure and avoid later claims by legitimate heirs whose names did not appear. These wills sometimes include lengthy rants against a child's (or even wife's) behavior. At the least they say something to the effect that "he/she gets nothing from me," or "he/she gets one shilling only," thereby preempting subsequent claims against the estate by a child or grandchild. Patrick Barber's will was dated 22 Sep 1791 and filed a month later in Ulster County, NY. The will not only goes into the details of who gets what, but it directs when and under what circumstances. [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 9; Wansley, p. 21*] That a man who served as a judge and was so concerned with detailed instructions does not mention an errant daughter who enraged him to the point of striking her name from family records and then disinheriting her, seems strange at best. If nothing else, one would expect a man familiar with legal processes to say something in his will to prevent any later claim on the estate by an omitted daughter or her heirs.

Another improbability regarding Mildred/"Amelia" as Patrick Barber's daughter is that Mildred Wansley, like her husband John, was not literate. When she signed her deposition in the Albemarle Chancery Court case in 1798, Mildred signed by mark, not by signature. [*ACC1801-004*] This was not unusual for the average woman in

Virginia born before the Revolution, but it would be very unusual for a daughter of the gentry, especially in the Northeast. Patrick Barber and his family appear to have valued education highly. Patrick himself seems well-educated with a continuing interest in books. Mrs. Hastings writes, "The Irish gentleman of that day seems often to have had a talent for bad spelling, but Judge Barber's phonetics are unsurpassable." [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 9*] His son John wrote that during the family's residency in Princeton, NJ, Patrick Barber "took a deep interest" in the building of Princeton College (then called College of New Jersey). [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 4*] At age 62, Patrick Barber wrote a letter in which he discusses the guardianship of a 5-year-old orphan in his neighborhood. Judge Barber declines guardianship of the boy, saying if he were twenty years younger he believes he would accept. However he continues, "Notwithstanding it would be a very great advantage to the child that some person would be appointed that would pay attention to educating of the child...I wish sir that you or some other like you who is not likely to have a son to educate, would step in and be his guardian and leave him to be a monument for your name." The rest of the letter is primarily about books. [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 9-10*] Patrick's son William attended Princeton, as did son Francis, who was "steeped in the classics." [*Chernow, Alexander Hamilton (2004), p. 42*] Shortly after graduating from Princeton, Francis became head of a highly regarded New Jersey college preparatory academy that supplied many students to Princeton, including Alexander Hamilton and sons of the upper classes. After the Revolution, Patrick Barber's son John became one of the founders of Montgomery Academy in Orange County, NY. [*William James, edited by Henry James, The Letters of William James (1920), Vol. 1, p. 5*] Mrs. Hastings suggests that the husband of Patrick Barber's daughter Margaret may have been related to the founder of Washington College in Chestertown, MD, still today a fine liberal arts college. [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 13*] Within this kind of family, it seems highly unlikely that a daughter of Patrick Barber could not write her own name.

### ***The "Amelia" meets John stories***

I find no evidence for or explanation why John Wansley—born, raised, and residing in central Virginia with little means and not migrating at the time to resettle—would be "passing through" eastern North Carolina where he met "Amelia Barber," as one version of their meeting story claims. Nor is it likely that "Amelia" would be casually "visiting" there. First of all, neither John Wansley nor Patrick Barber had any known family or other connections in North Carolina, so the location is problematic. Secondly, travel in the mid-1700's was arduous, slow, sometimes dangerous, and not undertaken lightly. Eastern North Carolina was at least 250 miles from John's home in Louisa County, VA, and 500 miles from Barber home in Princeton, NJ. Long distance travel by horseback or wagon generally covered only about 20 miles per day. Many roads were basically Indian trails and cleared paths winding around trees and boulders between settlements. A survey map of a property line on a road often resembled the meanders of a stream. Wider roads allowed passage for rolling hogsheads of tobacco to market using a two-wheeled axle pulled by oxen or horses. However carriage rides even on roads maintained for commerce reportedly were grueling events. Not the least of the dangers were deep mud, ruts that could overturn carriages and wagons, and the exigencies of severe weather. Also, Indian attack was still a threat along the border of Virginia and North Carolina border at that time. Travel in and near one's own county, though difficult, seems relatively frequent, and migration was a way of life. However, given travel conditions it is evident why in pre-Revolution days casual long distance inter-colony trips for "visiting" appear to be rare and then only among the wealthiest, which the Barbers were not. (Smith's *Beck History* tells a similar story of Lucy Beck Evans involving a traveling visitor, a chance meeting, and love at first sight, but it has logic the "Amelia" story lacks. Lucy's story took place almost 100 years after John and Mildred/"Amelia" married when travel was vastly improved. Lucy Beck and John Evans met when Evans stopped by the Beck home presumably while attending to business for his father who owned land in the Beck's county. [*Smith, Beck History, p. 27*])

As for the alternative version of how John met Mildred/"Amelia," there is no explanation for how a young native-born Virginian would ever come to be an overseer for--or even come to meet--Patrick Barber in New Jersey who had no known family or land in Virginia. There is no information in extant documents for John Wansley that indicates he had any experience in his early life in supervising a large farming enterprise, and Otto's claim that John became a "successful planter" prior to Patrick Barber's death is erroneous, as we shall see. John's pension application states he was born in Louisa County in 1738. [*File S32045, NARA*] (Part of Hanover County became the new Louisa County in 1742.) I have found no records or even clues to indicate that John Wansley ever resided outside of his native area in Virginia until he moved to Georgia about 1800. The authors claim John and Mildred/"Amelia" married about 1760 to 1763, and, indeed, their eldest daughter, who may not have been their first child, was born March 1765. Yet Louisa County Court Orders have entries for John in September 1760, June 1761, July 1762, and April 1764, showing John's continuing residence in the immediate vicinity of his birth. [*Louisa Count Court Order Book 1760-1764, John C. Bell, Louisa County Records (1983), Sect. G*]

Simply the fact of having two very discrepant versions of how John met his wife Mildred/"Amelia" (one from Frank Wansley, one from Katharine Otto, each otherwise using the same information) casts suspicion on both stories and raises questions as to either one's validity.

### ***The elopement stories***

Other questions of validity arise with the stories that Mildred/"Amelia," allegedly under 21 at the time, and later her 19-year-old daughter Sarah both "eloped" to get around the alleged objections of their fathers who disapproved of their marriage choices and would not give their consent as required for those under 21. The Wansley family authors mention their elopements so casually that it appears the authors were unaware of the strict laws made to prevent such illegal marriages.

In Virginia, as in other colonies, both males and females under the age of 21 needed a parent's or guardian's consent to wed, to protect against "defeating the law and defrauding parents and guardians of that natural right and just privilege in disposing of their children or orphans in marriage...and soe the parents by the inequality of the match dishonoured, and [in the case of daughters] the child ruynated in her fortunes." [*Hening, Statutes at Large, Volume II (1823), quoted by Susan Scouras in "West Virginia History and Archives News" June 2004, p. 1-2*]

The Virginia marriage laws passed by the colony in 1705 and reiterated by the state in 1792 required that a male or female under 21 could not marry without the consent of the parent or guardian given either in writing and witnessed by two persons, or by personally appearing before the county clerk who was responsible for issuing the license. [*Hening, Statutes at Large Vol III, p. 441; Shepherd, Statutes at Large Vol I, p. 130*] If the father was alive, the consent had to be his. The mother as a married woman had no independent legal standing in this regard, so her approval held no legal weight. Another requirement for a license was posting bond to ensure "there is no lawful cause to obstruct the marriage." The bond would be forfeited if cause was found against the marriage. A marriage could also take place by publishing "banns;" that is, public notices posted at the church or meeting house for three Sundays, allowing everyone a chance to come forward with any reasons against this marriage. The banns were posted in the parish of the bride. However, to prevent elopements and other illegal marriages, if a couple wanted to marry outside their parish, banns had to be published in the home parish as well, and the minister in the one parish could not perform the ceremony until the minister of the other had certified those banns had been posted for the required times and no objections were raised. The penalties against clerks, ministers or other officials who participated in or made possible (e.g., by forgery) an illegal marriage were not only steep fines (from £500 sterling in 1705 to \$1500 in 1792), but jail for a year without bail for each violation. They were further liable to "be prosecuted and punished as in case of forgery." [*Hening, Statutes, 1705, Chapter XLVIII, Section III; Shepard, Statutes, 1792 Chapter 42, Sec. 2*]

An illustration of the seriousness with which parents guarded their right to consent is the occurrence of newspaper advertisements warning about eloping minor children, much as owners did for runaway slaves. This example appeared in the *Virginia Gazette*, a Williamsburg newspaper with a colony-wide readership:

Caroline County, Virginia - July 23, 1746: "Whereas my son Thomas Baber, a youth of about 17 years of age, privately absents himself from my House without my consent, and is supposed to be in company with Winefred Baley, an evil-deposed wench, whom I understand he intends to marry; I hereby desire and forewarn all Ministers whatever, not to marry this said Thomas Baber until he is arrived at the age of 21 years.  
/Signed/ Thomas Baber [*Quoted by Joe Baber, BaberFamilyTree.org*]

As romantic and dramatic as it may make the stories, Mildred/"Amelia" in all likelihood did not "elope" to circumvent having her father's consent. Rare elopements did happen (e.g., a Virginia couple with means living close to the border of a colony with less strict laws might escape to try their luck there). However, elopement was not the option in the mid-1700's that it was when these questionable "Amelia" stories appeared over 200 years later. Since there is no evidence for, and much against, Mildred/"Amelia's" being Patrick Barber's daughter, in all probability she lived near John Wansley and shared neighbors and friends. Having few means and living in the same heartland area of Virginia both before and after marriage would make it highly unlikely for John and an under-age Mildred/"Amelia" to elope to marry without her father's or guardian's consent.

In the case of Mildred/"Amelia's" 19-year-old daughter Sarah Wansley, the Wansley authors say she married John Beck in Albemarle County, where both were raised, where their families (including her father) resided, and where the couple continued to live after they married. Under these conditions and the laws of the time, to elope and marry inside Albemarle County without Sarah's father's consent seems well nigh impossible.

### ***The story of Patrick Barber's attempted reconciliation***

However it came about, Mildred/"Amelia" did marry John Wansley. Katharine Otto goes on to claim that not long after their marriage, John became a "successful planter," and as a result Patrick Barber tried to make amends with "a number of fine gifts" which John returned, scorning any reconciliation because of the "shame" and "humiliation" Patrick Barber had caused John by refusing his marriage consent. "This affront to [Barber's] peace offering was so unpardonable that Patrick wiped Amelia's name off his records and he did not mention her, or her children, in his will." [Otto, p. 1] Not a pleasing representation of either man, although how true in fact is the question.

I have found no evidence that John was "successful" in ways that would motivate an irate wealth-driven father-in-law to want to "make amends." In 1785, over 20 years after his marriage to Mildred/"Amelia," John's household of 10 people lived in a relatively crude "slab cabin" rather than the more substantial log or frame "dwelling house" of most Albemarle households. [Albemarle Co. 1785 Census, Misc. Reel 1263, LVA]. The previous year, the 1784 Albemarle personal property tax lists show John was taxed for 2 horses, 5 cattle, and no slaves. In 1787, John was taxed for 2 horses, 7 cattle and no slaves, and he still had no slaves in 1798. [Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Lists 1782-1799, Reel 5, LVA] This is not the profile of a "successful planter."

Slaves were crucial for the success of any large farming enterprise at that time in Virginia. The number of slaves was indicative both of wealth and size of property, standard measures of prosperity and prestige. Yet John had no slaves. The "topmost image of a planter's status" and "emblem of wealth in Virginia was the coach or 'chariot.'" [Wienczek, *An Imperfect God* (2003), p. 90] Carriages and other conveyances were taxed as personal property, yet John was not taxed for so much as a two-wheeled "riding chair."

John Wansley's Albemarle County personal property taxes and a deed of 1 February 1799, where John sells his personal property the year before moving to Georgia, indicate John and his family were of modest means for their day. [Albemarle Deed Book 13, p. 46] The 1799 deed has been both mistranscribed and misinterpreted, leading to a falsely exalted picture of John's means and lifestyle. The transcription found in Frank Wansley's book includes "silver" among the articles being sold. [Wansley, p. 24] Doris Steed Smith's "Wansley Line" says the articles John sold included "silver and china" as well as "land." [Smith, *Wansley Line*, p. 1] All of these claims are erroneous. Researcher James B. Evan pointed out to me (confirmed by a scanned image via e-mail) that the original handwritten deed as entered into the record book by the Albemarle County clerk clearly does not include the word "silver" or "china," and no land was mentioned.

The 1799 deed did include "Plantation Eutenseals" (i.e., utensils). However, the word "plantation" at this time in Virginia basically meant a farm or land for planting and did not refer generically to the large slave estate agri-business that the word came to connote in the 20th century. Except for a few, such as some town-lot dwellers, almost everyone farmed, at least for their own family's provisions.

Not only was John Wansley not a "successful planter," but in fact records show John did not even own land of his own. This is proved by his absence on the Albemarle County Land Tax Lists 1782-1798 [Albemarle Reel 6, LVA] and supported by the absence of any recorded land deed found for John in Virginia. Instead, John lived on land owned by others. Two Albemarle County Chancery Court suits reveal that beginning about 1780, John lived on Albemarle land belonging to Walter Goldsmith, a blacksmith who owned a blacksmith shop probably on the same land, and prior to that John rented nearby Albemarle land from Jason Bowcock/Bocock. [Albemarle Chancery Court, Cases 1796-006 and 1801-004, LVA]

Records show a close relationship between John Wansley and the blacksmith Walter Goldsmith (discussed in detail later). There are intriguing clues in Virginia records that John himself may have been a blacksmith, as at least one of John's sons, Reuben, reportedly was [Wansley, p. 32] and as a grandson, Nathan son of Nathan, was recorded. [1850 census, Gordon Co, GA] (See my report on John Wansley for more about this speculation.)

In any case, John certainly was not a "successful planter" by trade, class or achievement. With no land of his own, no slaves, and close family ties with a blacksmith, John had neither the high social status nor the material achievement to induce a reconciliation from a father-in-law allegedly impressed only by both, as Otto claims.

Just as the "Amelia" stories distort and romanticize the kind of life that records show John Wansley and his family lived in Virginia, the stories distort and demean Patrick Barber. Their character depiction of Patrick Barber as Mildred/"Amelia's" father is quite contrary to how he is portrayed by Mrs. Hastings' research, by

historians, and in pieces written by himself and his children. Especially in the details told by Katharine Otto, the Patrick Barber of the "Amelia" stories is a man driven by concerns of wealth and class status, and vindictive if crossed. This contrasts sharply to records, letters and published research, which show him to be a man who led the life "in a very simple sense" of a "country gentleman" [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 7*], whose primary interests were civic involvement, his Presbyterian church, and education. Far from being an authoritarian and rejecting father, Patrick Barber's son John specifically mentioned in his father's epitaph that as a neighbor, husband, and parent, Patrick Barber was "obliging, tender, and indulgent." [*Hastings, Jan 1931, p. 8*] This is not the character or temperament of a father who would disown his daughter and die with vindictiveness toward her children as well as herself, simply for "marrying beneath her station."

### ***The "Amelia" and Sarah in Yorktown story***

Here we have another example where using family stories as historical fact is unreliable as to what happened, to whom, and when. Such problems are evident in this story found in Otto, Smith, Wansley, and Wansley's entry from Smith's father Noel Steed. With some slight variations and embellishments among versions, the story says Mildred/"Amelia's" "brother" Major William Barber, son of Patrick Barber, was wounded at Yorktown in 1781. Amelia got word and immediately went to Yorktown with food, "delicacies," and medicine to nurse him. She took along her eldest daughter Sarah, then age 16. (The authors do not include the fact that in so doing, Mildred/"Amelia" would be leaving behind at least eight younger children, including the still-nursing 7-month-old infant Patsy, in a family with no slaves for childcare). While in Yorktown, the story goes, Sarah met General Washington as well as 'Light Horse Harry' Lee, Marquis de Lafayette, General William Alexander (Lord Sterling), Von Steuben, and others on Washington's staff. "But most important to Sarah was her introduction to handsome young Lieutenant John Beck of her home county of Albemarle..." [*Wansley, p. 22*]

However, the "facts" of this story cannot be taken as given. Patrick Barber's son Major William Barber indeed was wounded in the Battle of Yorktown, but reportedly only slightly, nothing serious or life-threatening. *Beat the Last Drum: The Siege of Yorktown 1781* by Thomas J. Fleming says on the last day of the battle on 14 October 1781, Major William Barber delivered a message from General Lafayette to the French General Baron de Viomenil. As Barber left the French command post he was "wounded in the side by a cannon ball, but he ignored the wound and carried the message back to Lafayette." [*Fleming (1963) p. 286*] In *The Father: A Life of Henry James Sr.*, author Alfred Habegger says that over forty years after the battle General Lafayette recounted the story in an interview and remembered that "a cannonball passed so near to his [Barber's] body as to inflict a slight bruise that caused his body to swell in an extraordinary manner," yet Barber refused Viomenil's offer of a doctor and insisted on carrying the message back to Lafayette. [*Habegger (2001), p. 32*] *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* by Henry Phelps Johnston discusses a detailed report filed by Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton had been "prepared for college" under William Barber's brother Francis Barber who had been head of an academy in Elizabethtown, NJ, in the early 1770's. [*Nelson, New Jersey Biographical and Genealogical Notes (1916), p. 24*]. Lt. Col. Hamilton, as field officer of the day, reported on the Yorktown battle of 14 October 1781 and included a list of the officers who were wounded. William Barber, brother of Hamilton's mentor, was not included in Hamilton's list, but a footnote by the author states that Major William Barber was "wounded slightly," and his name was included later in the publicly published report by Edward Hand, Adjutant General. [*Johnston (1881), p. 147*] This does not sound like a situation serious enough to compel a mother to leave eight children under age 16 including a still-nursing infant and travel with only a young daughter the 145 difficult miles (at least a five day journey) to an army encampment in order to nurse a "slightly wounded" brother. In addition, her husband John Wansley was absent in war service twice for three months each tour during that same year. [*File S32045, NARA*]

However, the nature of Major Barber's wound or care of Mildred/"Amelia's" family are moot points here, since there is no evidence for, and much evidence against, "Amelia" being this William Barber's sister.

Even more damaging to the validity of this story is the fact that there is no record that Sarah Wansley's husband John Beck ever served in the Revolution at all, much less on General Washington's staff, as Doris Steed Smith's father Noel Steed claimed. [*Wansley, p. 13*] As we shall see below, the Wansley family authors and Sarah's descendants have misidentified her husband as another John Beck, the only one of that name on record as serving from Virginia in the Revolution.

It is common among handed-down family stories to find separate incidents collapsed into one over time and true fragments conflated through the years into an untrue story. For example, it may be that Mildred/"Amelia" did have a brother, relative, or close friend who became gravely ill during the Revolution. Possibly at some

point Sarah may have met George Washington, who had friends and political acquaintances in the Albemarle area. And Sarah easily could have met John Beck of her home county through a chance encounter. But the story simply could not have happened as given.

In fact, we have evidence from Sarah Wansley Beck herself that this story is not true. In 1856, Sarah applied for a pension as the widow of a Revolutionary War soldier (which is discussed in detail below). The application was denied for lack of evidence of her husband John Beck's service. [File R692, NARA] Three of the questions asked of all pension applicants were, where did the soldier serve, in what battles or engagements did he participate, and under what generals did he serve. Sarah could not supply any of that information. It is impossible to believe that she would not "remember" that she first met her husband-to-be during a trip to Yorktown following one of the most famous battles of the war while he was serving under George Washington himself or one of his illustrious generals. Sarah's own statement in her pension application that all she could remember is an officer "she thinks" was named Pelham proves this Yorktown story to be a later creation.

This leads us to the next set of problems with our current information about John Wansley's wife Mildred/"Amelia"--that of if, how, and whose primary records and historical documents were used in the research of those who passed on the "Amelia" stories in their books.

### ***Other Examples of Katharine Otto's Work on the Early Wansley Line***

I am grateful for Frank Wansley's labor of love in giving us his book *From Rome to Ruckersville: Our Wansley History* (1975), even with what I now believe from my research are its shortcomings and errors regarding the early generations. Like the other two authors, Wansley compiled family information previously not readily or publicly accessible and the later generations appear generally reliable. Yet he alone frequently tells us from where or whom various bits and pieces came, which is vital for assessment, verification and further research.

Frank Wansley warmly acknowledges that a large amount of his information in his 1975 book came from Mrs. Katharine Wilson Otto, "Cousin Kate." [Wansley, p. 37] In turn, Doris Steed Smith often echoes both Frank Wansley and Otto. Katharine Otto was 90 years old when her book came out in 1978, two years before her death. Born in 1888, Otto's research assumptions and methods appear to hark back to the turn of the century, when genealogical fever was fueled by romanticism and patriotic fervor, and when standards of proof were generally loose or absent from published family histories of the day. Otto herself acknowledges that the claims she makes to "Amelia's" parentage cannot be documented, but neither does she document nor cite specific sources for any of her other information except for a vague listing of "authorities."

One way to judge the validity of Otto's claims about Mildred/"Amelia's" father, which also appear in the work of Frank Wansley and Doris Steed Smith, is to investigate the validity of Otto's work in general. At least for early generations, primary records show Otto's work often to be filled with false claims, exaggerations, distortions, and collapsing one or more people of the same name not even related to her ancestors into a false construct of her (and our) family history.

Using examples from Katharine Otto's material about John and Mildred Wansley's sons-in-law Benjamin Davis (who married their youngest daughter Martha/Patsy--Otto's ancestors and mine) and John Beck (who married their eldest daughter Sarah), we can evaluate the overall reliability of her work on early family. This becomes important when taking Otto's word for Mildred/"Amelia's" parentage--since Otto's word, repeated by Frank Wansley and Doris Steed Smith and now widely distributed via the Internet, is essentially all we have.

### ***Misidentifying the Records of Benjamin Davis***

#### ***Will of Benjamin Davis***

Otto and the other authors call Patsy Wansley's father-in-law Benjamin Davis "Sr." and her husband "Jr.," and for this report I shall do the same. Otto says Benjamin Sr., who died when his only son was 16, "left instructions for his education and one or more plantations." [Otto, p. 6] In actuality, provisions "to give [my children] learning" and bequests of one "plantation" plus other land were in a will dated 5 Aug 1792 for another Benjamin Davis who died in Wilkes County, from which Elbert was created in 1790. [Wilkes County GA Ordinary, Estate Records & Wills 1792-1801, 44/31, p. 24-25, GA Archives] Our Benjamin Sr.'s will was recorded 24 Jul 1797 in Elbert County and does not mention education or "plantations." [Elbert Will Book B, p. 23, Ordinary's Office, Elberton, GA]

What is strange is that in a letter Otto wrote 25 Oct 1960, 18 years before publication of her book, she says correctly that our Benjamin's will was in Elbert in 1797, and she correctly names the children in the will. [Otto to Davis & Ziemann, Benjamin Davis Ancestor File #A030207, DAR Library, Washington, DC] Thus long before her book was published in 1978, she had already found the right will that did not mention education or "plantations."

### **Land of Benjamin Davis**

In that same 1960 letter, Otto says Benjamin Davis Sr. "gambled away two plantations in Virginia." There are no such records for our Benjamin, who was a carpenter by profession, not a farmer or "planter." Our Benjamin had no Virginia "plantations" to lose in the first place. He owned no slaves, and his only land of record was the very modest 36 acres he held in Culpeper County, VA from 1775 until 1790 when he left for Georgia. [Culpeper & Madison Co. Personal Property & Land Tax Lists, microfilm, LVA] No mortgage was ever recorded against his Virginia land, and Benjamin sold the land just prior to his departure for Georgia at a sum over four times the price at which he bought it. [Culpeper Deed Book H, p. 131; Deed Book P, p. 500] In fact, we shall see below that the plantation owner, and probable gambler, who lost his significant amount of land to debt was not Martha/Patsy Wansley's father-in-law Benjamin Davis Sr., but Patsy's sister Sarah Wansley's husband John Beck.

Continuing in Otto's book, she says Benjamin Sr. willed to his son Benjamin Jr. "one or more plantations, but he [the son] lost these and they [i.e., Benjamin Jr. and wife Patsy Wansley] went to live in their daughter Caroline's home." [Otto, p. 6] This statement of Otto's is a compression of misinformation, mistaken identities and unsupported conclusions.

Benjamin Davis Sr.'s will recorded in Elbert County Georgia in 1797 did bequeath "land" (not "plantations") to his son, but there is no indication of how much land there was. If Benjamin Sr.'s holdings in Virginia of only 36 acres are any indication, it was not a large tract, and Benjamin Jr.'s only slave of record is one male purchased between 1820 and 1830. [Jasper & Monroe Co GA census] There are no surviving land records for either Benjamin, father or son, in Elbert County except when the son in 1804, at age 23, sold 64 acres, presumably inherited land. [Elbert Deed Book J, p. 135]

The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) sponsored the publication of a series entitled *Historical Collections of the Georgia Chapters, D. A. R.*, and Volume III, *Records of Elbert County, Georgia*, was published in 1930. On page 216 there is a strange entry regarding land grants, printed to the side of the other columned entries, that says merely "Ben Davis, 2000 acres." However, 2000 acre land grants were illegal at the time, and extensive investigation into land grant records at the Georgia State Archives with the invaluable assistance of their senior land records archivist revealed this could only be an error for 200 acres (not 2000) pertaining to a grant for a different Benjamin Davis, not ours. Did Otto presume this erroneous entry for 2000 acres for another Benjamin Davis was the "one or more plantations" our Benjamin Jr. allegedly "lost?" (Otto's mother Carrie Price Wilson is recognized in Volume I of this *Historical Collections* series for her contribution to the Franklin County section, and Otto herself was at one time a DAR regent, so she obviously knew of this work.) The only other item I can find that might relate to Otto's claim of "lost" land is from an Elbert County survey for a "lost warrant" (a permit to survey land for a grant) dated 3 November 1806, and the Georgia Archives records show this was for only 50 acres. From the plat, the replacement appears to be granted to the heirs of the other Benjamin Davis of the 200-acre land grant. [Plat Book YY, p. 208, Reel 2-2229, Georgia Archives]

In Otto's 1960 letter, she says our Benjamin Davis Sr. got "land grants" in Georgia, which is incorrect. I can find no record of any land grant for our Benjamin Davis. [GA Headright and Bounty Land Records, 3/4/5, Georgia Archives] Although there were a number of Benjamin Davis's who got early Georgia land grants, information from bounty certificates, grant petitions and survey warrants at the Georgia Archives shows none of these was our Benjamin Davis, based on residency, date, and type of grant. The only Benjamin Davis who was granted Elbert County land (formed from Wilkes in 1790) received the grant "by his own headright" as a resident of Georgia six years before our Benjamin left Virginia. That other Benjamin Davis was "of Georgia" when he was granted a warrant to survey 200 acres on 10 September 1784 (replaced 17 October 1785), and "of Wilkes County, Georgia" when he sold part of this grant land with a mill called Pulliam's on 17 January 1789. [Elbert Deed Book A, p. 68] At the same time, our Benjamin Davis lived continuously in Culpeper County, Virginia, through 1790, as evidenced by his 1782-1790 Culpeper personal property taxes. His 1790 Culpeper deed of sale, in preparation for his move to Georgia, shows he is still "of Culpeper" selling land that he purchased in 1775. [Culpeper PP Tax Lists 1782-1802, Reel 89, LVA; CDBP:500] This information also proves it was the other Benjamin Davis "of Georgia" who in 1789 sold land at Pulliam's Mill, in the part of Wilkes County that became Elbert County, which Otto infers and Frank Wansley states in error belonged to our Benjamin Davis Sr.

Thus, there is no evidence that the land Benjamin Davis Jr. inherited was anything more than of modest size, and I have found no deed record or mortgage in Elbert County to support Otto's claim he "lost" inherited land or "plantation(s)." About 1815 the family moved from Elbert to Jasper County, Georgia (where daughter Martha Caroline was born in 1817), and they moved to newly-formed Monroe County, Georgia about 1821. [Obituary of Martha C. Martin, *Dahlonega Signal*, 1884] In 1839 Benjamin, still "of Monroe County," sold 202.5 acres in Monroe for \$2500 to his son-in-law William Martin of Lumpkin County, Georgia, a lawyer and land investor. [Monroe Deed Book K, p. 209] The next year, at age 59, Benjamin and Patsy joined William and Caroline Davis Martin's household in Lumpkin County. [1840 Lumpkin Co. census] Coming 25 years after they left Elbert County, the move to their daughter's house could hardly have been due to any "loss" of inherited Elbert land, as Otto claimed.

### **Benjamin Davis and Jefferson Davis, CSA**

Otto also claims in error that our Benjamin Davis Sr. was a first cousin of Samuel Davis, father of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War. [Otto, p. 6] This would mean Samuel Davis' father Evan Davis and our Benjamin Davis Sr.'s father were brothers. Otto says Benjamin's father was a James Davis, possibly based on an old Davis genealogy commissioned about 1912 by my great-uncle Dr. Henry Horsley. Apparently the researcher thought that a James Davis who died testate in 1765 in Spotsylvania County VA with a son Benjamin was our family, but this has since been proved in error. (Otto mentions in her 1960 letter that this James of Spotsylvania was an error. Still she says, with no explanation, that Benjamin Sr.'s father's name was James, for which I have found no evidence at all, although Benjamin Sr. did have a proved brother James, who may have gotten confused as his father in family stories.)

The Papers of Jefferson Davis Project at Rice University, Houston, TX, has compiled a definitive genealogy of the Jefferson Davis family from approximately 100,000 documents and family records. [Website at <http://jeffersondavis.rice.edu/>] There is no James as a brother of Evan Davis or anywhere else in the early Jefferson Davis family line.

Furthermore, I have researched extensively in the extant primary records for Benjamin Davis Sr. and his proved siblings dating back to the 1750's in Spotsylvania and Culpeper counties of Virginia and have found absolutely no connection with any of the Jefferson Davis family ancestors. Ironically, my research so far has found indirect evidence that our Benjamin Sr.'s father may also be named Benjamin Davis, of whom Otto was unaware, and Evan Davis did have a brother named Benjamin. However, in addition to there being no evidence to connect our Davis family with the Jefferson Davis line, the Rice University Jefferson Davis Project says Evan's brother Benjamin Davis died prior to 1762 with no heirs.

In Otto's 1960 letter, she mentions "Col. Harry Davis' book published about 1935 on the family," meaning our Benjamin Davis line. She says she was "disappointed that he left out our James," but blames that on his "helpers" who were not "consciencious"(sic) researchers, which she states Harry Davis was.

The book to which Otto refers is *The Davis family (Davies and David) in Wales and America: Genealogy of Morgan David of Pennsylvania* by Harry Alexander Davis, published in 1927. That book claims that Jefferson Davis' grandfather Evan Davis was a son of John David and grandson of Welsh-born Morgan David of Merion Township in Philadelphia County, PA. The relationship of the Morgan David line to Jefferson Davis, which Harry Davis claims, has been proved in error by the Rice University project. Also, according to researcher Diana Gale Matthiesen, Harry Davis' claim is one of those specifically mentioned as erroneous in Kirk Bentley Barb's "Extract from Genealogy of Jefferson Davis." [Matthiesen, citing Monroe & McIntosh, *Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 1, 1808-1840* (1971), Appendix III]

My research with primary records in Virginia shows that, contrary to Otto's belief, our Benjamin Davis line was not part of the Morgan David line either. Also, I have found strong indirect evidence that our Davis line in the American colonies originated in Virginia, and I have found no evidence that any of them ever lived in Pennsylvania.

Otto's letter also says she is told "there are many errors in the S. C. record of the family" in Harry Davis' book. However, I have not found that any of our early Benjamin Davis line ever lived in South Carolina. In her book, Otto says that Benjamin and Patsy Wansley Davis' son James Madison Davis was born in Monroe County, GA, and married in "Old 96" SC. [Otto, p. 9] Both statements are incorrect. James M. Davis was born in 1812 in Elbert County. [Obituary of James M. Davis, *LaFayette (AL) Sun*, 1896] (Monroe County was only formed in 1821 from former Creek Indian land.) His wife Matilda Goggans was born in South Carolina, but her family moved to

Georgia at least nine years before the couple wed. [*Saml Goggans, 1830 US Census, Jasper Co, GA*]. James and Matilda married in 1839 in Monroe County, GA, not Old 96, SC. [*Monroe Co. GA Marriages 1824-1845 Book A, p. 159*]

In addition to the numerous erroneous claims Otto makes in these statements, another disturbing aspect of her work is that in the face of contrary evidence she indicates no qualms or questions about her own assertions. Nor does she offer any explanation to support her side of the contradictions, just states it is so. None of us as family historians, including myself of course, can hope to be entirely free of error or mistaken assumptions, and there is always the need to re-examine our research when new information or claims arise. Yet Otto shows the same adamancy that it is others' mistakes, not hers, regarding the denial of Sarah Wansley Beck's pension application (discussed shortly) and the absence of "Amelia" in Mrs. Hastings' respected research on the Patrick Barber family (discussed above), as she shows with these claims regarding Jefferson Davis.

Every genealogy researcher I know with early Davis family south of the Mason Dixon Line seems to have someone in their family who claims their kinship with Jefferson Davis, so for that we may not hold Otto uniquely culpable. However, her unwillingness to face evidence of contradictory information does not help the reliability of her work or confidence in her claims, including her claim for Mildred/"Amelia's" father.

### ***Benjamin Davis in the Revolutionary War***

It seems probable that Otto also was mistaken in identifying the only Benjamin Davis who served in the Revolutionary War from Virginia as her ancestor and mine. [*DAR ID Number: 69468*] Katharine Otto was by 1914 the first to enter the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) under our Benjamin Davis Sr. at a time before the DAR required proof of the ancestor's identity, and no subsequent applicant has given proof of our Benjamin's service either. (Later applicants have been accepted to DAR membership on the basis that our Benjamin was listed as a potential Revolutionary War draftee in Culpeper County in 1781, thus qualifying him as a DAR "Patriot." [*Culpeper List of Classes 1781, Military Records, LVA; also Blankenbaker, The Culpeper Classes (1999)*])

After long and intensive research into all existing muster and payroll documents for the Revolutionary soldier Benjamin Davis and the history of his company, I think it much more likely that this soldier was one of the several Benjamin Davis's in the Frederick and Ohio County, Virginia, area rather than our Benjamin Davis of Culpeper County. [*Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, Virginia 8th Regiment, Series M881, NARA*] This is based in large part on the common pattern of enlistments usually found in Virginia during the Revolution.

Enlistees generally joined a unit formed and/or stationed in their own local geographical area. Often the officers were neighbors or acquaintances, and company rolls will include familiar names from primary records of the enlistee being researched. The Revolutionary War soldier Benjamin Davis joined a company commanded by Capt. Stephen Ashby and Col. James Wood, both of Frederick County, VA, by the time of the Revolution. When Benjamin Davis enlisted in March 1777, the company likely was located in or near Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia). [*See for example pension application of company member Vincent Tapp, File S41231, NARA*] Of the men named in the company's muster rolls whom I have been able to identify (e.g., through pension applications), they follow the general pattern of being from the area around Frederick and Ohio counties. Wheeling is almost 350 miles from where Benjamin lived in Culpeper County, VA, by autumn of 1775 at today's Wolftown (now in Madison County, VA), and I have found no records that indicate our Benjamin previously resided in the Frederick or Ohio County areas. [*Culpeper Deed Book H, p. 131*] Especially given the number of our Benjamin's friends, neighbors and acquaintances in Culpeper County and in nearby Orange and Albemarle County who headed up their own military units, it seems highly unlikely that our Benjamin would travel 350 miles to enter the war, particularly in a company with no men I can identify from Culpeper.

### ***Davis difficulties***

Our early Davis family is particularly hard to research, both because of the very common name and because of missing Colonial records. Katharine Otto did the bulk of her work 50 to 100 years ago and thus did not have the technology, research resources and access to records available to us today. However, the fact that almost nothing Otto says about our early Davis family corresponds with primary records should be fair warning as to the quality of her research in general, including her claims about John Wansley's wife Mildred/"Amelia."

### ***Misidentifying the Records of John Beck***

Similar serious problems arise in Otto's information about Sarah Wansley's husband John Beck, used also by Doris Steed Smith and Frank Wansley. Some of this information may not have originated with Otto, as she was not a Beck descendant. Nevertheless, even when not originating the claims, she follows suit and then adds her own touches. Her Beck contribution was significant enough for Frank Wansley to include Otto along with Smith and another Beck descendant in his "gargantuan" thanks for their Beck information. [Wansley, p. 15]

### ***John Beck in the Revolutionary War***

The three Wansley family authors claim that Sarah met "Lt. John Beck" in Yorktown in 1781 as well as Gen. Washington and other famous generals on Washington's staff. Otto calls Sarah Wansley's husband "Captain Beck" when even Sarah's pension application says she thought John was a Lieutenant. [Rev War Pension and Bounty Land File R692, M804, NARA] Frank Wansley says that while Beck was a Lieutenant, just before discharge he got promoted to Captain. Information in Frank Wansley's book written about John Beck by Doris Steed Smith's father Noel Steed goes so far as to say "Captain John Beck" was on Gen. George Washington's staff. [Wansley, p. 13] Sarah's husband John Beck was born 4 February 1762 [Beck Family Record, File R692, NARA], which would mean Beck was a Captain on Gen. Washington's staff at age 19, rather remarkable if true.

In fact, Revolutionary War records at the National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] have nothing to indicate that Sarah's husband John Beck ever served in the Revolution at all. As we shall see, the Revolutionary War service record (sans Washington's staff) attributed to Sarah's husband by the authors Otto, Wansley and Smith was actually for a John Beck of Ohio County, Virginia (now West Virginia) with a wife named Rebecca. [Rev War Pension and Bounty Land File W3755/BLWT275-200, NARA]

At age 91, Sarah Wansley Beck applied for widow's pension 4 August 1856. That application was denied based on failure to furnish proof of service, absence of required information and failure to provide even "traditional" evidence of service, meaning witnesses who testify to the Court that the man was known in his community as a Revolutionary War soldier. Surely had Beck been on Gen. Washington's staff, Sarah would have included that information, and had her husband been known in his lifetime as a Revolutionary War veteran, his friends and neighbors would have provided affidavits to that effect.

A letter written 19 February 1859 from a Pension Office investigator to his superior, apparently in response to a request for review of Sarah's file, says that he finds the evidence satisfactory that Sarah was married to her husband John Beck prior to one of the required dates for a widow's pension. However he continues, "But there is not a particle of testimony among the papers to show that her husband was the Lieut. of the name who served in the Continental Line of Virginia." [Pension File R692, M804, p. 13]

Katharine Otto waxes quite indignant about the denial of Sarah's pension application. She writes that Beck "was a Revolutionary soldier who followed Washington through the long years of weary struggle for freedom...After giving such service, it is a discredit to our government that when his widow, at age 90(sic), applied for a pension, she was rejected because she could not recall the names of her husband's superior officers, although she met all other requirements for proof." [Otto, p. 5]

That is patently untrue. The facts are that in her 1856 pension application Sarah Wansley Beck could not give *any* of the required information except to say, "she heard her husband say in his lifetime (she thinks) one of his officers was named Pelham." Sarah provided none of the other information asked of every applicant. That is, she could not say even approximately when or where Beck enlisted; she could not say what places he went to or any battles he engaged in during his service; she gave nothing to help identify where he served or even under which generals; she gave no required list of people of standing in the community, preferably including a clergyman, who would attest to the Court to her "veracity" (the usual wording) and to testify that the man was known by them and in his community as a Revolutionary War soldier--all of which was standard for every application. (There was one letter in Sarah Beck's file at the National Archives sent from a Thomas and Penelope Hansard regarding Sarah's application. [R692, M804, NARA] The microfilm of that letter was too illegible and faded for me to make out the details, but its contents did not change the rejected claim.)

I have read much of the legislation and several scores of Revolutionary War pension applications, and the law and the reviewers seem flexibly fair and lenient, especially for widow applicants, when parts of the required information were not known or remembered. Understanding that the veterans and their widows were by then

elderly and often of poor health or poor memory or both, the reviewers used what information was submitted plus sworn statements from respected people in the community to find a basis to allow the claim. The law provided a variety of ways for an applicant's statement to be corroborated. [*Case brief, S32045, NARA*] Statements could be supported by living witnesses (e.g., men with whom he served), by documentary proof (e.g., discharge papers), by traditionary evidence (e.g., known in his community as a Revolutionary soldier), by incidental evidence (e.g., an occurrence that "incidentally" connects the applicant with war service), or by the roll (e.g., pay and muster rolls).

Sarah was denied a pension because she gave basically none of the required information, no trace was found for her husband's service, no court testimony was given from community leaders or neighbors that they had heard or believed Sarah's husband served in the Revolution, and Sarah obviously was not the wife of the only John Beck of record who served in the Revolutionary War from Virginia and who afterwards lived in Ohio County, VA.

According to her statement, Sarah Wansley Beck was 91 years old and infirm when she made her widow's pension application. During Colonial Virginia, all males 16 to 50 were required to participate in their county's militia. It may be this militia duty that Sarah was recalling in extreme old age and confusing it with war service. However, records show it was not her husband John Beck who served in the Continental Line during the Revolutionary War.

The Revolutionary War service record for John Beck in Frank Wansley's book gives this information: "John Beck, ensign, 31 October 1778, 9th Virginia Regiment, Continental Line; Officers entitled to half pay; John Beck, Ensign, in detached service, promoted to Lieutenant, March 1, 1780, Col. John Gibson. Detachment Western Department." [*Wansley, p. 15, citing Wood's History of Albemarle County, Col. Wm. H. Powell, Heitman*]

This record corresponds with the service record of the Lieutenant John Beck who died 29 August 1816 in Ohio County, VA/WV. According to information included in the pension file, he appears to be a native of Kent County, MD. This John Beck's widow Rebekah filed from Ohio County, VA, on 18 March 1840 an application for pension based on her late husband's service. [*File W3755/BLWT275-200, NARA*] The information in Rebekah Beck's sworn statement and the supporting evidence in the file, including her deceased husband's commission as ensign, confirm he was the John Beck who was in the 9th Virginia Regiment (also at various times organized as the 13th and the 7th Regiments) of the Continental Line under Col. John Gibson with an ensign's commission effective October 1778. Rebekah Beck states her husband had volunteered in Dunmore's War and during the Revolutionary War served at Fort Pitt, Fort McIntosh, and forts at Wheeling and Holliday's Cove, all of which were in the "Western Department." The pension application also verifies that Rebekah's husband Lieut. John Beck received "his commutation of 5 years full pay in lieu of half pay for life." Rebekah Beck, widow of John Beck, was granted pension per Certificate 5919. She died 22 August 1853, probably in Ohio County, VA/WV.

It was also this other John Beck of the above service record who got survey warrants for Bounty Land as a result of his Revolutionary War service. (Revolutionary War Bounty Land was in the present-day states of Ohio and Kentucky, then part of Virginia.) This presumably is the mistaken basis of Noel Steed's statement in Frank Wansley's book that Sarah's husband John Beck "sold his land grants" before moving from Albemarle County, VA, to Elbert County, GA. [*Wansley, p. 13*] I can find no Virginia land grants, war-related or otherwise, for Sarah's husband John Beck. [*Virginia Grants and Patents Records and Bounty Land Warrants indexes and images, LVA*]

### **Land of John Beck**

Another example of the erroneous and misleading information given in the Wansley-Beck books for John Beck comes from James B. Evans. (Evans is a 30-year-veteran Wansley research whose work I have found to be well-documented, exacting, and based on primary records.) James Evans was in personal contact with Doris Steed Smith, author of *Beck History* and her manuscript "Wansley Line." The following is a note written by James Evans and included in the Ancestry.com files of Carol Millisack Miller:

"For a long time I have been very skeptical about Amelia Barber. My gut feeling is that John Wansley, Sr. was married to an Amelia Barber but she had no connection to the New England family of Patrick Barber. Other than the Beck-Wansley family tradition there is no documentation of her. The Sarah Wansley Beck descendants are the apparent source of this tradition [Evans, like most, was unaware of Otto's work--jh], and they become incensed at any suggestion that Amelia Barber was not connected to Patrick Barber."

Evans continues, "My doubts come from catching the Beck descendants in erroneous research and documentation and feel-good genealogy. The Beck descendants always report how wealthy John Beck was when he died. In fact in 1819 as documented in Elbert County deeds, he mortgaged 1500 acres of land for \$25,000 and around 30 slaves for \$35,000 and defaulted on the mortgage. His creditors seized his property. After his death Sarah Wansley Beck regained part of the land, as part of her dower rights, which had been disregarded when the property was mortgaged."

John Beck's land mortgage deed to which Evans refers was dated 8 May 1819 for \$25,000, for "all real estate," including the tract where Beck lived and several adjacent tracts, totaling 1500 acres. The mortgage of his 32 slaves was of the same date, and both mortgages were due with interest in less than four months. [*Elbert Deed Book R*, p. 233, 236; *Farmer, Elbert Co. Deed Books K-R*, p. 346-7] Beck defaulted on the mortgage and died five years later.

This information about John Beck appears to be the story about "lost plantations" that Katharine Otto wrongly attributed to Benjamin Davis. Information from the *Official History of Elbert County* (1940) seems to complete the picture. Author John H. McIntosh writes, "The banjo songs of Elbert County Negroes were all composed by the slaves and many of them are pregnant with wit and wisdom." [*McIntosh*, p. 105] The author gives this song about the Beck's as one example:

Miss Beck 'vite yo' in 'de parlor--  
 Dey fan yo' wid' 'de fan;  
 Oh mudder, oh, dear mudder,  
 I lubs dat gamblin' man.

Thus it turns out to be John Beck, not Benjamin Davis, who lost his plantations to debt and was likely the Beck with a reputation as a gambler. This confusion of identities and stories adds to doubts about the accuracy of Katharine Otto's "family legends" and to concerns about the reliability of Otto's information in general, including her material used by Frank Wansley and Doris Steed Smith.

### **Confusions about "Matilda Wansley"**

Another occurrence of confusing and unsupported Wansley information is from Katharine Otto, Doris Steed Smith, and Frank Wansley about an alleged daughter of John and Amelia named Matilda Wansley who is not mentioned in John Wansley's will. [*Elbert County Record Book 1830-35*, p. 482] The authors give no explanation for knowing of or assuming a daughter Matilda.

In her *The Genealogy of Martin-Price with Barber Genealogy* (1978) Otto says:

"Matilda (Wansley) Holder b. c1769; m. Major Luke Holder, thought to have been from Loudoun Co., Va. They moved to Kentucky after the Revolutionary War with members of allied families Bush, Davis, etc., under the leadership of Daniel Boone and Capt. William Bush where they established a church and named their town, Bushville." (p. 2)

In "Wansley Line" Doris Steed Smith echoes Otto:

"Matilda Wansley - b. abt 1769, Albemarle Co VA; married Major Luke Holder, poss. of Loudoun Co, VA. They moved to Kentucky after the Revolutionary War with a group of families from a several-county area under the leadership of Daniel Boone and Captain William Bush. Here they established a Church and named their town Bushville." (p. 3)

Frank Wansley says merely, "A daughter Matilda is said to have married Major Luke Holder of Kentucky." [*Wansley*, p. 23]

This is a confusion of misinformation. First, I have found no evidence of any Luke Holder marrying any Wansley. There seem to have been a number of Virginia men named Luke Holder, so such a marriage may have happened, but so far I have found no record that supports it. In any case, a Luke Holder in Loudoun County marrying a daughter of John Wansley is highly improbable, given that Loudoun is one hundred miles or more north of the Albemarle and Louisa county area where John Wansley was born and his family continuously resided before moving to Georgia.

"Captain Billy" William Bush did go with Daniel Boone to Kentucky in an expedition in the mid-1770's. The name of the settlement was Boonesboro. A Captain John Holder was also a leader of that group. Some say John Holder was accompanied by his father Luke Holder, born c1725. In any case, this expedition around 1775 would be way too early to include a married daughter of John and Mildred/"Amelia" whose eldest daughter (Sarah) was born in 1765.

The expedition to Kentucky led by Capt. William Bush that included a number of his family was a separate later group, and it did not include Daniel Boone. The group left Virginia in summer of 1780. At most a daughter of John and Mildred/"Amelia" would then be 14 years old, and according to the birthdate of 1769 given by Otto and Smith, their "Matilda" would be only 11 years of age.

I cannot find supporting documentation that the settlers named their settlement "Bushville." The Kentucky Archives and all other references I have searched simply refer to it as the "Bush Settlement." I have found no Holder among the early settlers there, nor any Davis. [*Roxann Gess Smith, Early Settlers from Clark County KY Court Records.*] (There was a Samuel Davis listed among the earliest settlers of Boonesboro, but our Davis family had no Samuel.) While many of Capt. Bush's siblings and their families did accompany him to Kentucky, I have not yet found a way that Benjamin Davis' wife Mary, whose maiden name Otto and Smith say was Bush, might be related to that Bush family. (In fact, from lack of evidence, I question that Mary's name was Bush.)

In the 1830 census, John and Mildred/"Amelia" Wansley's son Nathan was living in Lincoln County, Tennessee. Their daughter Nancy (Young) was living in Sumner County, Tennessee, on the border with Kentucky. Both Nathan and Nancy were included in John Wansley's 1835 will, so why leave out a daughter or her children (if she was deceased and had children) living in Kentucky? "Matilda" was a name found in several Wansley descendant lines, but as yet I have not found any other reason for assuming a missing child of John and Amelia named Matilda, and none of the authors give any source or explanation for her inclusion.

The fact that the other information Otto and Smith relate regarding "Matilda" is confused and in error does not help the credibility that John and Mildred/"Amelia" had a daughter Matilda. However, if they did, by virtue of age she did not go with either of the two Capt. William Bush expeditions which Otto and Smith confuse as one. This raises yet more questions as to the reliability of the authors' claims, including their claim for Patrick Barber as the father of John Wansley's wife.

### **Summary of the claim for Patrick Barber**

As we have seen, there are a significant number of errors, contradictions, unsubstantiated claims, and misrepresentations in the three Wansley family histories by Frank Wansley, Katharine Otto, and Doris Steed Smith. This includes their claim for Patrick Barber. There is not only the absence of any documented direct proof that Mildred/"Amelia" was Patrick Barber's daughter, but there is no indirect evidence or even circumstantial indication that this claim could be true. The only basis for this claim is the "Amelia" stories. Although they are often fascinating and romantic, they are fraught with internal illogic and inconsistencies and do not coincide with information from primary records or historical documents and context. Examples from the authors' information about other early family members reveal the same kind of serious problems of misidentification, unsubstantiated assumptions, and erroneous claims.

From the evidence of this research, it seems clear that the claim that Patrick Barber of New Jersey and New York was the father of John Wansley's wife is only family myth and has no merit in fact.

### **CLAIM for WILLIAM BARBOUR of ALBEMARLE COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

The earliest published account I have found that gives a name for Mildred/"Amelia" Wansley's father identifies him as William Barbour of Albemarle County, VA. As mentioned in a previous section above, this claim was published in the 1928 edition of *The Abridged Compendium of American Genealogy* Vol. III by Frederick A. Virkus under Sallie Wandsley Price West. Born in 1869, Sarah Price was a great-great-granddaughter of John and Mildred/"Amelia" Wansley, and a sister of Isabelle Price Charters and Caroline Price Wilson of the DAR records. Moreover, Sarah Price West was the aunt of Katharine Otto whose work we have discussed in detail regarding her discrepant later claim that Mildred/"Amelia's" father was Patrick Barbour of New Jersey and New York rather than William Barbour of Albemarle. As previously discussed, Sarah Price West's entry does not

provide any evidence or source for the claim of William Barbour, and Virkus' *Compendium* is known to be highly unreliable.

So far I have found no evidence of a William Barbour or Barber of Albemarle County in published family files or in primary records of the area during the time period that would fit with a wife John Wansley married in the early 1760's. (For our purposes, the difference in spelling of Barbour and Barber is irrelevant, since spelling of the day was phonetic, and various spellings were used interchangeably.)

In the process of tracking the source for the claims that Mildred/"Amelia's" maiden name was Barbour/Barber, I found an item perhaps worth a mention. Sarah Price West, of the Virkus submission, had a sister Caroline Price Wilson whose husband (and Katharine Wilson Otto's father) was Walter S. Wilson. He, in turn, had a well-known ancestor William Cone. [*DAR Lineage Book Vol. 70, p. 167; William Whitney Cone, Account of the Cone Family in America, (1903); Huxford, Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia Vol. II (1954)*] William Cone married in North Carolina (where one of the less-than-logical meeting stories for John and "Amelia" takes place) to a Keziah Barber, whose father was a William Barber. Remembering the analogy of family history stories to the game of "Telephone" or "Gossip," is it possible that the paternal line's Barber got confused with the maternal line's Wansley, or is it merely coincidence that a William Barber is claimed for the same generation of both? Could it be that Sarah Price West's niece Katharine Otto recognized such a mistake and went looking for another Barbour/Barber to fill the gap from among the published resources then available? (It must be said in Otto's defense that she was not alone in picking a name in the Northeast to be ancestors of Colonial Virginia families. For a number of reasons, there was much more published information widely accessible in the early 1900's about lineages in New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and as a result quite a few Virginia families acquired erroneous northern ancestors from family historians of that era.)

Katharine Otto appears to be correct in rejecting her aunt's claim. The lack of any evidence, both from Sarah Price West's entry and from record sources I have searched, seems to indicate that the father of John Wansley's wife was not a William Barbour of Albemarle County, VA.

### ***CONCLUSIONS about TRADITIONAL CLAIMS***

The Price sisters and the three Wansley family authors who gave us their claims and stories about "Amelia" were limited, as we all are, by the research resources available to them and by the standards and norms of genealogy in their day. Today's strict rules of evidence, the need for valid proof, and the absolutely crucial importance of documenting and citing one's sources were not generally employed by non-professional (and even some professional) genealogists during the late 19th to middle 20th century when these Wansley family predecessors did the bulk of their work. Even with today's research advances, our work as early 21st century researchers will likely be corrected and surpassed in time as new resources and technologies and previously unknown documents surface.

New research into claims about John Wansley's wife and her family demonstrates it is time we move on from received myths and mistaken assumptions to correct and expand our understanding of our early Wansley family. In so doing, we honor both the truth of our ancestors' lives as well as the intentions and contributions of our previous family historians. We need to begin at the beginning, using modern standards of research, proof and documentation, drawing upon the wealth of records and historical documents currently available, to search for Mildred (not Amelia) Wansley's true origins.

### **PART III. BEGINNING FROM THE BEGINNING**

This section is only a beginning in the search for direct or indirect evidence of Mildred "Milly" Wansley's origins. Here I am exploring the background and context, asking questions, reporting on my initial findings, and offering some (but surely not all) possibilities that need to be followed with in-depth research into primary records and other reliable historical documents. So far much of my search regarding alternate possibilities for Mildred's origins has been limited to secondary sources, such as deed and will abstract books, the *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy* and records found online. To that extent my search has not been exhaustive or all-inclusive, and my information and assumptions below need to be verified by primary documents if not already cited as such. I offer these as suggestions for further research, not as full or final answers to the questions that remain.

### **OTHER POSSIBILITIES for the FATHER of JOHN WANSLEY'S WIFE**

The most likely place to begin looking for evidence of Mildred's family is close to where John Wansley lived. It is said that before modern times most spouses can be found before marriage living within a seven mile radius of each other, as that was the distance a horse could travel fairly easily for an evening or Sunday of courting. Other connections came through relatives, mutual friends or family associates. With the exception of some wealthy elite concerned with dynasty-building, it is a rare family that does not show evidence of near proximity and interactions among intermarried groups of relations, their neighbors and friends. Obviously, the largest problem in finding such connections comes among people who leave few or no records behind, such as those who lived in counties whose records have been lost (like Hanover, where John Wansley probably was born), or non-landowners (of whom John was one) who made up the majority of a county's population. Though John Wansley left relatively few Virginia records, fortunately those he left do provide clues upon which we can build.

John Wansley's Revolutionary War pension application states he was born 1738 in Louisa County. Louisa County was not formed from Hanover until 1742, so either John was born in the part of Hanover that became Louisa, or he moved to Louisa as a very small boy. John appears still to be residing in Louisa County in April 1764, eleven months before the birth of John's and Mildred's first daughter Sarah. [*Louisa Court Orders 1760-1764*, p. 82, *Bell*, p. G-160] John and Mildred Wansley's son William Wansley may have been born before Sarah. Later Albemarle personal property tax lists are unclear regarding the ages of the Wansley sons because of gaps in their records. However, the Albemarle County Chancery Court case *Goldsmith v Dowell* shows John Wansley's son William Wansley was old enough to know by his own memory about land agreements and rental arrangements that took place in 1781. [*ACC 1801-004*] Thus William Wansley may have been born about 1760 to 1763, and if so, he was born in Louisa County. Although records of this time for both counties are incomplete, John and Mildred appear to have moved from Louisa to Albemarle by 1767-1769, since John is not on extant Louisa titheables lists that begin then. The earliest record I have found placing John Wansley in Albemarle County is a debt suit in April 1773. [*Albemarle County, Virginia Court Papers 1744-1783, Weisiger, p. 46*]

We have no record such as a deed to tell us directly in what part of Louisa County John Wansley lived. However, from deeds of the people with whom he is associated on records, and particularly deeds of the close family friend Walter Goldsmith, John appears to have lived in the northeastern part of the county, roughly in an area between today's Mineral and Cuckoo, VA on the west, and the Northanna River and today's Lake Anna on the east, where the counties of Louisa, Hanover and Spotsylvania meet, with a corner of Caroline County nearby. Thus, we might expect to find Mildred's family in that general vicinity also. In fact, in depositions in Albemarle Chancery Court in 1798, at least 25 years after moving from Louisa to Albemarle, John and Mildred each separately referred to this area of Louisa, where Goldsmith still owned land, as "down home."

From these indications, it seems reasonably safe at this point to take as our working hypothesis that John met Mildred while living in northeastern Louisa County. They married no later than 1764, probably also in Louisa.

Going on the received (but not proved) information that Mildred/"Amelia's" maiden name was Barbour or Barber, I have looked for her possible father in records and published family files, searching for a man of that name living in the vicinity with any direct or indirect connections with John Wansley. I have found no Barbour or Barber in Louisa, Hanover, or Caroline County in the approximate time range for a father of Mildred. However, I did find one (and only one) in Spotsylvania County records, and his name was William Barber.

#### **Barber**

The only Barbour or Barber I have found in the four county area closest to where John Wansley lived in Louisa County was a William Barber in records of Spotsylvania County. This William Barber has no Spotsylvania deed record and no land patent, but there are five Spotsylvania deeds that he witnessed between 1741 and 1749. (All from William A. Crozier's *Virginia County Records: Spotsylvania County 1721-1800*)

2 June 1741 - Peter Mountague of St. Geo. Par., Spts. Co., Planter, to John Blake of Fredericksburg, Mercht. £40 curr. 242 a. in St. Geo. Par., Spts. Co.?purchased by sd. Mountague of Rice Curtis, Senr., as by Deeds, June 3, 1735. Witnesses: Edmund Waller, WILLIAM BARBER. Rec. 2 June 1741. Elizabeth, wife of Peter Mountague, ack. dower. [*Spotsylvania Deed Book C; Crozier, p 155*]

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5 June 1742 - Andrew Craig of Spts. Co., Chirgeon, to John Allan of same county, Mercht. £32 curr. Lot No. 6, in town of Fredksburg. Wit: John Thornton, Henry Willis, WM. BARBER, Thos. Wood, Roger Malory. Rec. 7 July 1742. [*Spotsylvania Deed Book D; Crozier, p. 160*]  
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2 October 1744 - Robert Williamson of Caroline Co. to John Haley of Hanover Co. £50 curr. 400 a. in Spts. Co., pat., Jany. 10th, 1735. Wit: WM. BARBER, William Rolfe, Jos. Collins. Rec. 2 Oct 1744. Elizabeth, wife of Robert Williamson, ack. Dower [*Spotsylvania Deed Book D; Crozier, p. 166*]  
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1 November 1748 - Robert Stubblefield and Ann, his wife, of St. Geo. Par., Spts. Co., to Richard Baylor of King and Queen Co., Mercht. £100 curr. 400 a. in St. Geo. Par., Spts. Co., granted by pat. to John Collier, Junr., June 30, 1726, and by him conveyed to sd. Stubblefield, as by Deeds. Rec. 5 Oct 1730. Wit: Joseph Hawkins, Richd. Woolfolk, Richd. Dobson, Humphrey Wallis, WM. BARBER. [*Spots. Deed Book D; Crozier, p. 179*]  
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6 June 1749 - John Healey [Haley] of St. Geo. Parish, Spts. Co., to Ambrose Healey of St. Thomas Parish, Orange Co. £30 curr. ? acres in St. Geo. Par., Spts. Co. Wit: WM. BARBER, Geo. Wells, James Stevens. Rec. 5 Jun 1749. Mary, wife of John Healey, ack. her dower. [*Spotsylvania Deed Book D; Crozier, p. 179*]

The first item of interest I noticed about these deeds that William Barber witnessed is that on four of the five deeds there is one name or more also on records with early family members of Benjamin Davis, who married John and Mildred Wansley's daughter Patsy. This is significant since, according to John Wansley's associates on records and his area of residence in Louisa County, it is almost certain he would have known the Benjamin Davis family at least by 1760, and probably long before. (See report for John Wansley for details.) This gives us at least the possibility that John Wansley could have known the William Barber of these Spotsylvania deeds through the mutual Davis connection.

Of even more interest is the name Richard Woolfolk, who was a co-witness with William Barber in the 1748 deed above. Richard Woolfolk was probably related to (online files say uncle of) Augustine Woolfolk who in 1766 witnessed a Louisa County deed of Walter Goldsmith, the blacksmith who was a close long-time friend of John Wansley. [*Louisa Deed Book D, p. 14, Reel 3, LVA*] Thus we have another piece of indirect evidence that William Barber and John Wansley could have known each other through a network of shared associates.

However, as yet I have not found records for William Barber in Spotsylvania (or Louisa, Albemarle, Hanover or Caroline) after the Spotsylvania deed he witnessed in 1749, 12-15 years before John and Mildred married. No Barber is on later Spotsylvania deeds or wills to 1800 [*per Crozier abstracts*], and none in later Court orders 1749-1755 [*Reel 44, LVA*]. Unless we can find later evidence of William Barber in John Wansley's area, a claim for him as Mildred's father would be difficult despite the early, albeit somewhat removed, connections.

### **Barbour**

Going much farther afield both in geography and in probability, I have also investigated the family of James Barbour of Culpeper County, not because I think a relationship to Mildred is a true possibility, but because the family is well-known in Virginia history and genealogy and holds the same, if not greater, status as the Patrick Barber family did in the Northeast. Although I see no obvious connections with John Wansley as early as his marriage, again we find connections of proximity and mutual associates between this Barbour family and the family of Benjamin Davis, some of whom were together in Culpeper County by 1757.

James Barbour was born 1700. [*Grave marker cited in William and Mary Quarterly, Oct 1939, p. 488*] Acquiring his first land patents in the early 1730's for land that became Culpeper County, James Barbour became land-wealthy and prominent in county and parish politics. [*Virginia Patent Book 14, p. 196, Book 15, p. 54, LVA*] His children included a son William Barbour, about whom I have found no information. However, if the approximate birthdates of James Barbour's sons are correct, his sons were too young to father a child of Mildred's age, who married no later than 1764. (For example, James Barbour's eldest son, Richard Barbour, is thought to have been born about 1730, and never married.)

James Barbour's grown children continued to accrue wealth and social and political status in both Virginia and Kentucky, including a grandson James Barbour who became governor of Virginia in 1812. Although not anywhere close to the Barbour's in wealth and social prestige, there are some Davis-Wansley connections with this family. For example, one son of the elder James named Ambrose Barbour had land adjacent to Benjamin Davis Jr.'s aunt in Culpeper (later Madison) County. [*Madison Deed Book 1, p. 17*] Another son, Thomas

Barbour, lived at Barboursville, Orange County, 10 miles or less up the main road from where John Wansley lived in Albemarle at least by the late 1770's. In the 1790's, Thomas Barbour's son, James Barbour (the later governor), was the lawyer who wrote and signed the complaint petition for Walter Goldsmith in the latter's Chancery Court suit that peripherally involved John Wansley. [ACC 1801-004]

The senior James Barbour did not name a daughter Mildred (or Amelia or Milly) in his will dated 23 February 1770, nor did his wife Sarah Todd Barbour in her will dated 19 May 1781, nor have I read of any indications of a missing or disinherited child for him. [Culpeper Will Book B, p. 143 and Will Book C, p. 282, respectively]

To some, this Barbour family might seem on the surface a possibility for Mildred's relations *if* the story about her being the disinherited daughter of a wealthy and prestigious father is true. The emphasis here is on the large "if." Unfortunately, because most of the claims about "Amelia" made by Katharine Otto and passed on by Doris Steed Smith and Frank Wansley are questionable or erroneous, it seems almost impossible to know which may hold a kernel of truth and which are merely a product of imagination or misconstrued information. At the least we have ample cause in the research to be skeptical of the disinherited heiress story, and we need to proceed with great caution concerning its validity. Without any proof or documented indication of a missing unnamed daughter, any claim for James Barbour as Mildred's father is as unrealistic as the claim for Patrick Barber.

### **Barber**

As my search for a possible Barbour or Barber father for Mildred was yielding so little, I found several families in Albemarle County by the name of Barber I thought worth investigating. If Mildred's maiden name was passed down orally through a number of generations, the more familiar name Barbour/Barber could easily be mistaken for the unusual name Barber, especially since in the accents of Georgia, where the majority of Mildred's 19th century descendants lived, the names could sound almost exactly the same.

The first to catch my attention was the family of Edward Barber, who died in Albemarle County in 1798. His will was dated 12 March 1798, and two of the witnesses were George Taylor and Rachel Taylor. [Albemarle Will Book 4, p. 17, transcription by Vera Barber] George Taylor was the guardian of Susannah Watts who married John and Mildred Wansley's son Nathan Wansley. George Taylor gave his consent and posted the marriage bond 1 March 1794. [Vogt and Kethley, Albemarle County, Virginia, Marriages 1780-1853, p. 330] Another witness to Edward Barber's will was a Molly Watts, probably a relative of Susannah Watts Wansley.

"Road Orders" are county court orders that periodically divided the county roads into varying segments and assigned the responsibility for the road maintenance to the people living along that stretch of the road. Thus being together on road orders shows proximity of residence and indicates probable interaction.

Albemarle County Road Orders of 15 June 1792 show George Taylor on road orders with Edward Barber and his two sons George and John Barber. [Albemarle Order Book (AOB) 1791-93, p. 175 Pawlett, p. 22] Also on those same road orders were David Watts, John Jones, and David McCauley.

In the 11 March 1784 Albemarle Road Orders, John Wansley was on the same order with John Jones for "the road from the river to McCauleys," [AOB 1783-1785, p. 123, Pawlett, p. 8] and in 1792, John Wansley is on road orders with William Taylor and Micajah Taylor "on the road from John McCauleys to Carrs ford." [AOB 1791-93, p. 175, Pawlett, p. 23]

Micajah Taylor also posted bond for the marriage of John and Mildred Wansley's daughter Nancy to John Perry Patterson on 14 November 1789. [Vogt and Kethley, p. 248]

Edward Barber's will names his daughter Isabel Munday. Isabel Barber married Jonathan Munday 25 Dec 1784 in Albemarle County. [Joe Barber, BarberFamilyTree.org] Jonathan was the son of Samuel Munday and Lucy Dowell, related to John Dowell from whom Walter Goldsmith bought the Albemarle County land where he and John Wansley lived. (Goldsmith was apparently exempted from road duty by this time due to his age.) In the 1784 road orders, John Wansley was with Major Dowell, and in 1792 John Wansley was on road orders with Samuel Munday's sons Abraham, Reuben, and Jonathan Munday, the latter being the husband of Isabel Barber.

This is the pattern of intertwining marriages, associations, and proximities one expects to find among related family groups at this time in Virginia. However if Edward Baber and Mildred Wansley were related, it is not yet clear how. Since Edward Baber served in the Revolution, he was probably Mildred's age and not old enough to be her father. It appears that the identity of Edward Baber's father and Edward's residence prior to Albemarle is not yet known. [*Correspondence with Joe Baber, administrator of BaberFamilyTree.org*] Finding this information could be important, since for courtship purposes, the part of Albemarle where the Edward Baber's and the Wansley's lived in the 1790's was rather too far removed from where John Wansley lived in Louisa County during the years when he would have courted Mildred.

Interestingly, the only mention I have found so far in Louisa County records for any Baber is an entry for a Thomas Baber in the index to a 1756 Ledger Book of a general store at Fredericks Hall, VA. Not only is Fredericks Hall in the vicinity where John Wansley must have lived in Louisa near Walter Goldsmith, but a William and John Goldsmith are also mentioned in this 1756 ledger. However, inclusion in this ledger does not necessarily mean the patron lived near the store. The University of Virginia guide to this ledger book explains, "...this ledger occasionally notes the family relationships or occupations of the patrons, and the locality or the county in which the patrons resided...The inclusion of entries for the counties of Caroline, Orange, Halifax, Albemarle (or 'Rockfish') and Spotsylvania, is an indication that a number of the patrons were not 'local' residents, but merely passed through Louisa County on their way to Richmond, Williamsburg, etc." [*Guide to Accession No. 4201, Special Collections, Alderman Memorial Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA*] Thus, this Thomas Baber may be the son of Robert and Sarah Baber of Old Rappahannock and King William County who settled perhaps by the mid-1750's in Fluvanna County, VA where Thomas Baber wrote his will 4 October 1778. [*Fluvanna Will Book 1, p. 13-15, transcription submitted by Jim G. Faulconer to Clark County KYGenWeb*] Except for one witness named Mary Taylor (but otherwise unidentified), the will does not indicate any connection that I could see between Thomas Baber of Fluvanna and Edward Baber in Albemarle or with the Wansley's.

Continued research into the Edward Baber family could bring new information to light. At present, it seems this Baber family's connections with the Wansley's may be only those resulting from long-time close proximity.

There was another Baber family in Albemarle County whose relationship (if any) to Edward Baber is not known. The father of this family was Robert Baber who died testate in Albemarle. His will was dated 12 December 1747 and proved in August 1749. [*Albemarle Will Book 1, p. 4, trans. by Sandy Ruppell*] The point of interest here was that his will mentions his wife was pregnant at the time, and I have not found that anyone has identified the then-unborn child. However, if the child were our Mildred, she would have been 14 to 16 years old at the time of her marriage to John Wansley, which in this time and place and social group would be highly unlikely.

Quite contrary to the Edward Baber family, I have found no common associates between the Robert Baber family and John Wansley. Also, the Robert Baber family lived in the southern part of Old Albemarle that became Buckingham County in 1761, which is out of range for a likely spouse of John Wansley.

### **WHEREWITH WHITTEN?**

Not only do there seem to be scant few prospects for a father for Mildred Wansley named Barbour or Barber, but neither Barbour nor Barber is found in the name of any known descendant of John and Mildred Wansley. However, the name of Whitten is said to be the middle name of two of their grandchildren. Their daughter Sarah Wansley Beck reportedly named a daughter Mildred Whitten Beck (proved to be recorded in public records as Mildred W. or Millie W.), and their son Nathan Wansley named a son Nathan Whitten Wansley.

In fact, in November 1881, Nathan Whitten Wanslee with some of his family and friends traveled from Arizona to the St. George Utah Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They went to enter baptisms and confirmations for the dead by proxy for at least 26 deceased Wansley family members and their extended family. These records include "John Wanslee Senr.," by proxy "Nathan Whitten Wanslee, grandson," and a number of John's children. Researcher James B. Evans recently showed me that on 8 November 1881, "Millie Whitin" was recorded on the same page with Sarah, Nancy, Millie, Reuben, and Larkin Wanslee [*St. George Utah Temple Records, Film #170544, p. 16-17, #246.*] These four women were all entered by "friend" proxies, so no family relationship information was provided. However, combined with the other evidence explored below, this LDS record seems certainly to be John's wife, Mildred "Millie" Wansley, showing her maiden name to be Whitten. Nathan Whitten Wansley was well into his 20's when his grandmother Milly died, and obviously he would have special cause to know that her name was Whitten.

### **Whitten as a Wansley family name**

The three Wansley family authors in the 1970's point out the name Whitten when speculating about the Milly named as the wife of John Wansley in Thomas Wansley's Bible record. As discussed in Part I of this report, authors Frank Wansley, Katharine Otto, and Doris Steed Smith, using shared information, mistook this Milly as a second wife of John Wansley. They seem unaware that Milly was the nickname for Amelia (which they thought was John's wife's name) as well as the nickname for Mildred (the actual name of John Wansley's only wife). The authors speculate that Milly Wansley of the Bible record, who they thought was John's second wife, had the maiden name of Whitten. Given research to date, it seems instead that they inadvertently discovered the real maiden name of John Wansley's only wife Mildred, who was usually called Milly.

Before investigating this further, we need to unravel Frank Wansley's statement about Milly and the name Whitten (which in the process will also point to the fallacies in the three authors' ideas about "Milly Whitten" as a second wife). Wansley states that the reason Milly's maiden name may be Whitten is because, "Nathan's full name was Nathan Whitten Wansley, and John and Sarah [Wansley] Beck's daughter was Mildred Whitten Beck." [*Wansley, p. 41*]

The authors give no proof or documentation for their claim of the middle names of Whitten. However, we do have proof from the 1881 St. George Utah Temple records mentioned above that Nathan, son of John and Mildred Wansley's son Nathan, was named Nathan Whitten Wanslee by his own entry. [*St. George Temple records, p. 6-7, #77*] He appears as N. W. Wanslie in the 1850 Gordon County GA census (age 53), and Nathan W. Wanslee in the 1880 census in Apache County AZ (age 82). Also, we at least have proof of a middle initial "W" for Sarah Wansley Beck's daughter. She signed her name as Mildred W. Beck when she witnessed her parents' Elbert County GA deed on 26 Mar 1816. [*Elbert Deed Book P, p. 186, Farmer (1997), p. 274*] Mildred Beck also used her middle initial "W" in the 1860 census for Elberton, Elbert County, GA where her name is listed as Mrs. M. W. Gray, and she signed her Elbert County will dated 21 July 1873 as Mildred W. Gray. [*Will proved 8 Jun 1887, per transcript by Jim Evans*]

Almost certainly it was not John and Mildred Wansley's son Nathan, but only Nathan's son Nathan, who had the Whitten middle name. I have found no proof or indication that the elder Nathan had a middle name at all. In primary records of the senior Nathan, he is designated with no middle name or initial. Not only with the three Wansley family authors but yet today it is a common error for people researching families living around 1800 to presume that if a father and son had the same first name, and the son had a proved middle name, then the father had that middle name also. In Virginia, other than among the aristocracy, giving children middle names did not begin to appear in general practice until around 1800, and increased greatly throughout the South after the War of 1812. Of course, there were exceptions, such as Nancy Wansley's husband John Perry Patterson, born about 1760, whose middle name is proved in their marriage bond. [*Vogt and Kethley, p. 248*] However, without proof of a middle name or a middle initial in a primary record, we cannot assume there was one. (Another common error is mistaking a signature mark, often a letter, as a middle initial.) An example of another erroneous middle name among John Wansley's sons is Thomas, born 1783. In his Elbert County, Georgia will dated 24 July 1846 (as in prior records) Thomas is called and signs his name simply Thomas Wanslow. Yet within his will Thomas names all his children, born 1813-1834, with their middle names. [*Family Bible records and transcript of will of Thomas Wanslow, Wansley, p. 39-40*] Since Thomas had a son named Thomas Jefferson Wansley (b. 1820), Wansley researchers have presumed the father was Thomas Jefferson as well, yet the will and other records indicate that presumption is incorrect.

Since there is also no evidence of a middle name for John Wansley's son Nathan, almost certainly he was not named Whitten, as Frank Wansley seems to think. Actually, had his name been Nathan Whitten Wansley, that in itself would prove Whitten was not the name of an alleged second wife. The elder Nathan was born before 1770, since he posted security for his sister Elizabeth's marriage bond in 1790, and bondsman had to be at least 21 years old. [*Vogt and Kethley, p. 104*] The Wansley family authors posited (we now know in error) that John's "first wife Amelia" died sometime after the Revolution. Strangely, even by their reasoning, Nathan was unquestionably a son of "Amelia," so a middle name of Whitten could not have been for any "second wife," as Frank Wansley proposes. As for John and Mildred Wansley's two grandchildren said to have Whitten as a middle name, it hardly seems plausible that two of Mildred/"Amelia's" children, Sarah and Nathan, would give their children the maiden name of an alleged stepmother who did not even raise Sarah or Nathan.

We now know there was no second wife for John Wansley. As explained in Part I, we have firm evidence from the combination of Albemarle Chancery Court records, the Van Creek Church minutes, and Thomas Wansley's Bible that John Wansley's only wife was named Mildred, who went by the nickname of Milly.

What stands out now in high relief is that Mildred/Milly had one grandchild and probably two with a middle name of Whitten. One of those, Mildred "Milly" Whitten Beck, even carried her grandmother's first name of Mildred, and went by the same nickname of Milly. [1870 Elbert GA census] Could it be that her grandmother's birth name was Mildred Whitten as well? The November 1881 Wansley/Wanslee family records at the LDS St. George Temple with a Millie Whitin on the same page certainly indicate it was. The next question becomes, were there any Whitten families living near John Wansley in Louisa County around the time of his marriage to Mildred? The answer is yes.

### ***Whitten and Wansley connections***

In the tier of Virginia counties along the Pamunkey/Northanna River, which includes Hanover, Louisa and Albemarle, the name of Whitten (also spelled Whitton, Witten, etc.) seems almost as rare in middle to late 18th century Virginia records as Wansley. Significantly, so far the only Whitten records I have found in this area are for the part of Louisa County where John Wansley appears to have lived at the time of his marriage.

Although John had no land records to prove where he lived, we have strong evidence to assume John was living near, possibly even with, Walter Goldsmith when John married Mildred. John Wansley's relationship with Walter Goldsmith was a long and close one. Various court records in Louisa and Albemarle County tell a fascinating story. Walter Goldsmith was a blacksmith by trade (as was a grandson of John Wansley, probably a son, and perhaps John himself). [Albemarle Deed Book B, p. 340] When the Commonwealth of Virginia finally began issuing promised bounty land for past military service, it was Walter Goldsmith who testified in Louisa County Court in 1780 to the French and Indian War service in 1758 and 1759 of John's deceased father (or possibly brother) William Wansley. [Louisa County Court Orders, Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck, Virginia's Colonial Soldiers, p. 256] Goldsmith was described as an "old man" by 1781, which would make him the age of John's father, and so may have known John from boyhood. [ACC1801-004] Goldsmith's house in Louisa County was burgled in 1763. The man who found the culprit and returned Goldsmith's stolen property was Robert Thomson, probably the assignee of that name for part of John's father (or brother) William Wansley's bounty land earned by his French and Indian War service. [Louisa Order Book 1760-1764, Bell, p. G-154; Bockstruck, p. 288] In 1780, the Louisa County Court accepted Walter Goldsmith's oath that John Wansley was William Wansley's heir at law. [Louisa Order Book 1774-1782, Davis, Louisa County, Virginia, 1743-1814, p. 7] Such testimony often meant the witness was a relative, or if not, that no relatives survived or lived in the area. (Except for John, his father or brother William, his wife Mildred and their children, I have found no 18th century records for any other Wansley in extensive searching in central Virginia and cursory searching elsewhere in Virginia.)

Between 1764 and 1769 John Wansley moved his family to a part of Albemarle County about 45 miles northwest of where Goldsmith (and previously, surely John) lived in Louisa. It was from Albemarle that John was first drafted for Revolutionary War service in 1776. From testimony in two Albemarle Chancery Court cases, we learn details of John's continuing relationship with Walter Goldsmith. [ACC1796-006 & 1801-004] About January 1780 Walter Goldsmith, still residing in Louisa County, bought 200 acres in Albemarle near where John had been living on rented land. Goldsmith then "put" John and his family on the newly-purchased land. John lived on this land for the next 20 years, and Goldsmith never charged him rent. In early 1781, Goldsmith went to live on the Albemarle land with John and his family, while still keeping some of his Louisa land for income. One deponent testified that in the next year or so, he had gone to speak with Goldsmith and found him at breakfast with John, a fascinating domestic detail showing their close relationship. Goldsmith had a blacksmith shop on the Albemarle land. However, since he appears to have been exempt from compulsory road maintenance duty by virtue of his age, it may have been John who ran the blacksmith shop. (No apprentices or employees were ever mentioned.) In 1790, when John's daughter Elizabeth married, John's son Nathan was one witness, and Walter Goldsmith was the other. [Vogt and Kethley, p. 104] Goldsmith seems to have looked upon John as a son. In the late 1790's, a friend testified she once heard Goldsmith say that when he died he was going to leave the Albemarle land to John, if John "behaved himself." (John and most of his family moved to Georgia in 1800, at least 6 years before Goldsmith died [Louisa Deed Book K, p. 280] However, John's son Reuben, the reported blacksmith, stayed behind and was still living in Albemarle, as was Goldsmith, in 1803. [Albemarle PP Tax Lists 1800-1813, Reel 6, LVA])

As discussed previously, we know from court records that John was still living in Louisa in 1760 and at least 4 years thereafter. Given the close long term relationship with Goldsmith, it seems safe to assume that shortly before his marriage to Mildred, John was living near, or perhaps even with, Walter Goldsmith when in 1759 Goldsmith purchased Louisa County land in close proximity to land owned in 1747 by one William Whitten.

William Whitten/Whitton of Louisa County is claimed to be the son of William Whitten (Sr.), whose Caroline County will, dated 17 April 1729 and proved 9 July 1730, names children George, Thomas (b. c1719), William, Robert, Jeremiah, Mary, and Elizabeth. [*Transcript of will from Craig Beeman to RootsWeb Whitten Mail List, 28 Sep 1996*] In a 1999 post to the GenForum Whitton message board, Susan Sustar adds that after William Whitten Sr.'s death, his under-aged sons Robert and Jeremiah were bound out as carpentry apprentices to Robert Faris[h] of Caroline County until 1744. (Walter Goldsmith was a blacksmith, the father of Benjamin Davis who married Patsy Wansley was a carpenter, and families of skilled craftsmen and tradesmen often formed their own social groups based on common interests and professional associations.)

By 1747, William Whitten (Jr.) was living in Louisa County near where John Wansley and Walter Goldsmith probably were living, based on names and locations in deeds and court records. William Whitten's family later became related to the family of Thomas Wash through McGehee marriages, and at least by 1759, Walter Goldsmith had land adjacent to Thomas Wash and his son William Wash. Thomas Wash, in turn, had a grandson William Whitten Wash, indicating a likely Whitten and Wash family tie. [*Perrie Carrow, GenForum Wash Family message board, 2005 citing Gayle Blankenship, Virginia Families of Louisa, Hanover, and Monroe Counties*]

The Louisa County Court Order Book has an entry dated 13 June 1743 that reads: "On petition of Wm. Whitton setting forth that he is very poor and by sickness is rendered unable to Labour for a Livelihood. Ordered that he be exempted from paying county levies." [*Rosalie Davis. Louisa County, Virginia Titheables and Census 1743-1785 (1981), p. 7*] I have not found a record of when William Whitten died, but John Whitten appears on the extant Louisa County titheables lists, beginning in 1769. Since he is living in the same immediate area with the same associates and the Whitten name there was rare, John apparently is William Whitten's son. In 1773 John Whitten married Mary McGehee, daughter of William McGehee. [*Louisa Marriages, Louisa VAGenWeb Project*] (The abstract says William was Mary's father but this needs verification that he was not her guardian instead.)

In 1773, Walter Goldsmith, probably well into his 50's, became the blacksmith on Robert Armistead's almost 3000-acre Louisa County plantation on Elk Creek near the Northanna River. [*Davis, Louisa Titheables, p. 41*] The overseer of Armistead's plantation at that time was William McGehee, who was either the same or closely related to the one of that name whose daughter (or ward) Mary McGehee married John Whitten the same year on 3 Feb 1773. [*Louisa Marriages, Louisa VAGenWeb Project*] Walter Goldsmith and William McGehee co-witnessed a deed of Robert Armistead 20 Oct 1773. [*Davis, Vol. 1, p. 153*] John Whitten who married Mary McGehee was the probable son of William Whitten (Jr.) who may be Mildred Wansley's father, or at least a close relative.

Walter Goldsmith worked for Armistead in Louisa County until 1781 when, as an "old man," he went to live with John and Mildred Wansley and their family on Goldsmith's land in adjacent Albemarle County. Goldsmith kept some land in Louisa, referred to by both John and Mildred Wansley as "down home." [*ACC 1801-004*]

Given the long-term close relationship between the families, it may be that Walter or Elizabeth Goldsmith is a relative of John or Mildred Wansley. Although the name Elizabeth was a common one, the elder William Whitten did name a daughter Elizabeth in his Caroline County will proved 1730. So at least there is a possibility that Walter Goldsmith's wife could be Elizabeth Whitten, sister of William Whitten (Jr) of Louisa, and a possibility that Elizabeth Goldsmith could be Mildred Wansley's aunt.

The younger William Whitten's son John Whitten died in Louisa County 1783-1784. [*Louisa titheables & land tax lists*] Presumably it was his daughter Mary H. Whitton, "over 21, daughter of Mary Whitton," who married John Waller 26 Nov 1812, witnessed by William Whitton, who may have been the bride's brother. [*Louisa County Marriage Records compiled on Louisa County VAGenWeb Project*]

At least two brothers of John Whitten's father William Whitten (Jr) of Louisa County, namely Robert Whitten and Jeremiah Whitten, lived in Amherst County which was formed in 1761 from the southwestern part of Albemarle County. [*Beeman, Whitten Mail List, 28 Sep 1996*] Jeremiah's son William Whitten witnessed the will of John Rucker of Amherst County on 1 Dec 1779. The other two witnesses were John's brother Ambrose Rucker and Ambrose's son (or brother) Reuben Rucker. [*Amherst Will Book 1, p. 529, abstract at Hatcher Fam. Gen. Soc. website*]

In 1798 at the Amherst County home of John Rucker's brother Ambrose Rucker, the deposition of Jesse Beck was taken in the Albemarle Chancery Court case of Walter Goldsmith versus the heirs of John Dowell regarding proper title to Goldsmith's Albemarle land where he and John and Mildred Wansley's family had lived for 18 years. [ACC 1801-004] Jesse Beck is said to be a brother of their daughter Sarah Wansley's husband John Beck. [Smith, Beck History, p. 2] It was a Culpeper County Virginia relative of John and Ambrose Rucker of Amherst who founded the town of Ruckersville in Elbert County, Georgia, near where John and Mildred and most of their children moved in 1800. (Another Rucker relative in Culpeper married a first cousin of Benjamin Davis, husband of John and Mildred Wansley's daughter Patsy.)

The following presents a chronology of selected Louisa County deed records that demonstrate the proximity and mutual associates of Walter Goldsmith (and by inference, John Wansley) and William and John Whitten/Whitton. Comments also show the propensity of many of the families on the deeds to intermarry. [Note: Richard and William Davis of these deeds do not seem at this point to be immediate family of Benjamin Davis who married Patsy Wansley, although there are clues in research that they may be related.]

7 March 1747 - Thomas Poindexter of St. Martin's Parish, Louisa County and Sarah, his wife, to William Harris of the same. £43 10s curr. money. 100 acres in St. Martin's Parish, which sd. Poindexter bought of John Magehee...corner of WILLIAM WITTEN...in Thomas Graves' line...on south side of GREAT ROCKY CREEK...John Macgehee and WILLIAM WHITTEN's line.

/s/ Thos. Poindexter, Sarah (+) Poindexter Wit: William Kembrow, Richard Davis, John Webb Rec. 22 Mar 1747 Sarah gave her consent. [Rosalie E. Davis, Louisa County Virginia Deed Books, Vol. 1, p. 38]

*Note:*

*In 1777, the above seller Thomas Poindexter's son Bond Veal Poindexter purchased from John Harris, son of the above buyer, land that was adjacent to "the said Poindexter" and Walter Goldsmith. (See deed below) [Davis, Vol. 3, p. 23]*

*That same year, John Harris, son of William Harris, sold land he owned with William Sears to Walter Goldsmith. [Bell, Sec. E, p. 59]*

*The land in this deed that William Harris is buying is adjacent to William Whitton. John Whitton, probable son of the above deed's William Whitton, married 3 Feb 1773 Louisa Co., VA to Mary McGehee, daughter of William McGehee. William Poindexter married Polly McGehee, 24 Aug 1791, Louisa Co. Thomas Wash Sr, who was an adjacent landowner to land purchased by Walter Goldsmith in 1759 (next deed below) was married to Sarah McGehee. There were also several marriages among families in this deed with the Lipscomb family, some of whom are named in deeds below.*

*[Unless otherwise stated, all marriage dates given in the Notes for these Louisa deeds were taken from Louisa County marriage records compiled on Louisa County VAGenWeb Project at <<http://trevilians.com/marriagw.htm>>]*

6 March 1759 - John Carter of St. Martin's Parish, Louisa County, Planter, and Precious, his wife, to WALTER GOLDSMITH of same, Blacksmith; £10 curr money; 50 acres...William Wash's and David Smith's line...Thomas Wash's line /s/ John Carter, Precious (x) Carter Wit: John Pettus, David Smith, William Wash, Robert Hester Rec. 24 July 1759 [Davis, Vol. 1, p. 148]

*Note:*

*The grantor John Carter appears to have purchased this 50 acres of land originally from Thomas Wash and his wife Sarah (McGehee) on 26 Oct 1756. [Davis, Vol 1, p. 115] Thomas and William Wash were adjacent.*

*The western bound of St. Martin's Parish line ran north-south about 5 miles west of the Northanna River and the Hanover County line, i.e., the far eastern part of Louisa County. This 1759 deed shows that Walter Goldsmith was already living in this same county and parish prior to the purchase of this particular property. He, as well as John Wansley's father, may have lived in this area before 1742 when it was still Hanover County, which records are now mostly destroyed. Records indicate Goldsmith had other land in this area of northeastern Louisa County as well, but no earlier deed of purchase has been found.*

*Walter Goldsmith and his wife Elizabeth sell this land in 1766 (deed below), probably about the time John Wansley and his wife Mildred and young family move to Albemarle, where Goldsmith joined them in 1781.*

26 August 1760 - Thomas Wash [Sr] of Louisa County to John Wash of Amelia County; 5s curr money; 250 acres; part of the same tract whereupon the sd. Thomas Wash now lives, bounded on Thomas Lipscomb, John Pettus, Charles Kenneyday [Kennedy], John Smith, WALTER GOLDSMITH /s/ Thomas (I) Wash Rec. 26 Aug 1760 Ack. by Thomas Wash [Davis, Vol. 2, p. 5]

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10 May 1763 - John Wash of Prince Edward County to Thomas Wash Jr of Louisa County, St. Martin's Parish; £15 curr money; 149 acres in St. Martin's Parish; all the remainder of the tract of land that Thomas Wash Sr. made a Deed to sd. John Wash; land joins lines of Thomas Lipscomb, Thomas Wash, WALTER GOLDSMITH. /s/ John Wash, Susan Wash Wit: Thomas Lipscomb, Saml Ragland, John Smith, Richard (R) Davis, William McGehee Rec. 14 Oct 1765 Ack. by John Wash and Susanna his wife [Davis, Vol. 2, p. 49]

*Note:*

*Witness William McGehee is the father or close relative of Mary McGehee, who married John Whitton in 1773.*

-----

27 January 1764 - Thomas Wash to son William Wash, both of St. Martin's Parish, Louisa County, gift, 138 acres in Louisa County [on waters of LITTLE ROCKY CREEK], on the South and Southwest side of the Road, and Negros Phillis, Daniel, Harry, Joe, and sundry chattel, household stuff, and working tools.. /s/ Thomas (x) Wash. Wit: John Smith, William Kimbrow, John Sandy Hall, Thomas Wash, Jr., William Gambill. [Louisa County Deeds, D½: 12; Deed and notes below from The Baker Family of Virginia, p. 8, cited as excerpted from The Further Chronicles of the Pamunkey Davenport, by John Scott Davenport, Ph.D.]

*Note:*

*The following comments by Dr. John Scott Davenport about this deed mention Wash family connections with Davenport and Gambill. The Davenport's and Gambill's and some others of their intermarried families have strong connections with the family of Benjamin Davis who married Patsy Wansley:*

*"William Wash was married to a daughter of Charles Kennedy and Croatia Davenport, daughter of Martin, Sr. William Gambill was the eldest son of Henry Gambill, Sr., and Mary Davenport, eldest daughter and child of Martin [Davenport] Sr., of Hanover, and was a son-in-law to Thomas Wash, the grantor. William [Gambill] lived in Culpeper. John Smith was an in-law to some degree to John Davenport, son of Martin, Sr."*

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12 Nov 1764 - William Davis & Sarah his wife to William Harris, for £65 curr. money of Virginia, 52½ acres on the south side of GREAT ROCKY CREEK, being part of a tract bequeathed to Mary [McGehee] Davis wife of Richard Davis by the last will and testament of William McGehee dec'd, bounded on great Rocky Creek, Lipscombs and Davis corner, Harris's & Davis's corner. Not witnessed.

Signed: William Davis [by signature], Sarah (I) Davis [by mark] Sarah released dower. Rec. 13 Nov 1764 [Louisa County Deed Book C½, p. 53, Reel 2, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA; abstracted by Joan Horsley]

*Note:*

*This purchaser most likely is the son of William Harris who in 1747 purchased land adjacent to William Whitton (deed above), and the brother of John Harris who before 1777 had land adjacent to William Goldsmith (deed below).*

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17 November 1766 - WALTER GOLDSMITH of St. Martin's Parish, Louisa County, and ELIZABETH GOLDSMITH to George Lumsden of same, £12 curr money; for 50 acres; corner of William Wash and on John Smith's land & Thomas Wash's line. /s/ Walter Goldsmith, Eliza. (+) Goldsmith Wit: William Pettus, A. Woolfolk [Augustine Woolfolk], Edmond Eggleston Acknowledged in Court by Walter Goldsmith and Eliza. his wife Rec 17 Nov 1766 [Louisa Deed Book D, p. 14, Reel 3, LVA]

*Note:*

*Here Walter Goldsmith sells the land he purchased in 1759. John Wansley and family may have left Louisa about the time of this 1766 deed, as he is not found in the extant titheables lists that begin in 1767-1769.*

*Grantee George Lumsden's daughter Frances married Edward McGehee 23 Aug 1781 [Marriage Index, Louisa County VAGenWeb]*

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18 June 1767 - William Lipscomb, Planter, of Trinity Parish, Louisa County, and Elizabeth his wife, to WALTER GOLDSMITH, Blacksmith, of St. Martin's Parish, Louisa County; £25 curr money; 100 acres in Trinity Parish...sd. William Lipscomb's line...Thomas Johnson's line.../s/ William Lipscomb, Elizabeth (+) Lipscomb Wit: William Pettit, William Pettus, George Lumsden, R. Armistead, George Pottis  
 Rec. 13 July 1767 William Lipscomb and Elizabeth his wife ack. their deed. [Davis, Vol. 2, p. 82]

*Note:*

*In 1773, Walter Goldsmith begins working as blacksmith for the wealthy plantation owner Robert Armistead, a witness to this deed, whose overseer was William McGehee, father or close relative of Mary McGehee who married John Whitten the same year. William Lipscomb's grandmother is reportedly also a McGehee.*

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3 September 1770 - WALTER GOLDSMITH, Blacksmith, in Trinity Parish, Louisa County, and ELISABETH his wife, to James Tate, Planter, of same; £12 curr money; 100 acres in Trinity Parish...William Lipscomb's line /s/ Walter Goldsmith, Elizabeth (x) Goldsmith Wit: John Mcallester, Thos. (A) Almand, James Tate Jr Rec 10 Sep 1770 Ack by Walter Goldsmith & Elizabeth his wife [Davis, Vol. 2, p. 112]

*Note:*

*James Tate and his brothers Zimri, Enos, and William Tate moved about 1790 to Elbert County GA. Zimri's daughter Nancy married Samuel McGehee in Louisa County 9 Feb 1789 [Louisa Marriage Book 1, p. 43, Louisa Co. VAGenWeb] The family of Benjamin Davis, who later married Patsy Wansley, moved from Culpeper County VA to Elbert County GA in late 1790 or early 1791. Many other Virginia neighbors of the Davis's and Wansley's moved to Elbert County about the same time, while others left earlier for southern Virginia or North Carolina before arriving in Elbert County around 1790.*

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12 August 1772 - Richd Davis of St. Martin's Parish, Louisa County to William Davis of same; £50 curr money; 150 acres; in Parish afsd in the North side of ROCKY CREEK...mouth of a Spring Branch on the north side of Rocky Creek...up same to JOHN WHITTONs corner...Lipscomb's corner. /s/ Richard (R) Davis, Mary (M) Davis Rec 10 Aug 1772 Ack Rd. Davis [Davis, Vol. 2, p. 133]

*Note:*

*John Whitten married in 1773 Mary McGehee, daughter of William McGehee. The marriage (or marriage bond) was witnessed by William Davis, of above deed. [Marriage Index, Louisa Co. VAGenWeb]*

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20 Oct 1773 - Thomas Knighton to Robert Armistead; £23 11s to sell [list of personal property] If sd Knighton shall pay above sum in or upon 1 Oct 1778, then this indenture to be void. /s/ Thomas (T) Knighton, R. Armistead Wit: Ellyson Armistead, William McGehee, WALTER GOLDSMITH - Rec 8 Nov 1773; proved by oath of Ellyson Armistead [Davis, Vol. 1, p. 153]

*Note:*

*The witness William McGehee, here with Walter Goldsmith, is father or close relative of Mary McGehee who married John Whitten earlier this same year.*

*He also appears to be the same William McGehee who was overseer for the above mortgage deed grantee Robert Armistead by at least 1772. In 1773 Walter Goldsmith began working as blacksmith for Armistead on his Elk Creek Louisa County plantation. It was a common practice for large slave owners (Armistead owned around 30) to hire white skilled craftsmen to teach and oversee slaves in their trade, so eventually the slave owner did not have to pay for outside skilled labor. Thomas Jefferson began building Monticello with white skilled craftsmen, but most of the work was completed by highly trained slaves.*

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14 October 1777 - Wm. Sears [and John Harris?] to Waller Goolsmith [WALTER GOLDSMITH] 160 [acres] [Wit:] Bond V. Poindexter, Thos. Littworth, John Lane [Bell, Sec. E, p. 59]

*Note:*

*Louisa record abstractor John C. Bell explains that this entry was among those on "a list made by Clerk John*

*Poindexter about 1803 of 170 deeds then on hand in his office which were incompletely proven and not admitted to record." Witnesses and/or grantor(s) had to appear in court to verify or "prove" the deed and their signatures before a deed was ordered to be recorded, and many deeds, for many reasons, never got recorded. Another unrecorded deed on this list (below) shows that John Harris was probably also a co-grantor with Sears to Goldsmith in 1777, and the clerk's list was abbreviated (as are most deed indexes).*

*Jos. Sears to Wm. Sears & John Harris 19 Mar 1772 - 160 [acres]  
[Wit:] Gideon Harris, Thos. Johnson, Mary Sears [Bell, Sec. E, p. 59]*

*At the time of this purchase, Goldsmith was still listed in titheables tax lists on Armistead's plantation where he worked as blacksmith until moving to his Albemarle land in 1781, where John and Mildred Wansley lived at that time. Goldsmith sells this land in 1805, still residing in Albemarle, so may never have lived on this land himself, just used it for income.*

*The next deed below also includes Harris, Poindexter, and Goldsmith of this October 1777 deed.*

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8 Dec 1777 - John Harrys [John Harris] of Trinity Parish, Louisa County to Bond Veal Poindexter of same; £20; 90 acres; on NORTH EAST CREEK...new dividing line between sd. Poindexter & WALTER GOLDSMITH Wit: none /s/ John (IH) Harrys [Harris], Lucy (+) Harrys Rec. 8 Dec 1777 Ack. by John Harris & Lucy his wife [Davis, Vol. 3, p. 23]

*Note:*

*In 1747, William Harris, father of grantor John Harris, bought land from grantee Bond Veal Poindexter's father Thomas Poindexter, adjacent to William Whitton (deed abstract above) [Davis, Vol. 1, p. 38]*

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2 February 1786 - Isham Pulliam of Campbell County, to Zachariah Pulliam of Louisa County; £50; 50 acres on WATERS OF PAMUNKEY [also called Northanna River] bounded by land of Elijah Johnson on the east, GOLDSMITH's on the south & by John Pulliam on west and north sides; being land on which sd. Isham Pulliam did live & the same that was given to him by John Pulliam. /s/ Isham Pulliam Wit: Josef Chewning, Thomas Pulliam, Jean Pulliam, Drury Pulliam Rec 11 Sep 1786 Proved by oaths of Thos. Pulliam and Jane Pulliam 14 Sep 1789 - proved by oath of Jos. Chewning. [Davis, Vol. 3, p. 101]

*Note: The Benjamin Davis family was closely associated with earlier generations of this Pulliam family of Louisa and Spotsylvania County, VA.*

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7 September 1793 - William Arnold and Judith his wife of Spots. and George Lumsden and Elizabeth his wife of Louisa to William Johnson of Louisa £20 15s for tract in Louisa containing 88 1/2 acres being 1/2 of the land taken up by Charles Smith and John Lewis dec'd. adj. Robert Anderson dec'd., WALTER GOLDSMITH, Col. Robert Anderson. Sig. William Arnold, Judith Arnold, Geo. Lumsden, Elisa. Lumsden. Witnesses: W. Callis, Wm. Smith Jr. Rec.

[Louisa County Deed Book G, p 363, abstracted and submitted by Janice L. Abercrombie to Louisa County VAGenWeb at <<http://trevilians.com/deeds/deed13.htm>> (url 2006)]

*Note:*

*Robert Anderson, the deceased landowner in this deed adjacent to Walter GOLDSMITH, brought a debt suit in Louisa County in 1764 against John Wansley that was dismissed. [Bell, Sect. G, p. 82]*

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20 Mar 1796 - William McGehee Sr. to William McGehee Jr. all of Louisa, £372, . Beginning at a White Oak on South side of PAMUNKEY RIVER [also called Northanna], corner to John McGehee; S 56 deg W 152 poles to corner John McGehee and MARY WHITTON to Major Samuel Ragland

[Louisa Deed Book I , p. 183, cited by unknown contact, Ancestry.com]

*Note:*

*Mary Whitton of the above deed was the widow of John Whitton who died 1783-1784. Mary Whitton was the daughter (or possibly ward) of William McGehee, as recorded on her marriage record in 1773.*

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18 April 1805. WALTER GOLDSMITH of Albemarle County to Richard Mantlo, son and heir at law of James Mantlo. 160 acres in Louisa Co. on NORTH EAST CREEK; bounds include "part of the tract of land patented by Moses Estes [17 March 1736, then Hanover County, with a bound of Thomson (VPB17:240)] formerly the property of William Sears and John Harris." /s/ Walter Goldsmith

Witnesses: Jno Edwards, Duke Cosby, Jno. Thomason, Jonathan Munday.

8 July 1805 - Proved and acknowledged by WALTER GOLDSMITH and the oath of John Edwards.

8 September 1806 - Further proved and acknowledged by WALTER GOLDSMITH and the oath of Duke Cosby and John Edwards, and ordered recorded. [*Louisa County Deed Book K, p. 280-281, LVA*]

*Note:*

*Goldsmith bought this land 14 Oct 1777 which had been co-owned by William Sears and John Harris. In December 1777 John Harris sold Louisa land adjacent to the "new line" with Walter Goldsmith, and in 1747 John's father William Harris bought Louisa County land adjacent to William Whitten. (See previous deeds above).*

*In this 1805 deed of sale, witness Duke Cosby is the great-grandson of David Cosby, who won a debt suit against John Wansley in Louisa County court in 1760. Witness Jonathan Munday married the daughter of Edward Baber, whose family was a neighbor of Goldsmith and John Wansley's family in Albemarle County and shared a number of connections on records there. Witness John Edwards was son of Ambrose Edwards, an adjacent neighbor to the Goldsmith's and Wansley's in Albemarle County.*

### **CONCLUSIONS TO DATE**

Given the "Whitten" proved to be in the name of one grandchild of John and Mildred and claimed with good support to be in the name of another, plus the entry for "Millie Whitin" among the Wansley's in the LDS St. George Temple records, together with the accumulation of information from court and deed records, there seems to be strong evidence that John Wansley's wife Mildred/Milly's maiden name was Whitten, and that she could be the daughter, or at least a close relative, of William Whitten of Louisa County. Although we have had passed down to us that Mildred's last name was Barbour/Barber, that name has not been documented or proved, and the people who first made that claim mistook her first name and have numerous problems and errors in their work on early family lines in general. (It has been suggested that the Whitten name of two Wansley grandchildren might come from an even earlier ancestor such as John's or Mildred's mother, but in this case it seems an overly-long generational span between the "original" and the namesakes, especially since no other family surnames appear in the names of their children or other grandchildren.)

It is ironic that John Wansley's one and only wife seems to be Milly Whitten, who the 1970's Wansley authors propose, on flawed evidence, was John's "second wife." But genealogy is full of such ironies and unwitting surprises.

### **THE CHALLENGE AHEAD**

The challenge of researching John Wansley's wife Mildred, nicknamed Milly, at this point is to continue gathering primary records to see if there is more evidence to support, or any to contradict, that Mildred's name was Whitten and that her father or close relative was William Whitten (Jr.) of Louisa County, Virginia. (Learning more about the early Whitten line may lead us to yet-undiscovered information about John Wansley's father as well.) We still need to continue searching in primary records to see if there is equally strong evidence linking Mildred to a near-by Barbour/Barber or Baber family, and if so, what that relationship might be.

All preliminary investigation using secondary or second-hand sources needs to be verified against original records, and corrections need to be made to statements or assumptions proved to be incorrect.

These seem to be much more plausible, logical, and productive routes of inquiry than continuing to press a claim that Patrick Barber of New Jersey and New York was Mildred's father. The total absence of any direct or indirect connection between the Patrick Barber family and Mildred and John Wansley, as well as the significant errors and problems in the stories written about them, show this claim to be, in the end, just a fiction.

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## APPENDIX

### 1. Selected Descendant Outline for John Wansley and wife Mildred ("Milly")

Relationships of Wansley family members mentioned in this report (all descendants not included)

JOHN WANSLEY (son of William Wansley) m. MILDRED "MILLY" (previously known as Amelia Barber)

Children\*:

William Wansley

Sarah Wansley m. John Beck (*Line of Doris Steed Smith, daughter of Noel Steed*)

.....Mildred "Milly" Whitten Beck m. 1) Beverly Allen, 2) John F. Gray

Nathan Wansley m. 1) Susannah Watts, 2) Elizabeth Cleveland

.....Nathan Whitten Wansley/Wanslee

Nancy Wansley m. 1) John Perry Patterson, 2) William Young

Elizabeth Wansley m. Abraham Elliot

John Wansley m. Sally Greenway

Reuben Wansley m. Elizabeth Cunningham (*Line of Frank N. Wansley and James B. Evans*)

Polly Wansley (*"Dau. of John and Milly Wanslow" died 1806, per Thomas Wansley's Family Bible*)

Millie Wansley m. Samuel Jenkins

Martha "Patsy" Wansley m. Benjamin Davis "Jr." (*Son of Benjamin Davis "Sr", the "Patriot"*)

.....James Madison Davis m. Matilda Goggans (*Line of Joan Horsley*)

.....Martha Caroline Davis m. William Martin

.....Martha Matilda Martin m. William P. Price II

.....Caroline "Carrie" Price (b. 1860) m. Walter S. Wilson (*DAR Application under Wansley*)

.....Katharine "Kate" Wilson (b. 1888) m. Olaf Otto (*Katharine Otto, Wansley family author*)

.....Isabelle "Belle" Price (b. 1864) m. William A. Charters (*DAR Application under Wansley*)

.....Sarah "Sallie" Price (b. 1869) m. John C. West (*Virkus submission for Wansley-Barbour*)

Thomas Wansley m. Jemima Means

.....Thomas Jefferson Wansley

.....Martha Amanda Mildred Wansley

Larkin Wansley

\*Except for the last three, birth order of John and Mildred Wansley's children is only approximate based on available records.

### 2. Wansley Descendants Who First Published Claims about John Wansley's Wife 1914-1928

Caroline "Carrie" Price Wilson: DAR Application ID Number 41757

Isabelle "Belle" Sterling Price Charters: DAR Application ID Number 60842

Sarah "Sallie" Price West: *Virkus' Abridged Compendium of American Genealogy* Vol. III

### 3. Wansley Descendants Who Published Books of Wansley Family History 1975-1979

Katharine W. Otto: B. 8 Aug 1888, Dahlonoga, Lumpkin Co., GA; D. 09 May 1980, Savannah, GA  
*The Genealogy of Martin-Price with Barber Genealogy establishing data on Barber-Wansley connection with Beck, Davis and Allied Families*. Savannah, GA: Privately printed, 1978.

Doris Steed Smith: B. 4 Apr 1908, Murray Co. GA; D. 18 Oct 1994, West Palm Beach, FL  
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Frank N. Wansley: B. 21 Oct 1901, Elbert Co., GA; D. 25 Oct 1983, Elbert Co, GA  
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