Sarah Abigail Mahoney (1822-1888)

William and Sarah Abigail may have moved from Belfast to his property in Lincolnville on Ducktrap Stream, at least until May of 1843, because the family Bible says that their first son, Henry Oscar Wilson, was born in Lincolnville at that time. However, a move back to Belfast appears to have taken place at some time during the following two years, because in May of 1845 their second child, Lucy, was born (according to the family Bible) in Belfast, as was their third child, Edward, in 1846. It is possible that in 1843-1844 William and others, including his sister Sarah, sold their farms and made a reconnaissance trip out west at least as far as St. Louis (where Sarah married a Lincolnville man, Isaac Hills, in 1844), and possibly on into Illinois, then returned home to Maine by 1845.
Know all men by these presents, that
John E. Wilson of Charleston County of South Carolina, in consideration of four hundred dollars, paid to him by William Wilson of the same County, for an interest in the property hereinafter described, do hereby promise, release, bargain, sell and convey, and from henceforth as the said William Wilson has done and enjoys, forever all my right title and interest so good to the following described tract of land, situated in Charleston County, consisting of forty acres, bounded as follows to wit: Beginning at a stake and corner at the point leading from the public road to Horseshoe at the southeast corner of said tract, running due south from said corner, thence running south west by south forty words to line ABC, thence running west forty words to a stake and line thereon; thence to the center of Ducktrap Stream where the mouth of said stream on the same corner thereof until to Ducktrap South Grade Court house, bounded on same Court house, thence to the place of beginning containing ninety acres, etc.

To have and to hold, the same, together with all the privileges and appurtenances thereunto belonging, to him, the said William Wilson and his heirs and assigns forever.

And the covenant with the said William Wilson is, that he will and does hereby warrant and defend the same to the said William Wilson, his heirs and assigns forever, against the lawful claims and demands of all persons claiming by, through, or under me.

In witness whereof, the said John E. Wilson, together with Nancy Wilson, his wife, in token of his consent hereunto and hereby ratifying the same, this day of October, at the aforesaid place, personally appeared above mentioned John Wilson and subscribed the above instrument to the full pen and seal, before me.

Wendell E. Wilson, Justice of the Peace
Notarized at Charleston, S.C., October 17, 1831.

Record of the sale of 97 acres of land on the Ducktrap Stream by John Sheen Wilson to his brother William Faulkner Wilson on 4 October 1831, the transaction recorded by their father John Wilson, Justice of the Peace, just 24 days before his death.
Shortly following the death of his mother (1848), with nothing more to hold him in Maine, William and his older brother John Sheen Wilson, decided to move their families west permanently in search of open spaces and abundant farmland. Perhaps the idea had been put in their heads by all the stories of adventure and opportunity on the frontier which their father had undoubtedly brought back with him when he returned to Maine from the Ohio Territory around 1830. According to the story passed down as family tradition in one line (according to our cousin Doug Hamer), they boarded a ship in Maine, probably in Belfast, and sailed southward along the coast to Virginia, where they disembarked, most likely in Portsmouth.

The families proceeded inland along the well-traveled stage routes, then joined a wagon train. Sarah is said to have been appalled by the cruelty of slavery as practiced on the Virginia plantations, and was eager to continue on westward. They traveled by land as far west as the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, Virginia on the Ohio boarder—perhaps retracing the route followed by their father 15 or 20 years earlier. They stayed in Point Pleasant for a couple of years, perhaps awaiting the government announcement of new areas on the western frontier being opened to homesteaders. Their fourth child, William F. Wilson, was born there in February 1849. Alice O. Wilson, John Sheen Wilson's daughter, was born in Point Pleasant on 18 Nov 1850; JSW's eldest son Charles was
married in Gallipolis, Ohio, just across the river from Point Pleasant, on 24 Oct 1850; and JSW's sons, Charles and William H. Wilson, elected to remain there for some years after the rest of the family had moved on to Illinois (William was married in Point Pleasant in 1860).

Point Pleasant was in those days an important frontier outpost. It had been the site of the bloodiest battle ever fought between Indians (in this case about 1,000 Indian warriors of the "Northern Confederacy" of Shawnee, Delaware, Mingo, Wyandotte, Iroquois and Cayuga tribes under Shawnee Chief Hokolesqua, known in English as Chief Cornstalk) and white men, about 1,100 American colonial soldiers from Virginia under General Andrew Lewis. The Battle of Point Pleasant, on October 10, 1774, was the chief event of what historians refer to as Lord Dunmore's War, considered by many historians to be first battle of the American Revolution because the Indians (who lost the battle) had been incited against the colonists by the British.
Immigration routes from the east in the 1830's and 1840's. The future site of Grand Rapids, Illinois, where the Wilsons settled, is marked "X".
Sometime in 1851 the family decided upon an area to settle in Illinois, probably on land that had never been farmed. By this time William’s and John's sister, Sarah, her husband Isaac Hills and their family may have joined them, and perhaps also the family of their older brother George Ulmer Wilson and his wife Sarah Russ. The families of Sarah and George had both still been in Belfast as of the 1850 census, and George’s daughter Isabel had died in Belfast in 1851, but they traveled west shortly thereafter, probably catching up with William and John at Point Pleasant in mid-1851. They all boarded a riverboat at Point Pleasant and traveled down the Ohio River to where it meets the Mississippi, then up the Mississippi to the Illinois River north of St. Louis, and finally up the Illinois River to Peoria or Lasalle in LaSalle County, in north-central Illinois.

It was there in Lasalle that William's fifth child, Marie Antoinette Wilson, was born on August 14, 1851, and his sister Sarah's daughter Mary was born in 1852. By 1853 the families of William and John had settled on adjacent farms in Grand Rapids
township, Illinois, still in Lasalle County, and their sister Sarah's family had settled in
adjacent Ottawa Township where Sarah's husband could find work as a housebuilder and
carpenter. The township of Grand Rapids was located northwest of Streator a few miles
in or near what is now the Lasalle Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, so it must have
been a good place to live in the 1850's and 1860's, with fish and game plentiful. John
Ulmer Wilson was born in Grand Rapids on 21 October 1853; Albert George Wilson
was born there in 1856; and Sarah J. Wilson was born there in 1858. William F. Wilson's
last child, Nancy Mary Wilson, was born in Grand Rapids on April 4, 1865. In 1860
there were 1,430 people living in Grand Rapids township.

William Faulkner Wilson's older brother, John Sheen Wilson (1808-1894) and his
family had accompanied William's family to the Grand Rapids area; his daughter Lovicy
married a man from Lasalle County in 1853, and in 1856 his son John Sheen Wilson Jr.
made a woman born in Grand Rapids and settled there as well, until at least 1894,
when the elder John died there.

By the time of the 1860 census, William Faulkner Wilson, wife Sarah and seven
children (Oscar, Edward, Willie, Maria, John, Albert and Sarah) are listed as farming
land worth $4,000; his brother John Sheen Wilson, wife Nancy Goold Wilson and three
of their children (Joseph, Warren and Alice) are farming nearby on land appraised at
$4,250; John Sheen Wilson's son John Jr. is farming close by as well, on land valued at
$1,100, with his wife Elizabeth and son John III; and John Sheen Wilson's other brother
George is farming land worth $2,000 with his wife Marian and one young son (Charles)
on yet another tract.

At some time between 1862 and 1867 it appears that William's sister Lucy Jane,
with her husband Peleg Bryant and family, also moved to Illinois. Lucy's daughter Belle
was born in Moline on the Mississippi River in 1867. It was around that time that
William's sister Lucetta Ann and her husband James Cunningham also moved from
Maine to Illinois, to settle in the town of Ottawa in LaSalle County, where they are found
on the 1870 and 1880 censuses. It may also have been around this same time that
William's sister Mary Rebecca and her husband Yorick Cunningham moved west from
Maine and settled in Indianapolis. And, in addition, it may well have been around this
time that William's older brother, George Ulmer Wilson, moved to DeKalb County just
north of LaSalle County.

No one today knows what may have caused a rift in the family, but at some point
between 1866 and 1869 the William Faulkner Wilson family and the Sarah Wilson Hills
family left the John Sheen Wilson family (and perhaps also the Lucetta Wilson
Cunningham, Lucy Jane Wilson Bryant and George Ulmer Wilson families) behind in the
LaSalle County area and moved to what came to be known as the "Wilson Settlement"
about 5.5 miles northwest of La Hogue, near Gilman, in Iroquois County, Illinois. Sarah
and her husband, who was a carpenter and not a farmer, settled in the town of Gilman,
where they are listed in the 1870 census. Lucy Jane and Peleg Bryant may have left
Illinois around this time, and had returned to his family's home in Massachusetts by 1870.
In 1873 Sarah Wilson Hills and her family (except for son Nathan's family, which
remained in Gilman) relocated permanently to Michigan. And Lucetta Wilson and her husband James Cunningham moved from Ottawa a short distance to South Ottawa, Illinois, where they appear on the census for 1880 (where they went thereafter is unknown).

Thus it was that the nine surviving children of John Wilson and Mary Ulmer finally went their separate ways. The four who had moved west to Illinois ca. 1848-51 (George, John, Sarah, William), the two who had moved to Illinois after 1860 (Lucetta and Lucy), the one who moved to Indiana after 1855 (Mary), and the two who stayed behind in Maine (Susanna and Richard) appear to have had very little, if any, contact with each other after 1870.
Plat Map, Grand Rapids Township, LaSalle Co. IL in 1870
Gilman Cemetery, Gilman, Illinois
The William Faulkner Wilson family appears on the 1870 census for Douglass Township, near Gilman, now with six children (William, Maria, John Ulmer Wilson, Albert George, Sarah and Mary, Edward having died in 1864, during the Civil War, and Oscar having moved out to live by himself, though he never married). Marie Antoinette Wilson married Charles F. Lee in the County Seat of Watseka on 18 April 1872. Many Wilsons (including William and Sarah Abigail) are buried in the Gilman cemetery.

Perhaps the La Hogue area was not totally satisfactory either, however, because around 1876 William's family headed off again, to Missouri and, briefly, Arkansas, in search of good land they could acquire for farming. Land patent records in Arkansas show that a William F. Wilson acquired 80 acres in Benton County [E half of NE quarter of Sec 12, T18N, R32W] on 24 June 1878. This area is on the northern border of Arkansas with Missouri. We cannot be positive that this was “our” William F. Wilson, but family tradition says that while he was in Arkansas, William contracted typhoid fever and nearly died before recovering.

The family next appears in 1880 in Crawford County, Missouri near Sullivan, where sons John Ulmer Wilson and his younger brother Albert George Wilson had taken jobs working as miners in the lead mines. John Ulmer Wilson had married Melissa Pervina Jackson at Smith Jackson’s home in the nearby Indian Creek area of Washington County in 1876, and their first two children, William and James, were born in Crawford County in 1878 and 1880. The 1880 census for Boone Township, Crawford County, shows William F. Wilson (age 70) and wife Abigail (age 60) living with their children Oscar (age 35) and Albert (age 22); living directly adjacent are John [Ulmer] Wilson (age 28) with wife Melissa (age 17) and their first son, William (age 2). Daughter Sarah Josephine “Sadie” Wilson had married a Sullivan blacksmith named Charles Blanton 1877.

By 1883 everyone except Sadie (who remained in Sullivan with her husband) had returned to the LaHogue area, where Albert George Wilson married Melissa Jackson's sister Molly Jackson that same year. They maintained a cordial relationship with the other Jackson siblings, especially Melissa and Molly's sister, Olive Francis "Fanny" Jackson, who often came to visit.


Sarah Abigail Mahoney Wilson died on December 12, 1888; five years later William Faulkner Wilson died on May 18, 1893, at the age of 82, just a little more than a year after the birth of his grandson John Edgar Wilson, the son of John Ulmer Wilson. They are buried in the Gilman cemetery.