

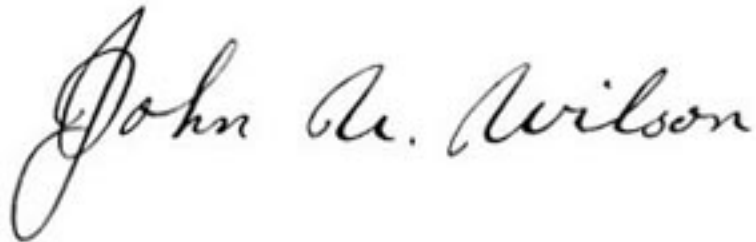


John Ulmer Wilson (1853-1947) and wife Melissa Pervina Jackson (1863-1921), with children William Ulmer (b.1878), James Albert (b.1880), Ada May (b.1883) and Jesse Rachel (b.1886)

John Ulmer Wilson (1853-1947)

John Ulmer Wilson, sixth child of William Faulkner Wilson, was born in farming country in Grand Rapids Township, Illinois on October 21, 1853. Little is known of his early life, but from 1876 to around 1880 his family lived in rural Crawford County and possibly also Washington County, Missouri where he worked in the lead mines, and came to know the Jackson clan. On December 24, 1876, he married 13-year-old Melissa Pervina Jackson, daughter of

William Smith Jackson and Eada Simmons. (For more information see under Jackson Family and Simmons Family.) John's brother, William F. Wilson Jr., was in Missouri with him in 1879 (mentioned on a tax receipt); and his brother Albert George Wilson may have spent time there as well considering that he married Melissa Jackson's sister.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John A. Wilson". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

We can be fairly certain that the lead mines in which John Ulmer Wilson and his brother(s) worked in 1876-1880 were in the Potosi area. The deposits at Viburnum and Indian Creek were not discovered until much later, and the Wilsons would not have been likely to meet up with the Jackson's of Indian Creek anywhere else. Lead mining had begun in Washington County around 1725, under the French, and barite deposits (some containing accessory amounts of lead) were also mined in the same area beginning around 1850. Then again, considering that John and his new wife settled in Crawford County, perhaps he was employed in small mines in that area. We will never know many of the details of the mining life of these young men, but it was surely a time of hard work and spartan, "frontier" conditions.

Andrew Jackson McIntosh (b. 1843), husband of Melissa and Molly's sister Catherine Jackson, lived in the same area, engaging in farming and lead mining like the Wilson brothers. Goodspeed's *Biographies of Franklin County, Missouri* recounts an interview with him:

At the earliest recollection of our subject [Andrew Jackson McIntosh] there were no schools or churches in the neighborhood, the people were generally poor, had poor markets for their produce, and the mining interest brought nearly all the money that was in circulation in the country, the people depending on the lead ore for their coffee, etc.

John and Melissa settled a short distance away from her father's family, in Boone Township, Crawford County (probably near Sullivan). Their first child, William Ulmer Wilson, was born there in 1878, and James Albert Wilson was born on Christmas Eve of 1880. In 1881 or 1882 they moved back to the "Wilson Settlement" in rural Iroquois County, Illinois, near Gilman. Four more children were born to them there: Edith (Ada) Mae Wilson (born 1883), Jesse Rachel Wilson (born 1886), Florence Olive Wilson (born 1890) and John Edgar Wilson (born 1892). Around 1900 they moved a few miles away to LaHogue, where John Ulmer Wilson worked at a grain elevator and farmed some acres about 5 miles to the north.



John Ulmer Wilson (1853-1947)
son of William Faulkner Wilson

In 1903 the family moved to Heron Lake in southern Minnesota, then a year later to Darfur about 10 miles northwest of St. James, Minnesota. From 1910 to 1925 the family was back in the LaHogue area, but Melissa had died in 1921, and John Ulmer, now elderly, lived the remainder of his life with his youngest son, John Edgar Wilson.

In 1925 they moved back to Minnesota for good. They spent a year or so living near Odin until a suitable farm came up for sale. In 1926 John Ulmer Wilson and his son John Edgar Wilson purchased an excellent farm where the family prospered until the depression finally put them out of business in 1932.

Young Wendell (aged 7) enjoyed going rabbit hunting with his grandfather, John U. On one memorable occasion John saw a rabbit running across a field far away, and took careful aim with his rifle, then fired off a shot. "It must have been a city block away," said Wendell, "because it took the bullet a while to get there." Then the rabbit suddenly curled up in mid-stride and tumbled to a stop. (Rabbit meat was a welcome addition to the family's diet. John Edgar Wilson's wife Jenny breaded and fried it like chicken.)

In yet another incident that Wendell recalls, the family was riding in their car (a Model A Ford) when they spotted a pheasant running (not flying) along a corn row. They stopped the car, and John E. (Wendell's father) was about to take a shot, but Jenny, noting what a long shot it was, said "Give Grandpa the gun." So John U. took the shot and, amazingly, hit the pheasant in the *head*. Wendell remembers marveling at the headless pheasant; he does not ever remember seeing his grandpa miss.

John Ulmer Wilson, though retired, was very close to his grandchildren and stepped in to help them when necessary. Clint, for instance, liked to rough-house a lot, and one day was teasing his little brother Wendell (then about 13) by trying to rub whiskey from a whiskey bottle on his mouth. Wendell went down on his back and, when Clint came after him, Wendell caught Clint with a kick to the stomach that sent him crashing through the dining room window! Furious, Clint came storming back into the house ready to let Wendell have it, but Grandpa Wilson stepped between them, saying Clint had brought it on himself.

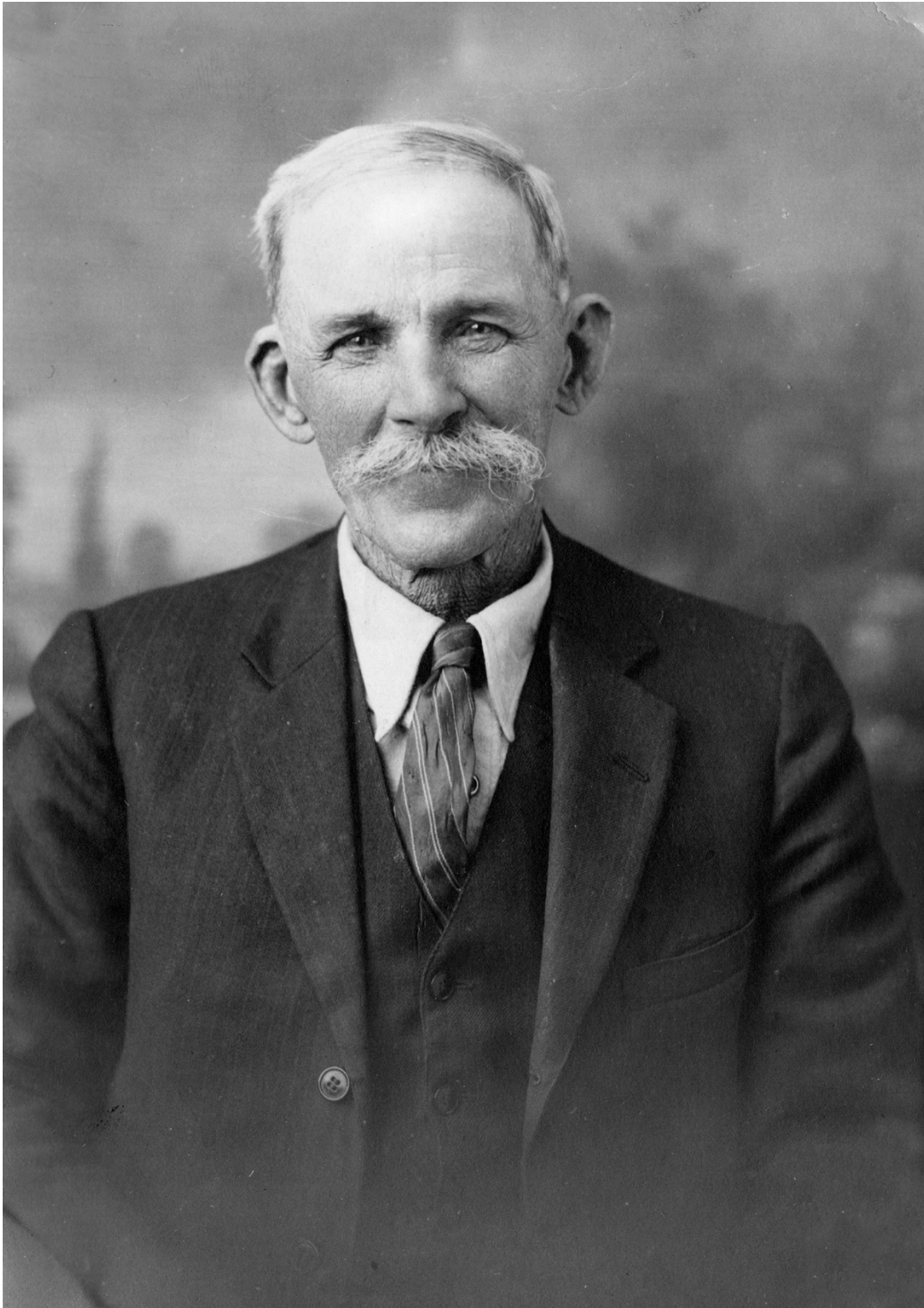
John Ulmer Wilson lived in St. James with his son John and family until his death in 1947 at the age of 93. He was remembered as a kindly but feisty man with a wry sense of humor and a highly refined skill at marksmanship. (He was said on numerous occasions to have shot pheasants on the wing in the head to avoid spoiling the meat with buckshot.) On one occasion, when he saw chicken thieves making off with some of their chickens (they lost over 100 chickens to thieves) he wanted to shoot the thieves with a shotgun out of the farmhouse window, but was restrained by his grandson, Chuck Hartman.



John Ulmer Wilson (1853-1947) family: [left to right] son William Ulmer (b. 1878), brother Henry Oscar (b. 1843), dau. Jesse Ray (b. 1886) dau. Florence (b. 1890), J.U.W., sister-in-law Olive Francis "Fanny" Jackson (b. 1879), son John Edgar (b. 1892), dau. Ada May (b. 1883), wife Melissa Pervina Jackson (1863-1921), and son James Albert (b. 1880). Note William and James in baseball uniforms with ball and bat, Also note the cased violin at right, now in the possession of granddaughter Ardis Schmitt. Photo taken in Iroquoise County, Illinois ca. 1893,



Wilson Family farmhouse, Rudy Henry Stock Farm ca. 1928. [Left to right:] Wendell (b.1922), Doris (b.1926), Jenny (b.1895), John Ulmer Wilson (b.1853), John Edgar (b.1892) and Clinton Ulmer Wilson (b.1917). Note dapper hat on John E. Wilson.



John Ulmer Wilson (1853-1947)
son of William Faulkner Wilson



**John Ulmer Wilson (1853-1947) and his son,
John Edgar Wilson (1892-1977) in 1946**

John Ulmer Wilson had been a fervent member of the Ku Klux Klan since his days in Missouri. Founded in Tennessee in 1866, during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War, the Klan was powerful in Missouri and Arkansas, even after Congress had passed legislation to combat it in 1870 and 1871. Revitalized in 1915 by William J. Simmons, the Klan spread again, this time with Catholics and Jews as well as blacks declared as enemies. In Minnesota John Ulmer Wilson continued to attend Klan meetings in Odin with his son, John

Edgar Wilson. John Edgar's son Wendell remembers being frightened as a child (ca. 1926) by the sight of his father coming down the stairs in full hood. John Edgar's wife Jenny (an immigrant from Austria-Hungary) was revolted by the Klan, and eventually put sufficient pressure on her husband and father-in-law to give up their membership. She is thought to have burned their Klan robes. Nevertheless, ingrained attitudes are often impossible to change, and the former Klansmen retained an uncharitable attitude toward dark-skinned people throughout their lives.



The Rudy Henry stock farm, owned and operated by the John U. Wilson family from 1928-1932



The John U. Wilson farm, La Hogue, Illinois ca. 1920

The Klan was a prominent force in southern Minnesota for many years following its revitalization in 1915; by the mid-1920's Klan membership was estimated at between 4 and 5 million nationwide. Lorraine Haseman (later to marry Wendell Wilson) also recalled seeing Klan activities as a young girl living near Butterfield just a few miles from St. James and Darfur. On one occasion, when she was about five years old (ca. 1926), she snuck up into the hay loft of her family's farm, with her sisters Eunice and Francis, and spied on a large Klan meeting being hosted by her Klansman uncle, William Henry Haseman. A cross was burned at night, and later a nice lunch was served for the participants. (There being no blacks or Jews in that part of Minnesota, the Klan concentrated there on persecuting Catholics.)

John Ulmer Wilson was blessed with good health throughout his long life, but came near to a premature death at least once. He was kicked in the forehead by a saddle horse named "Black Beauty" and his skull was broken. The attending physician was forced to remove shattered skull fragments and, remarkably, replaced them with a large silver plate under the skin of his forehead. The wound healed over and John was never bothered by it again. In 1925 he contracted mouth cancer from chewing tobacco, and the family sent him to Dr. Nichols' Sanatorium for the treatment of cancer in Savannah, Missouri. After 13 days of treatment, perhaps with some very minor surgery, he returned home to Minnesota. No doubt a strong natural immune system was what allowed him to come back cured, and he was never troubled by cancer again.

John Ulmer Wilson was a loving, hard-working patriarch from the pioneer generations of the family. He remained mentally sharp into his 90's, and even at that advanced age he was able to read the daily newspaper without the aid of glasses. He took good care of his family, especially the young ones, and had a wry sense of humor combined with a penchant for peculiar salty language. Expressions he would use, like "happy as a two-peckered owl," "there's a nigger in the woodpile," and "he drives like a man with a paper ass," horrified his daughter-in-law Jenny, who asked him not to say such things in front of the children. John would respond with a twinkle in his blue-gray eyes and a funny little smile under his big mustache.