

A GENEALOGICAL HISTORY

OF ·· THE

❖ IRWIN ❖ FAMILY ❖

And Family Connections,

*From the First Settlers of the United States to the
Present Day,*

BY JARED I. IRWIN

TO HIS DAUGHTER,

Mrs. MARY SALLIE IRWIN WOOD,

WIFE OF J. S. WOOD, SAVANNAH, GA.

FEBRUARY 11th, 1892.

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Mrs. Mary Sallie Irwin Wood,

Savannah, Ga.

My Dear Daughter:

Your nice letter of yesterday's date acknowledging the paper sent you containing funeral sermon of your grand-mother, Mrs. Col. Thomas Jefferson Warthen, by Rev. F. L. Adams of the Christian church of this place, and your request for as much of the history and connections of the Irwin family as I could possibly give, is very highly appreciated by me, and nothing affords me greater pleasure than to do so, and will here attempt to give you as full a statement of their origin and connections with other families, with their distinguished valor in the Revolutionary and Indian wars, of the early settlements of the Colonies and United States, but am fearful I can not give as full a detail as I desire.

I am one of the younger ones of the third generation of them to this country, and the older ones did not keep up the connection and circumstances as they should. I will however do the best I can, so that you and some of the younger ones may get some idea of this and other families of the first settlers of this country.

One Hugh Irwin, my great grand-father, whom I will start on, but am not sure his name was Hugh, but this is what I catch, came from Ireland and settled in Mecklenburg, N. C., and lived there sometime, likely until several children were born, three boys and one girl, Margaret, John, William, and Jared. When Jared was six or seven years old his father moved to Burke county, Ga. I see no account of his having taken any part in affairs in those days, but of course he was there in times of the British having possession alternately of that section of the county and then the settlers, to the great distress of the latter.

We find later on these three brothers, John, William, and Jared Irwin, moved from Burke county and settled in Washington county, Ga., not far apart and located a large body of some of the best lands in this county and all prospered as farmers and raised large families.

They were among the early settlers, some eight or ten miles a little west of south of this place, Sandersville, Ga. Then this whole country was a vast wilderness, inhabited by Indians and wild beasts. I would like here to have more time to elaborate upon the subject but it is such with me now, that I have but little time, say nothing of the amount of thinking, in writing these recollections as I have caught them from old folks from time to time.

I will take up your great grand-father's family first, my grand-father. I cannot remember which one of the three brothers was the oldest. My grand-father's name was John Irwin. He married a Miss Rebecca Sessions, a daughter of Joseph Sessions

the 1st, and sister to Captain Benjamin Sessions and Joseph Sessions the 2nd. They raised four children is all that I can remember. Alexander Irwin, my father, William Irwin, Sallie Irwin, and Margaret Irwin. Alexander Irwin, your grandfather, married Margaret Moore Lawson, a daughter of Andrew Thompson Lawson, who lived where his father Roger Lawson, the first lived and died, and was buried near the Oconee river, eighteen or twenty miles west of Sandersville.

My parents had ten children born unto them. The first, Thompson, died about one year old. John Lawson Irwin next, who was a brother and a father to me. He never married, and at the beginning of the late war with the States, he and his two brothers Thomas Jackson and Reason Whitehead Irwin, raised and equipped a company of one hundred and twenty-five men of infantry and reported their readiness for duty to the authorities, upon which he was ordered to West Virginia. They went and during the cold, bleak winter of 1861 he was taken sick, carried to White Sulphur Springs, Va., and there died. His remains were brought home by his brother, R. W. Irwin, 1st Lieutenant in his company, and buried in the old family burial grounds at Union Hill, this county. He held many honorable positions in this county and state. He was elected tax receiver and collector before he was twenty-one years old, and there had to be a special act passed for him to take the office and perform the duties. Was Major and Colonel of the Militia of this County for years and served it many times in the Legislature, but just before the war he moved to Henry county, Ala.

William Alexander Irwin was next, who lived

and died at Irwin's X Roads in Washington County. He too was a man of note who represented his county in the legislature several times and was aid de camp to Governor Brown at one time, which rank him as Colonel. He died soon after the war and left seven children, three boys, William J., Reason W., and Thomas, and four girls, Lou A., Ella, Mary M., and Lizzie Lee. Reason died soon after his father. His wife was Miss Elizabeth Daniel who has recently died. These six children still live around and on parts of the old homestead. Lou is now Mrs. James Palmer, Ella Mrs. Joseph Jackson, Mary Mrs. Albany Smith, and Lizzie Mrs. Sessions.

Sister Rebecca was next, who lived to be grown and married Silas Daniel, brother of brother William's wife, but did not live long.

Brother Thomas Jackson comes next. He lived and died a farmer at his home in Henry county, Ala. He was a man of good education and judgment; he was married to Miss Clara T. Warthen in the winter of 1856, daughter of Richard Warthen, Esq., of Warthen, Ga. They had two girls, Annie Lou and Everlyn. Annie Lou married a Mr. Farmer and soon died. Everlyn married Mr. G. G. Lark, and now lives at Fort Gaines, Ga.

Sister Margaret was next; she lived to be 14 years old and died.

Your father, Jared I. Irwin, would like to have some one else to write about him, but he will give you a few sketches of his life so as to make the connecting link. He is still living; was born on October 4th, 1834; in 1859-60 represented this county in the legislature; on November 21st, 1859, married Miss Lou Warthen, daughter of the late

*Jefferson A. married Claude A. Taylor, daughter of W. A. Taylor of this county, and they have one child, a daughter Andrew J. married Anna L. Stevens, a daughter of Richard H. Stevens of Hancock county, and have two daughters. John T. has not married

Col. Thomas Jefferson Warthen, who was killed at Malvern Hill, in the battles around Richmond, Va. He helped to raise and equip the Irwin Volunteers, of which he was first Lieutenant. This, with two other companies from Washington county, helped to make up the fighting 28th Georgia Volunteers of his Warthen's Regiment.

Since the war he perceived the necessity of building a railroad from Tennille to Sandersville, and with the aid and co-operation of others it was accomplished in 1876; and he is now and has been Superintendent of it since it was built. He and Lou, his wife, had five children, Jefferson Alexander, Andrew Jackson, Mary Sallie, John Thomas, and Lawson W., the youngest, died soon after his mother, in 1873. *In 1881 he married again a Mrs. Eleanor Berry, Edwin Birdsong's daughter, of Hancock county. No children by this marriage.

Next was Andrew Berry Irwin, who married Hannah Warthen, another daughter of Richard Warthen, Esq., and settled in Fort Gaines, Ga., as a lawyer, and practiced law until he was elected Captain of one of the companies his brother John carried to Virginia in 1861. After its term of one year was up, for which time they went into service, they re-organized and made two captains. He was elected captain of one of the companies and went to it; at the battles around Richmond, Va., he was taken sick with fever and died in Richmond. I brought his remains home and buried him at Union Hill, where all the family are buried, except brother Thomas Jackson and Uncle William. They are buried in Henry county, Ala. He and Hannah had one child—a boy—John R. Irwin, who married

a Miss Findlay of Macon, Ga., and now lives in Fort Gaines, Ga., and by profession is a lawyer.

Reason Whitehead Irwin, the youngest who lived to be grown, of whom you know, lives now at Shorterville, Henry county, Ala.; he too married one of Richard Warthen's daughters, Nannie Warthen, which made three Irwins who married sisters, and I, the fourth, married a double cousin of them. Your uncle, Reason W., has two children, Jennie and George D. He is a farmer and a man who stands well in his community; belongs to the Baptist church and is a christian gentleman.

The last one of the children was named Louiza Avaline and died when about a year old.

(These are descendants from John Irwin, you see, one of the three brothers who were the first settlers of this county. My father was a farmer and possessed a large body of land and other property at the time of his death in 1840.)

William Irwin, the 2nd, my father's brother, married a Miss Margaret Gamble, a cousin of his, in Jefferson county, and moved to Henry county, Ala. where he settled upon the high hills six miles west of the Chattahoochee river, now Shorterville, and opposite to Fort Gaines, Ga. There he amassed a large fortune, consisting of bottom lands on the west side of the river, negroes, and other property. At the time of his settlement it was considered the frontier of the country. Indians were there and possessed the country just beyond the Chattahoochee river. They did not have any children. He was called Gen. Irwin, and was in command of some of the forces along the river where the Indians were in great revolt at

times, and commanded at the battle (I can't say what it was called then but it was where Eufaula now is, and went by the name of Irwinton for some time). He was drowned in the Chattahoochee river in 1850, on a trip in a boat from Columbus, Ga., down the river to Fort Gaines. It caught fire in the night and burned to the water's edge, and he, a good swimmer, jumped off to swim ashore, but never reached it; his body was found afterward and buried at his home. He gave his brother Alexander's children one-third of his property and the balance to his wife. The two daughters, Aunt Sallie, who married a Mr. Miller and lived in Alabama the last I knew of them, the other, aunt Margaret, married a Mr. Blount and lived in Wilkinson County. They had several children and died; all the children have died except one, who lives in Wrightsville, Ga., and is named Neal Blount.

I have said your great grandmother was Miss Rebecca Sessions, and sister of Benjamin Sessions, who married your grandmother Irwin's sister Mary Berry Lawson, which made him uncle and granduncle to me. My Mother, Margaret Moore Lawson, aunt Mary Berry Lawson, and aunt Elizabeth Hannah Lawson, who married a William Eakin, cousin Lizzie Moreau's mother constituted grandfather Andrew Thompson Lawson's children by his first wife, who was a Miss Moore. His second wife was a Miss Eakin, and sister to William Eakin who had married his daughter, and uncles Alexander and Roger Lawson 2nd were their children. This Roger is our cousin Hugh Lawson's father who lives here.

This Lawson family runs back to the Lawson's of

the first settlers in Burke county. Hugh Lawson of that county was appointed as one of the committee to select a site, then I think it was in 1801 * for a location of a public State School and the present University at Athens, Ga., is that place, and the State has had a school there ever since. He was a son of great grandfather Roger Lawson and his name was carved on a tablet of marble with the names of the committee that located and superintended the building, and is fixed inside of the wall of the building.

Roger Lawson the 1st, who married a Miss Hannah Thompson, had five sons born unto him, William, Hugh, Roger Jr., John, and Thompson; the last my grandfather. Roger 1st, came from Ireland and settled finally in Burke county, there lived and died. The two sons, Hugh 1st, and Thompson lived and died in Washington county and were buried on the Oconee river. Andrew Thompson Lawson, my grandfather, had a nephew, Hugh, son of Hugh 1st, of whom he was guardian and raised to majority. After becoming grown he moved to Houston county where he married a Miss Penelope Franks, raising a large and honorable family and he himself becoming distinguished in the State of Georgia. He was noted particularly for his integrity, uprightness, and christian bearing, was familiar with the affairs of the state and was President of the Georgia Senate for fifteen years. Two of his daughters married Browns and live in Macon. Mrs. Bryant Brown of Macon is one, and Mrs. Buford Davis of that city is her daughter. Hugh 1st, mentioned above, married Miss Sarah

*See Rev. William Bacon Steven's History of Georgia.

Whitaker, sister of Benjamin Whitaker of Jefferson county for a long time Speaker of the House of Representatives.

A Mr. Allgood married grandfather Lawson's sister, who are the father and mother of Andrew Thompson Allgood of Trion Factory, (the father of Deotie Allgood). The old lady, my mother's aunt, was more like her than any one I ever saw.

The Gambles, Bothwells, Whiteheads, and ex-Governor Moore's family of Alabama, and the Barrys are all connections but it is quite out of my power to make the connection now. One David E. Bothwell however, was a Presbyterian Minister, * who was sent for from Ireland after the Royalists, (british troops), were withdrawn from Georgia, who carried the most of the preachers with them and this settlement of Irwins, Gambles, Lawsons, and others in Burke county wanted a preacher and this David E. Bothwell came, preached, and married among these families. Many years after preaching he made a visit to Governor Jared Irwin at Union Hill, took sick and died and was buried there near the Governor.

Of William Irwin the first, one of the three brothers, I am not as well informed of his life and descendants. Can not say who his wife was, and do not know how many children he had, but if I recollect right I can mention five of them; he had Alexander 2nd, Hugh, and three daughters. Alexander married a Miss Brantley, Harris Brantley's daughter of this county, and died young; he had one son William Irwin 4th, and he died in early manhood. Two of William the 1st daughters married

*See White's Statistics of Georgia.

John Smith. The first one soon died, then he married the other and she had two children and died, he lived in Wilkinson county. The third daughter Lydia married Mr. John Orr, grandfather of these young Orrs, and our cousins that you know in this county. Whitaker Orr, who now lives in Randolph county and is seventy or more years old, and who has been married six times, is his son. Hugh, Frank, Alexander, Freeman, and Francis Orr, also were his sons and Mr. William Goff's wife was his daughter.

I will now give you something of Governor Jared Irwin's (one of the three brothers) life. I never learned who he married.

I will cite you first to "Sherwood's Gazetteer of the State of Georgia," second edition, p 35, which gives some account of him. Hon. Jared Irwin was born in Mecklenburg county, N. C., about two years after his parents arrived from Ireland. He was a Brigadier General of the militia for a long time, represented Washington county in the legislature, was President of the senate several years, and Governor from 1796 to 1798 and again from 1806 to 1809. He was in the convention for revising our constitution in 1789, and was President of the body which revised it in 1798. He was a Congregationalist by profession, and lived like a christian.

He died on March 1st, 1818, leaving a large number of descendants. Irwin county in this State was named in his honor, as was also Irwinton in Wilkinson county. See White's statistics of Georgia, 1848, in which he says he was of Irish descent. His parents emigrated to Mecklenburg, N. C., and came to Georgia when he was seven

years old. He served his country faithfully many years in different capacities during the latter part of the revolutionary war, and on the frontiers against the Indians. He was elected Governor the second time, and in 1796 he had the honor of signing the the act rescinding the Yazoo Law, and had the infamous land law that was an imposition upon the people burned on the public square in Louisville, Ga., then the capital of the State." At the close of the war for independence he was a member of the first legislature that convened under our present form of government. He was a very pure man, and an excellent neighbor, whom all around him looked upon as a guide. Hospitality was his chief virtue. In every station he accepted he exhibited his devotion to the public good. He was buried at Union Hill, his home, and in 1856 there was an appropriation by the Georgia legislature to raise a monument over his remains. It was when Howell Cobb was governor, and, by some misunderstanding some way the appropriation was about to go over without any action to build it, but when I was a member of the legislature in 1860 I had an act passed, with a committee consisting of Col. R. L. Warthen, Capt. S. A. H. Jones, and Col. J. W. Rudesill, to locate a site for the same, and compelling the governor to erect it in Sandersville, Ga., which was done, and it now stands on the south side of the public square. He had only four children that I know of, Jared, Jr., 2nd, John, Isabel, and Jane. Jared and John were graduated in the first class that graduated at Athens, Ga. The Rev. William Bacon Stevens, author of Stevens' history of Georgia, has it Jared and Thomas, but I think he is mistaken, for I never

heard of him having a son by the name of Thomas. Capt. John Irwin was his name. "Light-horse John" he was called, on account of his gallantry. He commanded a company of cavalry in the Creek war under the heroic Gen. John Floyd and distinguished himself at the battle of Autossee and in other engagements. He was said to be the most polite gentleman of his day. With his always ready company he kept the Indians at bay on the west side of the Oconee river, as that was the line between the settlers and Indians then. He never married and died comparatively a young man.

Jared Irwin Jr., 2nd, married a Miss Williams a grand-aunt of our late solicitor O. H. Rogers, of this county. After the country between the Oconee and Chattahoochee rivers was surrendered to the settlers he moved to Stewart county and was killed in the massacre at the battle of Roanoke. Judge Wimberly told me a year or two ago (he lives in Lumpkin, Stewart county) that he was a boy and saw the company when it went out to meet the Indians and it was not long before his horse came running home without his rider, and it was soon known that he was killed. He left some children. A Mr. Kirksey of Lumpkin, Stewart county, married one of the daughters and took care of the old lady the balance of her life; he is Ordinary of that county now, and getting to be quite old. One of the children was named Jared Irwin, 3rd. The last I knew of him he lived in the southeast corner of Alabama. The Governor's two daughters, Isabelle and Jane, and the two boys were all that I can remember of ever hearing mentioned that constituted his family.

Isabelle married William Whitaker and had several children. One boy was named for his grandfather, Jared Irwin Whitaker. Two other boys William and John, and a daughter Isabelle Whitaker, after her mother. William and John the last I knew of them lived in Henry County, Georgia, and Isabelle lived with one or the other. Jared lived and died in Atlanta, was editor of the Atlanta Intelligencer a long time and was spoken of in high terms, as a candidate for Governor. I hear he has one son who lives in Atlanta now. "Cousin" Jane as she was called, the Governor's youngest child, lived and died an old maid, "said she would not marry for fear the Irwin name might run out." She was spirited, a good talker, and affable in her manners, patriotic, whole-souled and a noble woman. She brought a claim through our then great members of Congress, Alexander H. Stephens and Robert Toombs, in the United States Congress for ten thousand dollars, for property spent by her father in the defense of this section of the country in time of the Revolutionary and Indian wars and recovered the same. She died in Atlanta in 1856 at her nephew's, Jared Irwin Whitaker, and her remains were brought to the old family burial ground at Union Hill, and I had them placed by the side of her father's.

The three brothers, John, William, and Jared, built a Fort near Union Hill which covered those springs that now supply the congregation of the Ohoopie church. It was called the Irwin Fort and was of great protection to the settlers. Afterwards the Governor donated six acres of land there, taking in some of those springs, to all denominations

that would build a church and preach there, and now it seems that the Baptist predominated and they are in possession of the six acres with a very nice church on the same. My grandmother Irwin was baptized there before I could recollect.

You will find more about the Governor in Rev. William Bacon Stevens' history of the State of Georgia, written in 1841, second volume, as well as others that will interest you. See on page 390 where he was a candidate for Governor, also on pages 401 to 403 where he was ordered as commander of a portion of the forces, to disperse Gen. Clarke's settlement on the west side of the Oconee river, now Wilkinson county. This book gives you all the details of this and other transactions of his and others, and is to supply the deficiency of the history of Georgia since 1779. My father and uncle William went as privates under command of Capt. Benj. Sessions, their uncle, to the Indian war in Florida in 1815, were not gone long and did not have to do much fighting. They were young then and grandfather and mother were much pleased when they all returned alive.

I said something about these three brothers, first settlers in Washington county, having a sister. She married a man by the name of Darby, who had a son that lived on the west side of Buffalo creek. He raised a large family, two sons and four daughters, Oliver, Jared, Ann, Sarah, Jane, and Rowana.

Oliver was killed on the Central Railroad when young, was fireman or employe on a train which ran into a washout and killed him. Jared became an engineer, married, raised a family and continued as engineer on the Central Railroad of Georgia

till 1873. He died at Tennille, Ga. Ann married Benjamin Wood, raised a large family of children, who are among some of Washington County's best citizens. Jared Oliver Wood, our present Engineer of the Sandersville & Tennille Railroad Company, is one of their children. Sarah married a Mr. William Wood, and they too had a large family, Mr. Charles A. Durlow's present wife is one of them. They are both living now and doing well. Rowanna married a Mr. Elkins; they had one child, a girl, whom William J. Irwin married. Jane married Freeman Orr; they raised a large family of boys and some of them live in the lower part of this county.

I will now try to give you a little more in detail of the Sessions', to whom we are very closely connected. They are quite a noted family, as well as the Irwins, Lawsons, Whitakers, and others that I have already spoken of. There was one Joseph Sessions 1st that moved to this county, I suppose from Ireland also, and settled a little west of south from this place, six or seven miles distant and two or three miles from the settlement of the Irwin's, I do not know whether he came direct from Ireland, or whether he settled further east first and then came to this county. I think he came direct. He lived and died there, had four children that I can remember, two sons and two daughters, Benjamin, Joseph Jr. 2nd, Rebecca (my grandmother) and Basha. Benjamin Sessions, as I have said, married my mother's sister, Miss Mary Berry Lawson. He was thirty years old and she was fifteen when they were married, raised a large family, four boys and four girls, Joseph W. Jr., Charles L., Benjamin F.,

Andrew Thompson, Mary, Susan, Elizabeth, and Margaret M. This Joseph W. 3rd. is the one that lives now very near the old homestead where his father and grandfather died. He has a large family, five or six boys and four girls. J. C. Harman at Tennille, married the oldest girl and one of his sons married Lizzie Lee Irwin. Charles L. married a Miss Tarbutton of this county, moved to Alabama at the beginning of the war, joined the army and was killed at the battle of Chicamauga. Benjamin F. went to the war with the Irwin volunteers as 2nd Sergeant of the 28th Georgia Volunteers, was taken sick and died at Manassas. Andrew Thompson was killed in the last battle that was fought in the war at Bentonville, he was young and a brave man.

Cousin Mary (I say cousin for it is so natural for me to say it as they were so close kin till they felt about as close as brothers and sisters, they are double cousins to me), married a Fluker, and raised several children. Milton and Benjamin were killed in the late war. Susan married H. T. Roberson and soon died. Jennie married Augustus G. Tarbutton and they both died, leaving two children. Dr. David E. died in Irwinton a year or two ago, Joseph Fluker, the youngest one, lives here now. Cousin Susan married William Glenn and died within a year. Cousin Elizabeth married George Boatwright and they are the parents of Benjamin, Frank, and James Boatright who live in the old settlement of their grandfather Sessions. Capt. J. D. Franklin's wife is one of the girls. Margaret Married William Wall of this county, then moved to Terrell county, and lives in Dawson, Ga. Aunt

Basha married a Mr. Dillard who had two children. Almarine Dillard was the name of the son. I do not know the name of the daughter, but she married a Dr. Cheatham and all lived and died in Terrell county, Ga.

I have learned since writing about the Governor that his wife was a Miss Stewart, related to Gen. Stewart, for whom Stewart county was named.

With these scattered recollections and what I could pick up here and there, I will have to give up further attempt on this subject, but with a fond recollection of my ancestry as an honest, straightforward, and conservative people I am proud, and hope the descendents will maintain the same traits of character for generations to come.



