

The First Generation

b. 1733-34 (?)

John Stephenson--

d. 1794

Wife

Hannah

Children:

1. Thomas Stephenson (1755-1799) Married Mary Waddell 1781
2. William Stephenson
3. Joseph Stephenson
4. Mary Stephenson
5. Elizabeth (Ann ?) Stephenson (Married John Callahan , Oct.
25, 1784)

John's Brother:

William Stephenson--Wife Martha

Children:

1. Elizabeth
2. Rebecca
3. Moore
(Franklin County)

The Stephenson brothers were born in Ireland, twenty miles north of Belfast. They were Scotch Irish Presbyterians.

John and his family came to America in 1768, and settled in Iredell County, N. C. After the Revolutionary War he moved to Georgia and died in Breene County 1794. His will, written in 1793 and probated in 1794 in Greene County, named his wife Hannah, and his sons, Thomas and William executors. Other children: Mary, Elizabeth and Joseph. A certificate from his brother William in Iredell County mentioned lands in North Carolina.

Note: Some of this data was culled from the records kept in the Rhodes Memorial Building in Atlanta, Georgia. Some of it from family records.

The Second Generation

II. Thomas Stephenson - Born in Ireland, 1755
Died in Greene County Georgia, 1799
Married in 1781 or 83

Wife

Mary Waddell - Born in Ireland, 1756
Died in DeKalb County, Georgia, 1840

It is a well established tradition in the Stephenson family that Thomas was a soldier in the American Army throughout the Revolutionary War. He enlisted from Iredell County, N. C. at the age of 21. Unfortunately his record, name of Company, etc., were not kept with the family records and up to the present time have not been verified by records in the War Department. The story was told by their children and grandchildren that Thomas asked Mary to marry him before he left for the army; she refused and gave the reason, she did not want to be a widow. The story was enhanced in the telling by the narrators imitating her Irish dialect. According to the records of John Stephenson of Carroll County, they were married in 1781, and soon after moved to Georgia, the exact date not on record, but their son John was born in Wilkes County, Georgia in 1786.

After the Revolutionary War there was a considerable immigration from Virginia and the Carolinas to Georgia. To understand this one needs to know something of the early history of Georgia. Georgia was the last of the thirteen colonies to be established. It was one hundred and twenty-six years after the first settlement at Jamestown, Virginia that Georgia had an English Settlement, and not until 1752 did she become a colony under direct British control.

The land was wilderness and populated with hostile Indians, with whom the settlers were continually at war. Gradually, by treaty and by purchase, the lands were taken over from the Indians.

In 1784 the Georgia legislature passed the Land Act, and appointed a Land Court to handle and investigate land claims. A large tract of land had been taken from the Indians in settlement of debts made by them with the traders; this land was called Wilkes County; later it was divided and other counties formed from it. This land was to be sold by the government to settle the claims of the traders. Also a large part was to be donated to those who had served America in the Revolutionary War. It is logical to surmise that Thomas Stephenson, who by reason of his service, would be entitled to a claim would be glad to be a beneficiary of this Act.

These early settlers came into Georgia by crossing the Savannah River at Fort James in Wilkes County. There they registered with the Land Court which was established there and secured their lands. These records are supposed to be kept in the Georgia Department of Archives and History, and we hope yet that Thomas' may be found. The family record say that they first lived in Wilkes County and thence to Greene. We know they were living in Greene County in 1790, for we find records showing that Thomas Stephenson and his wife Mary of Greene disposed of 124 acres of land, July 9, 1790. (Land Grants* P-117)

1. John (our ancestor) born November 12, 1786, in Wilkes County, married to Susan Anna Peeler.
2. Thomas, the only certain record that we have of him is that "he lived and died in Clarke County, survived by two sons who moved to Upper Georgia" Among the D. A. R. records of marriages on Greene County is one Thomas Stephenson who married Sarah Rounsavale August 18, 1818. This could have been this Thomas.

In J. C. Flannagan's History of Gwinnett County we find the statement; "William Stephenson of Clarke County drew Lot No. 45 in land lottery p-62, and on p-62 "Samuel Stephenson from Clarke County drew Lot 180, 7th dist." Since at that time any part of the State north of Wilkes County was spoken of as Upper Georgia, this just possibly could have been the two sons mentioned above.

3. Sarah (Sally) married William Anderson February 2, 1819 in Greene County. They lived in Clarke County. She died at the age of 84. No children. (I have a letter she wrote to J. M. Stephenson, my father-V.S.W)
4. Polly, married Edward Callahan. They moved to Mississippi. According to D. A. R. records of marriage in Greene County, Polly Stevens married Edward Callahan, December 20, 1815 (p-270). This is no doubt, Polly Stephenson as records were not free from error, and this is the probable date of our Polly's marriage.
5. Mary, married Joshus (or Joseph) Shaw. She moved to Upper Georgia.
6. William, moved to Mississippi. He married and had four sons and three daughters.

The Third Generation

III. John Stephenson -b.November 12, 1786 in Wilkes County, Georgia
 d.January 21, 1871 in DeKalb County, Georgia
 M.Year 1812, Greene County

Wife-

Susan Anna Peeler b.January 8, 1792 in Greene County, Georgia
 d.August 11, 1860 in DeKalb County, Georgia

They moved to DeKalb in 1825. There were twelve children in this family, nine sons and three daughters. Two of the sons died in infancy or childhood, and one at the age of 20.

1. Thomas U. born November 12, 1812, moved to Tennessee in 1847, where he practiced medicine for fifty years, and died at the age of 87, leaving descendants.
- *2. James Peeler, born December 31, 1814, He was called "Happy Jim". He first moved to Carroll County, Georgia, and later to Marshall County, Ala. leaving descendants.
- *3. Susan, born August 20, 1816, married Thomas Gardner, and died at the age of 36, leaving five children.
4. John Elbert, born November 23, 1818, died 1832.
- *5. Anthony Franklin, born August 1, 1820, died July 31, 1893.
- *6. Joseph, born November 10, 1824. He lived in DeKalb County. There were two children.
- *7. Moses Randall, born March 8, 1827, died December 22, 1913
6. William, born December 2, 1822. Lived in Clayton County, Georgia, and died at the age of 78.

9. Elizabeth Ann, born June 7, 1829, died 1870. She married William Brantley and moved to Texas in 1851. There were Children.
10. Mary, born May 20, 1831, died at the age of 73. She married Needham Whitley, and lived in DeKalb County near Lithonia. She had a large family.
11. John Alexander, born April 29, 1833, died 1836.
12. Jacob Henry, born February 20, 1835, died in infancy.

Those names marked with an asterisk will be given a more extended development of their lives under the heading-"The Fourth Generation"

The Birth dates were in the possession of J. W. Stephenson of Carroll County. He had his grandfather's Bible. Among K. A. Stephenson's notes we find that John Stephenson, who married Susan Peeler, was appointed guardian for the minor children of Anthony Peeler who had lived in Jasper County. The death of Anthony Peeler's death was 1839. K.A. Stephenson has a mass of itemized accounts made for these children. It is not certain what the relationship of Anthony Peeler was to John's wife, Susan, but evidently, very close. It is interesting to note that Susan named her of her sons Anthony Franklin.

The Fourth Generation

IV. Anthony Franklin Stephenson, born August 15, 1820, died July 31, 1893. Married- first, September 22, 1838, Jane Gardner, born May 12, 1812, died May 16, 1856. Married- second, November 5, 1857, Louisa Smith Black, born November 16, 1824, died September 27, 1904. Anthony Franklin Stephenson was the fifth child of John and Susan Peeler Stephenson, and lived in DeKalb County, Georgia until 1849 when he moved to Carroll County with his wife Jane and three sons, John Wilburn, James Madison and Franklin Thompson. The gradual acquisition of land, by treaty and by purchase, from the Indians was the cause of a continual movement of the settlers, especially those young and strong enough to wrest a home and civilization from the wilderness. During the administration of Governor Troup (1823-1827) he concluded a treaty with the Creek Indians and secured all their lands in the State of Georgia. The land thus gained was divided into Counties, one of which was Carroll County, but all the Indians were not removed to the West until 1838. When A. F. Stephenson moved to Carroll County it was still largely forest and unsettled country. He bought one hundred acres of land, uncleared, and built a cabin near a spring. This log cabin was well built, generous proportions, with a good rock chimney and roomy fireplace. Later when his house was built he continued to use the cabin for a kitchen. The writer remembers that cabin. At that time they had a cook stove, but still used the fireplace also, and no food ever seemed so delicious as that cooked over red coals of fire in that open fireplace. In the other end of the cabin was an old loom where Aunt Tomsie wove beautiful bedspreads and coverlets, as they were called.

Jane Gardner Stephenson died May 16, 1856, and lies buried near Bowdon, on the lower Carrollton to Bowdon Road. She was a daughter of Christopher Columbus Gardner and his wife Clarissa Simmons of North Carolina. Her brother, Thomas Gardner, married Susan Stephenson, her husband's sister. Before her marriage she was a Presbyterian, but joined the Missionary Baptist Church with her husband. (My father, (J. M. S.) always spoke beautifully of his mother, and Uncle John (J. W. S.) told me she was called the sweetest singer in the County (V. S. W.)

The second wife of A. F. Stephenson, Louisa Smith Black, was the widow of Thomas Black, and she had one child, Eliza Thomas Black, who had been