

**Neil Williams (c1795–aft.1860)**  
**& Spouse:**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums (c1800–aft.1880)**

**RESEARCH NOTES**

**FAMILY SUMMARY**

**Neil Williams:<sup>1</sup>**

Born: c1795,<sup>2</sup> Sampson County, North Carolina<sup>3</sup>  
Married: 13 January 1820, Lawrence County, Mississippi<sup>4</sup>  
Died: last on record 1860 census Madison County, Mississippi  
Parents: John Williams and Rhoda Ann Strickland<sup>5</sup>

**Mary “Polly” Sessums:**

Born: c1800, Sampson County, North Carolina<sup>6</sup>  
Died: last on record 1880, Leake County, Mississippi  
Parents: **Jacob Sessums** of Duplin and Sampson<sup>7</sup>  
**Penelope “Penny” Fisher** of Duplin and Sampson<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Online trees frequently identify Neil as “Cornelius.” As shown by this set of research notes, every document known to be created for him in his lifetime consistently calls him Neil, Neal, or Neel—never Cornelius.

<sup>2</sup> The **1850** census cites his age as 56 (b. 2 June 1793–1 June 1794); see Attala Co., MS, pop. sch., T15 R8E, p. 328 (stamped), dwell./fam. 1110/1113 (indexed by *Ancestry* as “Noal” Williams). The **1860** census cites his age as 64 (b. 1795–1796); see Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., Canton p.o., p. 74 (penned), dwell./fam. 533/531. Both censuses agree that he was born in North Carolina.

<sup>3</sup> Numerous online trees assert (without providing evidence) that his parents, John and Rhoda, were residents of Sampson Co., NC. For example, see See mimipatti04, “Williams, Boyanton, Jordan, Bridges, Ingram, & Allied Families,” user-contributed tree, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/7286945/person/7023755394/facts> : accessed 20 June 2021), “Cornelius ‘Neal’ Williams” Facts page. If correct, then the 1800 and 1810 Sampson Co. censuses offer only one household for “John Williams.” In **1800**, he had three boys aged 0–10 (b. 1790–1800); see stamped p. 528, line 8. In **1810**, he had two boys aged 10–15; see stamped p. 161, line 8.

<sup>4</sup> Marie Luter Upton, *Marriage Records Lawrence County, Mississippi, 1818–1838* (N.P.: P.p., 1970), 7, 9; imaged “Marriage Records, Lawrence County, Mississippi, 1818–1838,” database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/30215/images/dvm\\_LocHist013838-00003-0](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/30215/images/dvm_LocHist013838-00003-0) “ accessed 2 July 2021) > images 8, 10; citing Marriage Book 1: 33, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Online trees identify John (without evidence) as “John Holly” or “John Holland” Williams. For example, see SheilaJaffries48, “Sheila’s Family Tree,” user-contributed tree, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/20043315/person/997305959/facts> : accessed 1 June 2021), “Jno. (John Holly) Williams” Facts page. However, all known documents created by and about him in his lifetime call him only *John*. He did have a grandson named John *Holly* Williams.

<sup>6</sup> Birthplace is based on proved residence of parents at the time of her birth. When she married in January 1820; Jacob gave permission, implying that she was not yet 21. Censuses cite her age as follows: **1800**: 0–9 (b. 1790–1800), **1810**: 10–15 (b. 1795–1800); **1820**: 16–25 (b. 1795–1804); **1830**: 20–30 (b. 1800–10); **1840**: 30–40 (b. 1800–10); **1850**: age 42 (b. 1807–08); **1860**: 59 (b. 1800–1); **1880**: 84 (b. 1795–96). Details and documentation for each census appears under those years within this set of research notes. Mary has not been found on the census of 1870 or anywhere after 1880.

<sup>7</sup> For Penny Fisher as Jacob’s wife, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Jacob Sessums (c1777–1850) & Spouse Penelope ‘Penny’ Fisher (c1780–aft.1840),” a work-in-progress last updated 20 July 2021), 84 pp.; archived online at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com>) under the “Research” tab.

<b>Residences:</b>	1818	Lawrence County, MS
	1820, 1823	Lawrence County, MS
	1828–1832	Simpson County, MS
	1833–34	Not found
	1835–1838	Lawrence County, MS
	1840–1842	Newton County, MS
	1845	Newton County, MS (unproved) <sup>9</sup>
	1846, 1850, 1854	Attala County, MS
	1855–1860	Madison County, MS

Children of Neil and Polly (two of whom remain unidentified) were:

1. **?RHODA ANN? WILLIAMS**, born c1821; m. c1837, Newton Co., MS, **Shadrack Odom**; died early 1840, Newton Co.; likely in childbirth. At her death she left two infant sons:<sup>10</sup>
  - **Samuel E. Odom**, b. 10 February 1838, Newton Co.; d. 12 June 1909; Leake Co., MS.<sup>11</sup>
  - **John V. Odom**, b. 2 February 1840; d. after 23 June 1900, probably in Oktibbeha Co., MS.<sup>12</sup>
2. **UNIDENTIFIED**, born c1823; d. c1824, Lawrence Co., MS.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For Duplin and Sampson records on Jacob and Polly's birth families, see E. S. Mills, "Sessums & Fishers of Sampson County (Formerly Duplin), NC: Preliminary Survey," report to file, 29 June 2021, 146 pp.; archived online at *Historic Pathways* under the "Research" tab.

<sup>9</sup> "Mississippi, U.S., Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1805–1890," database, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3556/>; accessed 10 July 2021). As with the 1837 allegation discussed above, this database provides no details and no documentation; and I have not found evidence to support it.

<sup>10</sup> For all previously known documentation on Shadrack Odom and his wives, with children by each; see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Shadrack Odom (ca. 1819–aft. 1861); Spouses 1. [Unknown]; 2. Elizabeth Cooksey: Research Notes," a work-in-progress last updated 1 August 2013; archived at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com>) > Research > Odom. The documentary and genetic evidence for the identity of Neil and Polly's first daughter as the wife of Shadrack Odom is currently under peer-review, with plans for publication in late 2022 or early 2023.

<sup>11</sup> For birth and death dates, see "Mississippi Confederate Pension Applications, 1900–1974," database, *Family Search* (<https://www.familysearch.org>; accessed 1 August 2013), "Oakes–Ormond," images 97–100, E. J. Odom, Widow (Samuel Odom, Pvt., Co. D, 3d Cav.), affidavits 16 July 1909 and 4 September 1916. Also images 156–63, Samuel Odom (Pvt. Co. D., Wiley Johnson), affidavits of 5 August 1905 and 7 September 1908. Sam's death place is from his granddaughter Thulmar (Jeffcoat) Shown, in whose childhood home Sam died when she was three. His widow remained in the family home until her death in 1916, during which time Thulmar shared her bed.

<sup>12</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Oktibbeha Co., Miss., pop. sch., Beat 4, ED 93, sheet 13, dwell./fam. 245, John Odom. Also 1860 U.S. Census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., post office: Decatur, p. 142, dwell. 952, fam. 962, John "Odem" in Samuel "Odem" household.

John's middle initial is provided in a government-records database entry for his son Jesse's Social Security application. It may or may not be correctly read. All other known sources call him simply *John*. See "U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936–2007," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/613600286:60901>), entry for "Authur Jessie Odum."

<sup>13</sup> "Mississippi, U.S., State and Territorial Census Collection, 1792–1866," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229\\_2-0374?](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229_2-0374?); accessed 5 July 2021) > image 20 > "Lawrence (Births and Deaths) Date Unknown." That state census of births and deaths, which also included a listing of living individuals over seventy years of age, was taken in 1825 and covers births and deaths occurring in 1824. See the discussion under 1824 and 1825 in this paper, where the documents are presented.

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3. **JOHN WILLIAMS**, born c1825,<sup>14</sup> m. about 1844, *Jeanette Johnson*.<sup>15</sup> **1850**: Not found. **1860**: Leake Co., adjacent to brother Jacob N.; children Newton A.R. (14), James A.J. (13), Jordan A. (10), Ebenezer N. (8), Dicy A.V. (6), Cicero B.H. (5), Mary D. (2).<sup>16</sup> The obituary of his son Cicero would report that John “Died of disease while serving with the Southern forces in Tennessee.”<sup>17</sup> Several dozen John Williamses enlisted in the Confederacy from Mississippi, but the only one whose service record and personal details appear to be appropriate is the John who enlisted for three years at Carthage in Leake Co., on 23 April 1862, as a private in Co. E of the 27<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Regiment. The October muster roll states that he was sent to the hospital at Knoxville, Tennessee, on 26 October; the muster roll of November and December 1862 states that he died at “Ringgold Hospital.” At his death, he was in possession of \$40.75.<sup>18</sup> The widowed Jeanette moved her family to Johnson Co., Texas where Sessums in-laws had settled. From there, she moved yet again, before 1900, to the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, where she was enumerated that year as “Jeanette Johnson, aged 71.”<sup>19</sup> Dicy, James, and several of their offspring made unsuccessful Dawes claims asserting that John’s grandmother, Penny Fisher, was a “full-blood Choctaw.”<sup>20</sup>
4. **THOMAS WILLIAMS**, born about 1827; represented by a tickmark in parental households of 1830 and 1840; filed petition with brother John in 1858, Madison County, calling Neil Williams “our father.” The 1850 census of Attala, where his parents then lived, presents him as a young farmer, aged 23, with a wife Elizabeth aged 18, living six houses from the farm of his sister Luvicy and her husband

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The document does not state the name, age, or gender of the person who died within the “Neil Williams” household. Typically, when the death is attributed to the household of a male, the deceased was a wife or child. In this case, evidence proves that Neal’s wife of 1820 continued as his wife until his death c1863 and was his widow in 1880. The birth pattern of Neal and Polly’s children suggests the deceased was an infant whose death left a childspacing gap between living children.

<sup>14</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Leake Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o.: Carthage, p. 82, dwell./fam. 533/533, adjoining brother Jacob.

<sup>15</sup> Date of marriage approximated from 1860 census data. For Jeanette’s identity, see affidavit of James A. J. Williams, 15 May 1902, Choc. MCR 5571; imaged in “Dawes Packets,” database with images, *Fold 3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/56063519>: accessed 21 June 2021), 16 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898–1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 86.

<sup>16</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o.: Carthage, p. 82, dwell./fam. 533/533.

<sup>17</sup> Obituary of Cicero B. H. Williams, *The Hooker Advocate* (Hooker, Oklahoma), 2 November 1933; abstracted by Pellifritz71, “My Muintir,” user-contributed trees, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/33913699/person/18553921040/facts> : accessed 20 June 2021), attached to “John H. Williams, Facts” page as “Death of John H. Williams.” Abstract states: “Cicero Byrant [*sic*] Houston Williams was born May 31, 1856 in Lake (this should be Leake) county, Mississippi, and passed away at his home near Hooker on October 28, 1933, aged 77 years, 4 months, and 28 days. His father, a soldier in the Confederate army, died of disease while serving with the Southern forces in Tennessee.”

John’s alleged middle initial (“H”) is not documented by Pellifritz71. As this research paper documents, every record found for John in his lifetime consistently calls him “John” with no middle initial.

<sup>18</sup> “Civil War Service Records (CMSR)–Confederate,” database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/83128475> : accessed 6 July 2021) and six subsequent images.

<sup>19</sup> 1900 U.S. census, Choctaw Nation, I.T., Twp 3N R1W, stamped p. 249, ED 161, sheet 35, Dicy Wren household.

<sup>20</sup> Choc. MCR 5571, James A. J. Williams (16 pp.); MCR 6153, Dicie V. Wren (31 pp.); MCR 6154, John Wren, (12 pp.). See images at *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/browse/h8n6j-zWt-L0vgirl>).

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Francis Marion Gatlin.<sup>21</sup> He has not been reliably connected to any other Thomas Williams on record.

5. **ELIZABETH LUVICY WILLIAMS**, born about 1829; m. 1849, in Attala Co., MS, MS, Francis M. Gatlin, who died 12 April 1900 at Grandview, Johnson Co., Texas. The widowed Luvicy then filed for a pension as a Confederate widow, citing her late husband’s service from 1861 through 1865 in Co. C, 7th Mississippi Battalion, Price’s Brigade.<sup>22</sup> The Gatlins began their married life as farmers, with the 1850 census enumerating them in Attala County six farms from her newly-wed brother Thomas; Luvicy and Francis were already the parents of a daughter Martha E.<sup>23</sup> By 1860, they had moved to Jones County, MS, where Francis set up a mercantile store adjacent to his more-prosperous brother Mitchel Gatlin.<sup>24</sup> The postwar 1870 census found them in adjacent Wayne County, where Francis had become a house carpenter, with less than a quarter of the resources he held in 1860.<sup>25</sup> By 1880, they had relocated yet again, this time farming with Luvicy’s brother J. N. Williams in Leake Co.<sup>26</sup> A year before this last census, on 30 July 1879, their son Major Slade Gatlin had married there in Leake to Rhoda Ann Elmlra Elizabeth Odom, the daughter of his first cousin Samuel E. Odom.<sup>27</sup>
6. **PENELOPE ANN “PENNY” WILLIAMS**, b. 1831–32; m. apparently 1854 in Attala Co., MS, *Jeremiah Gatlin*, said to be the son of William W. Gatlin and wife Elizabeth Ryals.<sup>28</sup> **1860**: not found. **1870**: Holmes Co., MS., Jeramire (32), Penny A. (30), Hardy L. (15), Mary E. (11), Sarah D. (7), Emeline (5), Annie (3).<sup>29</sup> Jeremiah served as a private in Capt. Sam Young’s Co. G, 30<sup>th</sup> Regt., MS infantry, having enlisted on 5 April 1862 at Grenada, MS, under “Col. Neill” for three years or the duration of the war. A muster roll of 30 June 1862 notes that he had received no pay. The July–October musters report that he was

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<sup>21</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Attala Co., MS, pop. sch., p. 169, dwell./fam. 1162/1166 (Thos. Williams) and 169 verso (also stamped p. 336), dwell./fam. 1158/1172 (F. M. Gatlin).

<sup>22</sup> “Alabama, Texas and Virginia, U.S., Confederate Pensions, 1884–1958 ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1677/images/32241\\_1220701439\\_2214-00430?pid=1331294](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1677/images/32241_1220701439_2214-00430?pid=1331294) : accessed 13 December 2020), application of Mrs. Luvicy Gatlin (Widow of Francis M. Gatlin) age 71, 7 June 1900, Johnson Co., TX.

<sup>23</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Attala Co., MS, pop. sch., p. 169, dwell./fam. 1162/1166 (Thos. Williams) and 169 verso (also stamped p. 336), dwell./fam. 1158/1172 (F. M. Gatlin).

<sup>24</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Jones Co., MS, pop. sch., Ellisville, p. 60, dwell./fam. 392 (Mitchel Gatlin, 35) and and 393 (F. M. Gatlin, 31, Lavicy 31, Martha A. D. 12, Sarah &? 10, Francis M. 8, Major S. 6, Edward 4, Mitchel S. 2, and Martha 30).

<sup>25</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Wayne Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o. Waynesboro, Township 9, p. 58, dwell./fam. 22/22 (Francis M. Gatlin 40, Lovisa 40, Sarah F. 19, Francis M. 18, Major 15, Edward 13, Mitchell 10, Jefferson D? 8, Mary 7, Cicero W. 4).

<sup>26</sup> 1880 U.S. census, Leake Co., MS, pop. sch., Beat 2 ED 49, p.23, dwell./fam. 197/202 (F. M. Gatlin 50, wife Levicy 50, and children Jefferson 18, Marietta 16, Cicero W., 13, Lillie S. 11, Newton N. 7); dwell./fam. 198/203 (J. N. Williams 45, Mary 49); dwell./fam. 199/204 (Edward Gatlin 23, wife Matilda 19, aunt Martha 56).

<sup>27</sup> “Mississippi, U.S., Compiled Marriage Index, 1776–1936,” database, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/452763:7842> : 23 December 2020), “M.S. Gatlin” and “Miss E. Odom,” Leake Co., MS.

<sup>28</sup> p143j “Peoples/Holsworth Family Tree,” user-contributed tree, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/28576564/person/12986581877/facts> : accessed 28 June 2021). Also Ijmckin, “Peoples Family Tree,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/37932723/person/19405666399/facts>: 20 June 2021). The marriage is not found in “Mississippi Marriages, 1800–1911,” database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1680835>); Attala Co. marriages for this period are destroyed. The “L” in Harvey’s name stands for LaFayette, according to p143j.

<sup>29</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Holmes Co., MS, pop. sch., Richland P.O., stamped p. 131, dwell./fam. 134/143.

absent and in the hospital at Tupelo, MS. When discharged, he was sent back to the field and participated in the Battle of Murfreesboro (Tennessee) on 31 December 1862. The muster of 3 February to 3 March 1863 reports that he was "absent, Sick, Surg." and that he had been paid a bounty of \$50. He signed a receipt for clothing on 3 June 1863; and in August, he was said to be present, but "in arrest"; no reason was given. The service record ends at that point.<sup>30</sup>

Online trees assert that Jeremiah Gatlin died about 1878 in Attala County, but cite no evidence. They also assert that Penny died "aft. 1875" in Holmes County.<sup>31</sup> Their daughter Mary Elizabeth Gatlin (b. c1859), is said to have married George Skelton 5 December 1880 in Leake Co.<sup>32</sup> The 1880 census of Leake shows one "Mollie" Gatlin, aged twenty, living with Thweatts as a "cousin," two households from "M.S" Gatlin and wife "E" (Major Slade Gatlin and wife Rhoda Elmira Elizabeth Odom). A fifty-year-old "G" Gatlin, living without wife or children, appears several households on the other side of Major Slade.<sup>33</sup>

7. **JACOB N. WILLIAMS**, b. c1834–35; m. **Mary Ann** —?—. **1860**: Leake Co., MS 1860 (Carthage P.O., p. 82, dwell./fam. 532/532 *adj. John Williams*. **1870**: not found. **1880**: Leake Co (Beat 2, p. 360, dwell. 198/203, "J. N. Williams, 45, wife Mary 49, *adj. Gatlins on both sides*). Daughters Savannah Q. V. E. Williams (b. 1857) and Sarah F. B. Williams (b. 1859) of the 1860 household are not enumerated with J.N. and Mary in 1880. On 22 March 1862, as a farmer whose nearest post office was said to be Kirkwood, MS (near Thomastown, Leake Co.), Jacob enlisted in the Confederacy at either Thomastown or Canton in Madison Co. (his service cards disagree)—promising to serve for the duration of the war in exchange for the bounty offered by Lt. J. P. Mills (a Leake Co. officer). He was assigned to William H. Dudley's Co. G, 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi Infantry, the same company to which his brother Solomon had just been assigned. With the 21<sup>st</sup>, they marched to Virginia. From 18 October until 8 November, Jacob was hospitalized with pneumonia in the General Hospital of Camp Winder in Richmond. After a short return to active duty he was hospitalized again on 8 May 1863 at Richmond's Mississippi Soldiers' Hospital, where he remained until 11 August, suffering from "Vul: Sclo" [*vulnus sclopeticum*—i.e., a gunshot wound]. The November 1863 muster roll notes that he deserted on 19 September; likely, as with many soldiers, he returned home to help the family harvest their crop. On 6 February 1864, after crops were harvested, he returned to duty, but fell ill

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<sup>30</sup> "Civil War Service Records (CMSR)—Confederate," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/83319360> : accessed 6 July 2021) and ten subsequent images.

<sup>31</sup> For example see Terry Dee Spradlin, "Terry Nantz Family Tree," user-contributed tree, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/39067370/person/73000531586/facts> : accessed 6 July 2021).

<sup>32</sup> Ijmckin, "Peoples Family Tree," user-contributed trees, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/37932723/person/29116122401/facts> : 6 July 2021). The marriage of a couple of that name is reported in "Mississippi Marriages, 1776–1935," database, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7842/> : accessed 6 July 2021), but I have not confirmed that the bride in this record is Penny and Jeremiah's daughter.

<sup>33</sup> Rhoda Elizabeth Elmira (Odom) Gatlin was the daughter of Sam Odom and Elizabeth Boyd and the granddaughter of Shadrack Odom by (I propose) ?Rhoda Ann? Williams, daughter of Neal and Polly. "Mollie" Gatlin lived as "cousin," with Leon McNeal 28, and wife Sarah 29, suggesting that her parents (Penny and Jeremiah) may be dead. The Thweatts were 12 households from Eli Odom, half-brother of Sam.

Numerous members of the Odom family are on each of several prior pages, including Sam, his wife Elizabeth (née Boyd), and Sam's stepmother Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom—whose sister Zilphy and husband Thomas Sessums shared their home with the widowed Mary Williams in this year 1880; see ED 50 pp. 11–16, stamped pp. 394–97.

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again. He was admitted on 18 June to the General Hospital at Petersburg, VA, with “Int. fever, and was re-hospitalized at Farmville, VA, between 20 June and 1 July 1864, for chronic diarrhea. Upon his release from Farmville, he returned to his unit, suffered a severe arm injury in the Battle of Berryville, VA, on 3 September 1864. He remained with his company through April of 1865, but was captured that day at the Battle of High Bridge and sent to Point Lookout, Maryland—one of the largest and worst of the Union prisoner-of-war camps. Six days later, the Civil War ended. He was not released, however, until 22 June—at which time he was provided transportation from Point Lookout to the town of Canton. The oath of allegiance that he took at the time of his release described him as a resident of “Leek Co. Miss.,” 5’ 6¾”, dark complected, with brown hair and grey eyes.<sup>34</sup>

8. **SOLOMON D. WILLIAMS**, b. about March–June 1837 (1860 census: 2 June 1836–1 June 1837; 1850 census: 2 June 1834–1 June 1835; CSA enlistment: 6 March 1837–5 March 1838); m. **Ellen Fisher**, 11 July 1859, Madison Co., MS.<sup>35</sup> Solomon was also a farmer whose nearest post office was Kirkwood when he enlisted at age 24 on 5 March 1862, at Canton (Madison Co.) or Thomastown (Leake Co.), by Lt. J. P. Mills for the duration of the war, and was paid a bounty. As a private in Co. G, 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi Infantry, he was “wounded in face” and admitted to General Hospital Camp Winder, Richmond, VA, on 1 July 1862, then returned to duty on 10 August 1862. His company’s muster of November–December 1862 reported that he had “left sick Sept. 15, place unknown,” and the muster of July–August 1863 also reported him sick and absent. The muster of March and April 1864 reports that he was “Supposed dead.” However, a summary service card covering 1861–1865 reports “Missing since September /62 Supposed to have gone to the U.S.”<sup>36</sup> No Union Army record has been found for him. Neither he nor Ellen has been found thereafter; Ellen does not seem to have filed for a widow’s pension.<sup>37</sup>
9. **SARAH WILLIAMS**, b. 1843–44, enumerated in the parental home in 1850 and 1860. *Possibly*, she was the Sarah Williams who married “N.C. Dees” in Madison County on 7 November 1866. The couple has not been found thereafter.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> “Civil War Service Records (CMSR)–Confederate,” database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/79419287> : accessed 6 July 2021) and twenty-five subsequent images.

<sup>35</sup> “Mississippi, U.S., Compiled Marriage Index, 1776–1935,” database, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7842/> : accessed 20 June 2021).

<sup>36</sup> “Civil War Service Records (CMSR)–Confederate,” database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/79420042> : accessed 6 July 2021) and eleven subsequent images.

<sup>37</sup> “Mississippi, Confederate Pension Applications, 1900–1974,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YM9-HH4> : accessed 6 July 2021) > Williams, A.A.–Williams, Mollie.

<sup>38</sup> Madison Co. Marriage Book H: 1860–1874: 158; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 007724350 > image 144.

RESEARCH NOTES

1800

SAMPSON COUNTY, NC

Census

(p. 531; Fayetteville Dist.)

*Consecutive entries*

Mary Sessoms	1 white male 16–25	1 white female 26–44	0 slaves	6 total
	2 white males 0–9	1 white female 0–9		
Isaac Sessoms	2 white males 45+	2 white females 45+	0 slaves	6 total
	1 white male 0–9	1 white female 0–9		
Jacob Sessums	1 white males 16–25	1 white female 16–25	0 slaves	4 total
	1 white male 0–9	1 white female 0–9		<b>[Mary]</b>

COMMENT:

- Isaac Sessoms was the father of Jacob and grandfather of Mary.
- Mary Sessoms was widow of Richard Sessums, brother of Isaac, for whom she opened probate in November 1797.<sup>39</sup>
- James Grice, next door to Jacob Sessums in Duplin this year, was married to Axy Sessums, the apparent sister of Jacob's father Isaac.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sampson Co., NC, Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1794–1800, no visible pagination; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008139513 > images 86–87. Also "North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665–1998," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007384316\\_00001](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007384316_00001) : accessed 7 June 2021) > Sampson > Probate Records 1663–1978 > image 29210 and ff. for folder "Richard Sessums, 1799, specifically image 29217.

<sup>40</sup> E. S. Mills, "Sessums & Fishers of Sampson County (Formerly Duplin), NC: Preliminary Survey," report to file, 29 June 2021, 146 pp.; archived online at *Historic Pathways* under the "Research" tab.



**Neil Williams**  
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1818

**LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS**

Census<sup>43</sup>

(image 7)	Williams, David	1 wh male 21+	1 wh female 21+	4 total whites
		1 wh male -21	1 wh female -21	4 total inhabitants
(image 9)	Williams, Richard [skip 12]	1 wh male 21+		1 total white/ 1 inh.
	<b>Williams, John</b>	1 wh male 21+		1 total white/ 1 inh.
(image 12)	<b>Sessums, Jacob</b>	1 wh male 21+	1 wh female 21+	10 total whites/ 1 slave
		3 wh male -21	5 wh females -21	[includes <b>Mary</b> ]
(image 13)	Williams, Albert [skip 22]	1 wh male 21+	1 wh female 21+	2 total whites/ 2 inh.
	Fisher, Elijah	1 wh male 21+	1 wh female 21+	7 total whites/ 8 inh.
			5 wh female -21	1 slave
(image 22)	<b>Williams, Neil</b>	1 wh male -21		1 total white/ 1 inh.

COMMENT:

- John Williams was surety for Neil's marriage bond in 1820. Online trees consistently identify him as Neil's father but provide no evidence. That said, the patterns and substance of the records found for John, wife Rhoda, and their children—individually and collectively—strongly support their being the birth family of Neil Williams. DNA does also. Many of my autosomal DNA matches at *AncestryDNA* descend from other proved children of John and Rhoda—all instances in which robust, well-documented trees in both their lines and mine offer no other kinship possibility within the relationship ranges imputed by the sized of the shared segments.
- Jacob's neighborhood in consecutive order:

Dees, Arthur	Garner, Willis
Stone, Marvel	Sigler, George
Mullin, James	Garner, Parish
Warin, Joseph	Wethersby, Isom
Heneker, Leonard	Cooper, John
Gilliland, James	McGee, John
Harris, Gowin	Tarver, James
Mcafee, Joseph	Ryal, Gidion
Watson, Harison	Galbreth, Williams
Fulgam, Henry	Jones, Wavely
Mires, Isaac	Tillis, Temple
Barcksdale, Collier	Times, William
<b>Sessums, Jacob</b>	Times, James
[see next column]	Steen, Nathan

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<sup>43</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PW5-P8P> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Lawrence > 1818 State Census > image 22.

Others of potential interest:

*Consecutive entries* (images 6–7)

**Watts, Thomas**  
**Watts, Reuben**  
Lot, Abraham  
Wiggins, Jesse  
Watts, John  
McAll, Hugh  
Lee, Stephen  
Parker, Aron  
Rayborn, Mark  
Hornsby, Reubin  
McFarson, David  
Cooksey, William  
**Cooksey, William Seig.**  
Webb, William  
Webb, William Seign.

*Consecutive entries* (image 9)

Odum, Jacob  
Smith, William  
Lovel, Gideon  
Budwell, Ezekiel  
Budwell, Solomon  
Dunn, John Seign & Jun. [of Sampson?]  
Ball, H. James  
Eliott, Stephen  
Delashunt, John  
Carpenter, William  
Coor, John [of Sampson?]  
Coor, William [of Sampson?]  
[skip 7]  
Williams, Richard

COMMENT:

Thomas Sessums, brother of Mary, married Zilphy Cooksey Jr., the son of Zilphy (Watts) Cooksey and grandson of William Cooksey Sr. above. The Watts, Lotts, Wiggins, Rayborns, and Hornsbys were their in-laws—some of whom would migrate with them to Newton County.

1820

LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS

Marriage<sup>44</sup>

COMMENT:

I am reading the entire volume for all references to Sessums, Williams, and known in-laws. The left-hand numbers for each entry below represent the page number in the original volume.

vol. 1

33. **Neal Williams** and **Polly Sessoms**. John Williams, bondsman. Consent by Jacob Sessoms for dau. Polly. Jan. 11, 1820 (Lupton p. 7, *Ancestry* image 8)

41. Mark Rayburn and Rhoda Watts, by Fort Alford JP, Aug. 13, 1818. (p. 8, image 9)

COMMENT:

Rhoda Watts was a niece of Zilphy (Watts) Cooksey, whose daughters married Thomas Sessums (brother of Polly), James A. Rayburn, David Gill, and Shadrack Odom (as Shad's second wife).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Marie Luter Upton, *Marriage Records Lawrence County, Mississippi, 1818–1838* (N.P.: P.p., 1970); imaged "Marriage Records, Lawrence County, Mississippi, 1818–1838," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/30215/images/dvm\\_LocHist013838-00003-0](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/30215/images/dvm_LocHist013838-00003-0) : accessed 2 July 2021). The preface states that Upton made her abstracts from Book 1 (1818–28) and Book 2 (1828–); the Book 2 abstracts end with 1838, although the volume continues past that year.

<sup>45</sup> See Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Testing the FAN Principle Against DNA: Zilphy (Watts) Price Cooksey Cooksey of Georgia and Mississippi," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 102 (June 2014): 129–52, PDF at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<http://www.HistoricPathways.com>) under the "Articles" tab.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

Mark Rayburn and many others of the Watts-Lott clan were taxed in adjacent Covington County in 1821.<sup>46</sup>

Williamses on 1821 Covington roll: Edward, Elisha, Starling (image 7), John (image 8), Zachariah (image 10). In 1822, Robert and Thomas were added (images 17 and 21).

46. "Return only, **Neal Williams** and **Polly Sessoms** by Samuel C. Alexander, JP, Jan. 13, 1820" (p. 9, image 10)

59. **John Grice** and Elizabeth Russell. Edmond Bishop, bondsman, Nov. 20, 1820 (p. 10, image 11)

COMMENT:

Polly Sessums' paternal aunt, Axy Sessums, married James Grice c1785–90 in Sampson Co., NC.<sup>47</sup> I have not yet studied the Lawrence Co., MS, Grices to determine whether they are part of the same family.

64. Nicholas Gunnels (?) and **Dina Williams. Bird Williams**, bondsman. Hayden Tilman, JP. Jan. 28, 1821." (p. 10, image 11)

COMMENT:

I do not know whether these Williamses are part of Neil's family. I am gathering the Williams data until I can identify his family members. The name "Bird Williams" also is found in Madison County in the 1858–60 period contemporaneous with Neil's residence there.

67. **Jesse Grice** and Nancy Evans. James Evans, bondsman. Jan. 30, 1821 "return written out for Jesse Grice, Sr., but not signed." (p. 10, image 11)

69. Howel Summeral and **Nancy Parker. Lewis Parker**, bondsman. Reben Collins, JP. Mar. 11, 1821. (p. 10, image 11)

COMMENT:

One Lewis Parker was a Sessums-Fisher-Williams neighbor on the Coharies in Sampson Co., NC.

91. William Russel and **Trury Grice. Jesse Grice**, bondsman. Aug. 27, 1821. (p. 12, image 13)

109. James Shannon and **Catherine Williams. Daniel Williams**, bondsman. Consent of parents, unnamed, July 11, 1822 (p. 13, image 14)

112. **Reding Sessoms** and Marian Brown. William Brown, bondsman. Feb. 5, 1822 (p. 13, image 14)

COMMENT:

Reding Sessoms (*var.* Redding Sessums) was Polly's brother.

146. Henry Tyler and **Keziah Williams**. John Hickman, bondsman. Consent by Moses Tyler and **Ann Williams**. June 2, 1823. (p. 16, image 17)

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<sup>46</sup> Mississippi State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1851," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPX8-4W> : accessed 17 July 2021) > Covington > County tax rolls 1821–1854, Box 3640 > images 5–6 (1821).

<sup>47</sup> For the Grices of Sampson, see E. S. Mills, "Sessums & Fishers of Sampson County (Formerly Duplin), NC: Preliminary Survey," report to file, 29 June 2021, 146 pp.; archived online at *Historic Pathways* under the "Research" tab.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

COMMENT:

Keziah Williams was a daughter of John and Rhoda. She and Henry Tyler settled in Attala Co., Miss., with Neil & Polly in the 1840s.

199. Edward Willingham and Isabella More. John F. Mores, bondsman, **Wm. Williams, JP.** Nov. 18, 1823 (p. 19, image 20)

245. **Benjamin Williams** and Mary Miller. William Miller, bondsman. Nov. 29, 1825 (p. 22, image 23)

316. Amos Greer and **Mary Williams.** Wiley Wroten, bondsman. James Hall JP. Nov. 18, 1827 (p. 26, image 27)

328. James Grayham and Ruth Miller. **Benjamin Williams,** bondsman. Nov. 29, 1827 (p. 27, image 28)

344. **Rolan Williams** and Olif Miller. Feb. 27, 1823. (p. 28, image 29)

COMMENT:

Rolan (aka Rolin) Williams and Olive Alice Miller moved to Holmes Co., Miss., before the 1840 census.

344. **Richard Williams** and Lucinda Burker, [no month] 20, 1822. (p. 28, image 29)

345. **James Fisher** and Mary Bethany Noble. James Buckley, bondsman. Consent by Sary Staton, gdn. of Bethany Noble. Sept. 27, 1827. (p. 28, image 29)

349. **Fleet Cooper** and Narcissa Stein. James S. Walker, bondsman. Sept. 11, 1828 (p. 28, image 29)

COMMENT:

In Sampson County, NC, a generation earlier, one "**Fleet Cooper**" was a neighbor and associate of the Sessumses, Fishers, and Williamses.

349. Blount Lewis and Rebecca Brister. **David Williams,** bondsman. Dec. 22, 1828 (p. 28 image 29)

361. Martin King and Mahalla Sowels, **David Williams,** bondsman. Consent by James King, father; and Green Sowels, father. Apr. 23, 1829 (p. 28, image 29)

vol. 2

56. Robert Bridges and **Savilla Williams. Bird Williams,** bondsman. Mar. 1, 1832 (p. 32, image 33)

91. Fleet Cooper and Martha Maxwell. Mathews D. Patton, bondsman. Dec. 24, 1832. (p. 34, image 35)

COMMENT:

I stopped reading this volume with March 1835 (p. 36, image 37; being original vol. 2: 139).

**7 AUGUST 1820**

**LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS**

Federal census

(Township 8; consecutive entries)<sup>48</sup>

<b>Elijah Fisher</b>	1 white male	26–44	1 white female	26–44	1 slave
	1 white male	10–15	1 white female	10–15	10 total
	3 white males	0–19	2 white females	0–10	

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<sup>48</sup> 1820 U.S. census, Lawrence Co., MS, p. 64, lines 33–34 (Fisher, Sessims), and p. 70, line 2 (Williams).

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

<b>Jacob Sessims</b>	1 white male	26–44		2 slaves
	1 white female	26–44		13 total
	1 white male	16–25	[Redding]	
	3 white female	16–25	[-?-, -?-, -?-, born 1795–1804]	
	1 white male	10–15	[Thomas]	
	1 white female	10–15	[Charity]	
	1 white male	0–10	[Solomon]	
	2 white females	0–10	[Sarah & -?-]	

(Township 9)

<b>John Williams</b>	1 white male	45+	1 white female	45+	1 slave
	1 white male	16–25	2 white females	10–15	12 total
	1 white male	16–18	1 white female	0–9	
	1 white male	10–15			
	4 white males	0–9			

COMMENT:

- Jacob's daughter Mary and her new husband Neil Williams are not found in a separate household and do not appear to be in either parental household.
- The male 16–25 and the male 16–18 were one and the same.

**1820–1821**

**LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS**

State census

(image 11) <b>Sessums, Jacob</b>	2 wh males 21+	1 wh female 21+	9 total
	3 wh males -21	3 wh females -21	

COMMENT:

Jacob's neighborhood in consecutive order:

Hardin D. Runnels	Owen Carpenter
Joseph Caldwell	Isaiah Howard
Gabriel Jones	Baptist McDowell
Arthur Lewis	James Coyle
Benjamin Darlia	Peter Mang
Greenberry Cook	Joshua Mullin
William Gibson	Elizabeth Prestridge
John N. Field	William Smith
William Mallett Junr.	William D. Hathorn
Alexander McCullough Junr.	Isaac Walker
<b>Jacob Sessums</b>	Jesse Winburn
[see next column]	Thomas P. Homea

**1820–1824**

Tax rolls

COMMENT:

I have not found Neil Williams on the rolls for Lawrence, Copiah, Covington, Hinds, or Rankin during these four years. He next appears on the 1825 Lawrence Co. census.

1823

LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS

Census

"I, Samuel Stamps Tax assessor & Collector of Lawrence County certify that this my return of the bearth and deaths of Lawrence County December 6<sup>th</sup> 1823. [Signed] Samuel Stamps TA

[Consecutive entries]

Willis Russel

**William Nall** 1 "Deaths of White persons having fixed residence"

Irwin Scarberry

Matthew B. Cannon

Abel Stringer

Samuel Brett

William Brister

Susannah Newlen<sup>49</sup>

COMMENT:

Some online indexes and trees have picked up this name as "Neill Williams." However:

- The name order is not reversed. The pattern of the names before and after is GivenName Surname—i.e. William Neill, rather than Neill William.
- The second name looks more like "Nall" than "Neill."
- The "1" mark in the column for deaths attributed to "William Neill [Nall?]" is crossed out, although Neill's name is not. Given that this is not a census of all heads of households, his name should be crossed out if he had no deaths or births to report.
- "William Nall" also appears on image 3, with 1 death in that column.
- Conclusion: The above entry has the death crossed out because the entry is a duplicate.

1824

SIMPSON COUNTY, MS

Context

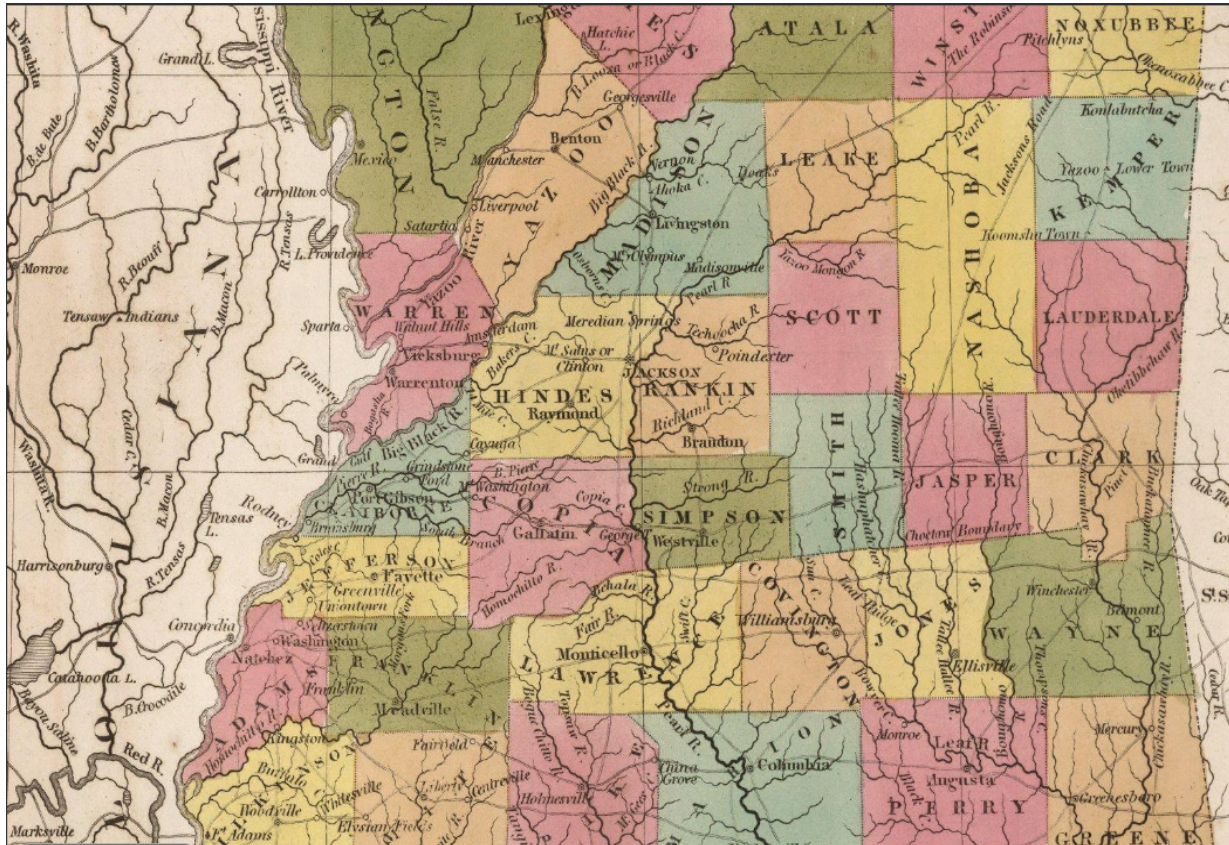
Simpson County was created 23 January 1824 from the Choctaw Cession of 1820 (Treaty of Doak's Stand). Courthouse records were destroyed in 1840 and 1872. Land, probate, and court records begin in 1872. Adjacent counties:

- Copiah (on west)
- Covington (on southeast) [site of Cookseys & Wattses who were Thomas Sessums' in-laws]
- Jefferson Davis (on south)
- Lawrence County (on southwest)
- Rankin County (on north)
- Smith County (on east)

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<sup>49</sup> "Mississippi, U.S., State and Territorial Census Collection, 1792–1866," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229\\_2-0374](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229_2-0374) : accessed 5 July 2021) > image 20 > "Lawrence (Births and Deaths) Date Unknown." "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPWR-VMC> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Lawrence > 1823 State Census > image 8.

Central Mississippi Counties



Anthony Finley, *Mississippi* (Philadelphia: Anthony Finley, 1836), showing (a) Newton County as part of "Nashoba" and (b) Jackson's Road from Lawrence down to Marion and up through Nashoba and Kemper.

1824

LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS

Census

"The Births & Deaths of all persons over the County of Lawrence in the Year 1824."<sup>50</sup>

COMMENT:

- No entry for Neil Williams.
- I am noting this negative search because the 1824 date for this document helps to identify the undated list of births & deaths that I present in the next document below.

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<sup>50</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPWR-GJG> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Lawrence > 1823 State Census > image 8.



Number of deaths of blacks 17<sup>51</sup>

COMMENT:

This undated census is filmed together with an 1841 state census of Lawrence County. The 1841 document is dated. Ancestry has erroneously assumed that its date also applies to the undated census.

The Mississippi State Archives, which holds the originals of both documents, labels this one as "Lawrence (Births and Deaths) Date Unknown." All other Mississippi rolls that I have seen for registration of births and death are for the 1822–25 period.

Other Williams males included on this list: **James, Thomas.**

Williams males enumerated on censuses of Lawrence between 1820 and 1841:

**1820:** D.C., Jacob, **James**, Jesse Sr., John, Lewis, Martin, William

**1830:** Benjamin, Daniel, David, Elisha, James, John, Jordon, William

**1840:** Byrd, Daniel, Isaac, Jas H, John, P.B., Robert

**1841:** Daniel, **James**, James Sr., Demser? Jun., Lewis? N?, W. W. Sr.

As a further test of the likelihood of the c1825 date, I randomly chose 16 individuals from the birth and death list, whose names were clearly written.<sup>52</sup> Then I searched for each of those men in 1820, 1830, and 1840. Results:

- 11 of the 16 were heads of household in 1820
- 8 of the 16 were heads of household in 1830
- Only 4 of the 16 were heads of household on either the 1840 or 1841 censuses.

Conclusion: the list almost certainly was created in the 1820–30 decade. The list is significantly longer than the 1823 list, suggesting that it was created after 1823 (as the county expanded) rather than before 1823. The fact that dated lists exist for 1823 and 1824 also places this at 1825 or so. The next document below, dated 1825, with tallies that match the undated document above, confirms the 1825 date for the "census of births and deaths" on which Neil Williams reported one death. **However, this "1825" compilation covered births and deaths for the preceding year, 1824.**

**1825**

**LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS**

Census

"Return of the Census of Lawrence County for the year 1825 together with a return of the births and deaths of 1824.

Births in 1824: 154

Deaths: 41

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<sup>51</sup> "Mississippi, U.S., State and Territorial Census Collection, 1792–1866," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229\\_2-0374?](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229_2-0374?) : accessed 5 July 2021) > images 20, 22.

<sup>52</sup> The tested individuals were Abner Armstrong, Simon Burney, Wilson Cooper, Christopher Dyas, Hardy Harrington, Meshack King, Neal McAlpin, Wright Mitchell, Clement Mobley, Clement Mullins, Solomon Murray, Samuel Pepper, H[armon] Runnels, Stephen Sasser, Washington Stanfield, and Reuben White.

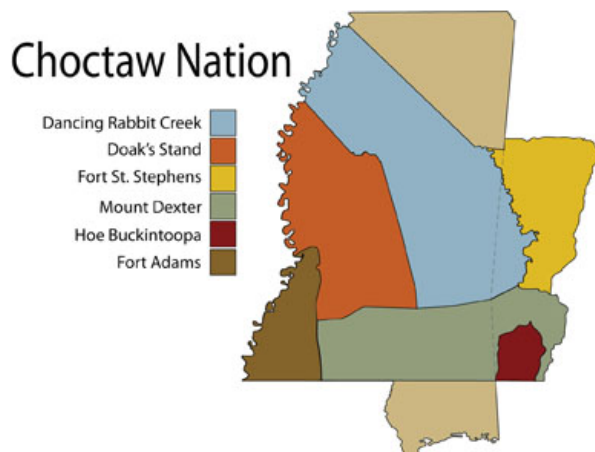
Person 70+: 24  
White males 1367  
White females 1646  
Taxable inhabitants: 645

"I Samuel Stamps Tax Assessor & Collector of Lawrence County certify the above to be correct return of the Census of Lawrence County with the births and deaths and persons over the age of Seventy as I can ascertain the facts. [Signed: Samuel Stamps T.A. & C.]"<sup>53</sup>

### Map of Choctaw Cessions in Mississippi<sup>54</sup>



## Choctaw Land Cessions in Mississippi and Alabama



This map shows the original homeland of the [Choctaws](#) in what are now Mississippi and southwestern Alabama as well as the land cessions over time through various treaties lost their traditional homeland. Alabama treaty cessions are Hoe Buckintoopa (1803), Mount Dexter (1805), Fort St. Stephens (1816), and [Dancing Rabbit Creek](#) (1830).

Courtesy of Rob Ferguson

<sup>53</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPWR-JGJ> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Lawrence > 1823 State Census > image 8.

<sup>54</sup> Rob Ferguson, map, "Choctaw Land Cessions in Mississippi," map, *Encyclopedia of Alabama* ([encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-8005](http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-8005) : accessed 1 June 2021).

**1824–1827**

Tax rolls

COMMENT:

I've not found Neil Williams in Copiah, Hinds, Lawrence, or Simpson Counties. The counties of Madison, Neshoba, and Newton, where he later lived, were not yet created.

**1828**

**SIMPSON COUNTY, MS**

Tax roll

Semi-alphabetized by first letter of surname.

**Sessoms, Jacob**           NO [no tax due]  
**Sessoms, Reding**       1 white poll, \$.50 tax  
**Williams, Neil**         1 white poll, \$.50 tax  
"Transmitted" 5 June 1828<sup>55</sup>

COMMENT:

Jacob Sessums was undoubtedly in Simpson with his son Redding and son-in-law, Neil Williams. However, he was past the maximum age for poll tax (50) and, even though he had patented new land in Simpson in 1826, there was at that time a five-year grace period before taxes were due on new, raw land.

**1829**

Tax rolls

COMMENT:

- Neil does not appear on extant rolls of Copiah, Lawrence, Hinds, Madison, Rankin, or Simpson.
- Polly's brother Thomas Sessums would, this year in Rankin, marry Zilphy Cooksey Jr. Zilphy's brother John Cooksey does appear on the 1829 tax roll of Rankin.<sup>56</sup>
- Polly's brother-in-law, Jesse Cortney, was taxed in Simpson, where Polly's father still resided.<sup>57</sup>

**1830**

**SIMPSON COUNTY, MS**

Census

(p. 186, begin line 13)

*Consecutive entries*

Dempsey Touchstone

Thomas Bell

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<sup>55</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 34 (Courtney), 35 (Fisher), 37 (Sessom), 38 (Williams).

<sup>56</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Rankin > County tax rolls 1829, Box 3753 > image 3 (Cooksey).

<sup>57</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 44 (Cortney, Fisher).

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

Jonathan <b>Bass</b>	[Bass was also a prominent name in Sampson Co., NC—one with Native American roots]		
Levi <b>Bass</b>			
Ephraim Bridges			
Samuel Bridges			
Richard Mullican			
Hezekiah Mitchell			
Thomas Mitchell			
<b>Jacob Sessons</b>	1 white male	50–59 [Jacob]	0 slaves
	1 white female	50–59 [Penny]	6 total
	2 white males	10–15 [Solomon & Jacob Jr.]	
	1 white female	10–15 [Sarah]	
	1 white male	5–9 [Reuben Fisher Sessums]	
<b>Jesse Courtney</b>	[married to Charity Sessums, sister of Polly]		
<b>Neal Williams</b>	1 white male	30–39	6 total
	1 white female	20–29 [Polly]	
	1 white female	5–9 [Margaret, not in parental household in 1840]	
	2 white males	0–4 [John & Thomas]	
	1 white female	0–4 [–?–, not in parental household in 1840]	
Charles Toney			
Dan Kellum			

**1831–**  
Tax rolls

COMMENT:

- I have not found Neil in Covich, Lawrence, Madison, Rankin, or Simpson.
- Polly’s brother Thomas is taxed in Rankin with his brother-in-law John Cooksey.<sup>58</sup>
- Polly’s father Jacob is taxed on his land in Simpson, as is Polly’s brother-in-law Jesse Cortney.<sup>59</sup>

**1832**  
**SIMPSON COUNTY, MS**

Tax roll  
Semi-alphabetized by first letter of surname.

<b>Courtney, Jesse</b>	1 white poll, \$.37½ tax
<b>Sessums:</b>	NO
<b>Williams, Neal</b>	1 white poll \$.37½ tax
Williams, Simeon	1 white poll \$.37½ tax   <i>Consecutive entries</i> <sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Rankin > County tax rolls 1831, Box 3753 > image 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 53 (Cortney), 58 (Sessums).

1833–1839

Tax rolls

COMMENT:

- The 1832 tax roll, above, is **Neil's last known appearance until the 1840 census of Newton County**. I have searched for him and Simeon on the rolls of Attala (whose rolls begin 1835), Copiah, Lawrence, Madison, Neshoba, Newton, Rankin, or Simpson.
- 1833: Polly's father Jacob is enumerated on Simpson Co.'s census, along with son-in-law Jesse Courtney and newest son-in-law, Samuel Courtney.<sup>61</sup> That would be **Jacob's last appearance until he emerged on the 1840 Newton County census**.
- 1834: Thomas Sessums and his Cooksey and Odom in-laws were taxed in Neshoba. This new county had only 35 tax payers that year.<sup>62</sup>
- 1835: Thomas Sessums and his Cooksey and Odom in-laws entered government land in Neshoba (now Newton), which was patented to them in 1841.<sup>63</sup>
- 1835–36: Jesse and Samuel Courtney were taxed in Simpson in '36; the '37 roll is missing; and both were dropped in 1838.<sup>64</sup>
- 1838–39: The Courtneys (with Sessums wives), Thomas Sessums, and Thomas's Cooksey and Odom in-laws were all taxed in Newton County (cut 1836 from Neshoba).<sup>65</sup>
- It is probable that, when Neshoba was created in 1833, Neil moved onto those new lands with Polly's brother Thomas and his Cooksey in-laws. From there, they were cut away into Newton.

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<sup>60</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 65 (Cortney), 73 (Williams).

<sup>61</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 92–93 (Courtney), 95 (Sessums). This state census is clearly labeled as such, but it is filmed with tax rolls and does not appear in the separate groupings for Mississippi state censuses that are offered by *FamilySearch* and *Ancestry*.

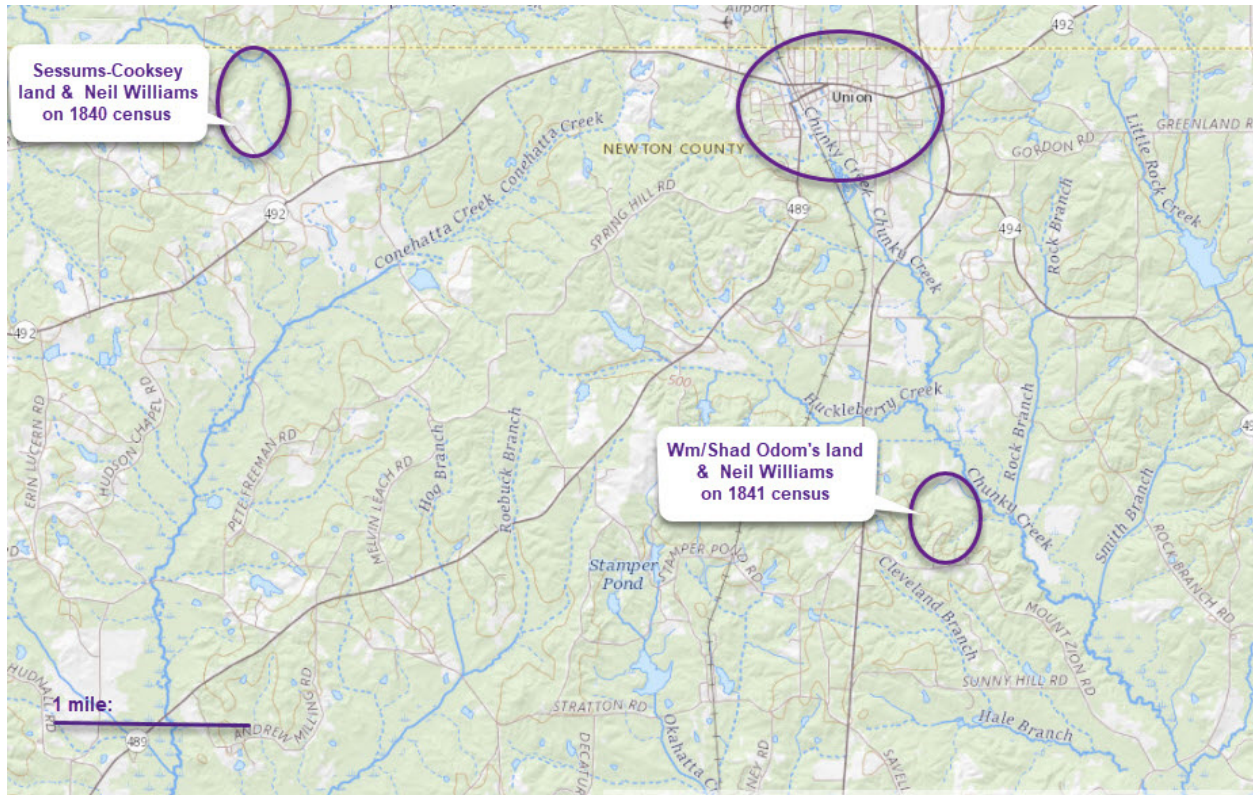
<sup>62</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Neshoba > County tax rolls 1834, Box 3711 > image 3.

<sup>63</sup> Myrtis S. Craft, George Mason, and Melvin Tingle, *Book of Original Entries: Land Records of Newton County, Mississippi* (N.P.: n.p., 1998), 1, 40, 84 (Fishers), 117–18 (Odom), 101, 107–8 (Cooksey), 56, 101, 106, 172, 234 (Sessums). Also 33–35 (Pace, Smith), 161–62 (Johnson), 106 (Dunn), and 182 (Thomas).

<sup>64</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 118: 1835 (Samuel Courtney); image 139: 1836 (Jesse & Samuel Courtney).

<sup>65</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Newton > County tax rolls 1838, Box 3711 > 1838: images 3 (Breeland, Cooksey), 9 (Odum), 11 (Raburn, Sessems); 1839: images 2 (Breland), 3 (Courtney, Cooksey), 6 (Raburn, Sessems).

Cooksey, Sessums, and Odom Land Settlements  
Newton County, MS, 1834–35



**9 SEPTEMBER 1835**  
**LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS**  
Land purchase

Allen Sterlings and wife Lydia of Lawrence to **Neil Williams**, sale for \$300 cash in hand, E½ of NE¼ S13 T8 R19W, 80 acres of the lands formerly sold at St. Stephens, Ala. Witnesses: **Joel Polk** and W. B. Sterling. Acknowledged 9 September 1835 by the Sterlings before James Shannon, President, Board of Police for the county.<sup>66</sup>

COMMENT:

- Joel Polk, below, was 1839 bondsman for **Daniel Williams** and **William Williams**.
- Section 13 was contiguous with Section 11 where **Isaac Williams** owned land. Isaac owned land in 5 sections immediately north of the tract Neil chose: S1, 2, and 11 in T8 R19 and S35-36 in T9 R19. **Robert Williams** was roughly 2 miles to the NE in S5 and 8 T8 R18. Robert and Isaac also owned land about 2 miles above Robert, adjoining **father John** in S20, 28, 29, and 30 of T9 R18.

**7 DECEMBER 1838**

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book C: 38–39; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > image 558.

LAWRENCE COUNTY, MS

Land sale

Neil Williams of Lawrence County to Robert Williams (place not stated), sale for \$300, 80 acres described as E½ of NE¼ S13 T8 R19W, "land formerly sold at St. Stephens, Alabama." Signed Neal Williams, Mary Williams. Witness: Isaiah Mobley. Acknowledged 7 December 1838 by Neal Williams before William Harrison, JP, who attested the appearance and relinquishment of Mary Williams. Filed 28 January 1847. Recorded 17 Sept. 1847.<sup>67</sup>

COMMENT:

Neil (aka Neal) has not been taxed in the county since 1832. The usual explanation for situations such as this would be that Neal left the county after the 1832 tax roll, left his land in the charge of a renter or agent, and then sold the land after he was certain that he would not return.

On 3 May 1844, Robert Williams (s) and wife Clarissa Williams (s) sold to William Malone for \$300, E½ NE¼ S13 T8 R19W. Witness: E. M. J. Stringer. Acknowledged by Robert before Stringer, J.P. on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1844. Stringer attested the appearance of "Clarissa Williams, the lawful wife" before him and her relinquishment on 8 June 1844.<sup>68</sup>

The association between Neal and Robert supports the "consensus" that the two were brothers.

Also

- 9 December 1819, Harmon Runnels and wife Hester of town of Monticello to David Carlton Williams of same, lots 11, 15, 24 in Monticello (Deed Book A: 39–42)
- 1 August 1825 Bird Williams to William Williams, both of Lawrence, sale of land in E ½ of SW ¼ S7 T5 R10E (Deed Book A:393–94) Different locale from the John Williams cluster.
- 13 January 1826, Samuel Moore to John Williams, sale of a negro Boy named Jack for \$100. Witness: James Shannon, J.P. Recorded 1 January 1827.<sup>69</sup>
- 3 February 1827, William Davis (x) of Covington Co. to John Williams of Lawrence, a Negro girl named Nancy for \$375. Witness: Isaac Williams. Executed before James Shannon, J.P.<sup>70</sup>
- 22 November 1831, John Bostick and Elizabeth, his wife, to Luke Williams all of Lawrence, for [not stated], sale of 79.875 acres in E½ of "South Quarter" S7 T8 R20W. No witness, Acknowledged and Relinquished before Richard A. Hargis 30 December 1831. Filed 12 January 1832. Recorded 29 March 1832.<sup>71</sup>
- 23 January 1834, Levi Noble and Jane his wife to Isaac Williams, both of Lawrence, for \$400: E½ of SW¼ S36 T9 R19W in the district of lands formerly offered for sale at St. Stephens. Witnessed: James Shannon, M.B.P.L. C. [Member, Board of Police, Lawrence County] and Daniel Williams.<sup>72</sup>

COMMENT:

Daniel's land in Section 2 lay adjacent to Neil's land in S14.

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<sup>67</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book D: 536–37; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008201845 > image 304.

<sup>68</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book D: 466; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008201845 > image 267.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book B: 22–23; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > images 273–74.

<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book B: 24; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > image 274.

<sup>71</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book B: 264; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > image 394.

<sup>72</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book C: 215–16; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > images 650–51.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

- 17 April 1836 **Daniel Williams** (s) to **William Williams**, both of Lawrence, in consideration of \$326 paid by William Williams, Daniel gives conditional title (mortgage) to SE¼ S2 T8 R19, containing 159.75 acres. Witnesses: A. Stewart and Charles Stewart. Crosswritten over the first page of the deed is: “The Within deed is satisfied this 23d October 1854, William Williams.”<sup>73</sup>
- 6 August 1836 John Martin to **Robert Williams**, both of Lawrence Co., sale for \$900, NW¼ of S14 T7 R19W, 159.80 acres. Witnesses: Francis A. Martin, **William Williams**. Proved 5 June 1837 by oath of witness Francis A. Martin before Arch<sup>d</sup> Anderson, J.P.<sup>74</sup>
- 17 October 1836 **James Williams** and wife **Margaret** to William L. Smith, both of Lawrence, sale for \$1420.50, NW¼ of S26 T8 R21, containing 186 acres; also NW¼ of S23 T8 R21W, containing 40 acres; also NW ¼ of S25 T8 R21 W 159.525 acres. Witnesses: C. Mitchell and **John M. Williams**. Acknowledged and relinquished 17 October 1836 by James and Margaret. before C. Mitchell, J.P.<sup>75</sup> [about 10-12 miles W of the John-Isaac-William-Robert-Neil cluster]
- 22 June 1837 Elisha Williams and wife Patsy sold E½ of NW ¼ S30 T7 R10 East to James Sells, with James Price and Henry Maxwell as witnesses, with acknowledgements the same day by both Elisha and Patsy before Jesse Maxwell, J.P.<sup>76</sup>
- 26 October 1837 **Robert Williams** (x) and wife **Clarissa Williams** (x) to Brittain Bridges, both of Lawrence, sale for \$900, the NW¼ of S14 T7 R19W, containing 159.80 acres. Witnesses: Joseph Parkman Senr. (x) and Joseph B. Parkman. Acknowledged by Robert Williams and his wife **Clarissa Williams** 18 November 1837 before Fort Alford, J.P.<sup>77</sup>

COMMENT:

Robert’s land in S14 lay adjacent to Neil’s land in S13 and contiguous to Daniel in S2.

- 7 April 1843. Whereas, on 18 March 1839 in Circuit Court of Lawrence, William Weathersby won judgment against **Daniel Williams** and **William Williams** for \$376.76 damages and 33.25 costs expended, a *fiere facias* was issued and judgment levied on the property of Daniel and William, who gave bond with Joel Polk as security for the forthcoming of said property, to be sold at the time and place therein specified.” The bond is forfeited and an order issued against the “goods and chattels, lands and tenements” of Daniel, William, and Joel. Sale to be held 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of May next. || On 29 May 1843 the land was sold for \$50 to William Weathersby: SE ¼ S2 T8 R19. A conditional Sheriff’s deed was made 10 June 1843 to Weathersby by Solomon Sutton, Sheriff. On 24 May 1845 William Weathersby acknowledged that **William Williams** had paid him \$66 and the land was being conveyed to him.<sup>78</sup>
- D:354-356, William Weathersby to William Williams
- 31 March 1847 Robert Williams to S. H. Walker, for \$600, sells W½ of NE¼ S8 T8 R18 (80 acres), also E½ of NW¼ of S8N T8 R18, also SE¼ S5 T8 of R18W—containing in all 240.54 acres. **Witness: William B. Williams**. Acknowledged by Robert and relinquished by Clarissa before M. M. Fortinberry J.P., 21 May 1853.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book C: 66–67; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > images 573.

<sup>74</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book C: 183; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > image 634.

<sup>75</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book C: 85–86; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > images 582–83.

<sup>76</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book D: 153; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008201845 > image 98.

<sup>77</sup> Lawrence Co., Deed Book C: 218–19; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 008134328 > image 652.

<sup>78</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book D: 355–56; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008201845 > image211.

<sup>79</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book F:667–68; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 365.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

- 21 May 1853, **Robert Williams**, Adm. of estate of Arthur Allen of Lawrence Co. sells to Willis B. Sterling of same, for \$203.30, the W½ of NW¼ S7 T8 R18W containing 74.8125 acres. Witness: **Wm. B. Williams**. Acknowledged 21 May 1853 before M. M. Fortinberry J.P. Filed and recorded 6 May 1857.
- 23 May 1854, Joel Polk and Mary his wife to **Isaac Williams**, all of Lawrence, for \$100, sale of NE¼ of NW¼ S1 T8, R19W, containing 40 acres. No witness named. Acknowledged and relinquished by the Polks, 27 [blank] 1854 before H. Hooker "B.P." [Board of Police]. Filed 10 May 1855. Recorded 5 June 1855.<sup>80</sup>
- 25 March 1854, Brittain Bridges "to my beloved daughter **Clarissa Williams**, a tract of land described as NW¼ of S34 T6 R19W "with the exception of that part lies west of Greens Creek' also 100 yards off the S end of the NW half of said quarter section. Witness: M. M. Fortenberry, J.P. Filed and recorded 26 March 1856.<sup>81</sup>
- 17 January 1855, German Walker (s) and wife Icy F. Walker (s) to **Isaac Williams**, all of Lawrence, sale for \$150 cash, NW¼ of S30 T9 R18W, 148.075 of an acre (with the exception of twenty acres more or less deeded to Milton Griffith and 10 acres to Thomas B. Slater Jr.), also NE¼ of SW¼ S30 T9 R18W being 38.27 acres; also W½ of SE¼ and SW¼ of SW¼ S30 T9 R18W being 111.04 acres. Witness: B. F. Haile. Acknowledged and relinquished by German and Icy before B. F. Haile, J.P. on 17 January 1855. Filed 10 May 1855. Recorded 5 June 1855.<sup>82</sup>
- 3 April 1857, **Robert Williams** to John H. Tennison, for \$300, conveys "a certain Negro boy named Dennis, about eleven years old, warranted, to take effect if he does not pay a promissory note for \$300 due before 1 January. On 8 August 1857 Tennison acknowledged that the debt was paid in full. Witness: S. W. Dale, J.P.<sup>83</sup>
- 5 December 1857, Nancy Benson (s) to **Isaac Williams**, both of Lawrence Co., sale for \$600, NW¼ of SW¼ S30 T9 R18W (excepting a little portion taken off a certain cross fence of the SW corner, thence by said cross fence running in a NW direction through the following described numbers: the NE¼ of the SE¼, the SE¼ of the NE¼ and the NW¼ of the NW¼, S25 T9 R19—all lying NE of said made line. Witness **John H Williams**. Acknowledged 25 December 1857. Filed for recording 15 April 1858. Recorded 8 May 1858.<sup>84</sup>
- 15 February 1858, Jesse M. Brent and Mary B. Brent his wife to **Frances Williams** all of Pike Co.
- 18 February 1858, **D. M. Williams** (s) to **William C. Williams**, for \$50.70 debt, mortgage on (a) NW¼ and W½ of NE¼ & NW¼ of NW¼ & the NW of SE¼ of S11 T8 R19W, the titles of which lands are hereby vested in the said William C. William until" 1 January 1860, "reserving to me the said D. M. Williams or my heirs or assigns the right of redeeming said lands by or before the time above Stated.<sup>85</sup>
- 20 November 1858, **Isaac Williams** (s) and **Mary F. Williams** (s) his wife to **John H. Williams**, all of Lawrence, sale for \$525, the NW¼ of S30 in T9 R18W, 140.015 of an acre, with the exception of 20 acres deeded to Milton Griffith and 10 acres deeded to Thomas B. Staten Jr. Also NE¼ of SW¼ of S30 of T9 R18 W being 38.27 acres, also W½ of SE¼ and SW¼ of SW¼ of

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<sup>80</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book F:274–75; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > images 158–59.

<sup>81</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book F:445–46; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 245.

<sup>82</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book F:275-76; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 159.

<sup>83</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book F:91–92; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 377.

<sup>84</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book G: 186–87; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 599.

<sup>85</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book G: 159; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 585.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

S30 of T9 R18 being 111.04 acres. Witnesses: Milton Griffith, G. W. Hartzog. Acknowledged and relinquished before B. F. Haile, J.P. 20 November 1858. Filed and recorded 26 Nov. 1858.<sup>86</sup>

- 25 October 1858, **Isaac Williams** (s) and **wife Mary F.** (s) of Lawrence, "deed fo Gift to our beloved Daughter Amanda M. Hartzog of the County and State aforesaid, [a] certain negro Slave by the name of Martha ..." Witness: B. F. Haile, J.P. Filed and recorded 26 November 1858.<sup>87</sup>

COMMENT:

- I need to map all the above tracts.
- **Deed Book A** has only a grantor index and needs to be read.
- **Deed Book B:** the first 180 pages are indexed only to grantor and need to be read.
- **Deed Book E** does not have any index and needs to be read.

**6 MARCH 1840**  
**NEWTON COUNTY, MS**

Tax roll

Semi-alphabetized by first letter of surname

[Consecutive "C" entries]

<b>Cooksey, John</b>	0 land, 1 wh poll, \$.37½ tax [m. c1838, Eveline Odom, daughter of William]
<b>Cooksey, Saml.</b>	0 land, 1 wh poll, 1 slave, \$1 [m. c1838, Cynthia Ann Odom, daughter of William]
<b>Coartney, Samuel</b>	0 land, 1 white poll, \$.37½ tax [m. c1833, Sarah Sessums, daughter of Jacob]
Chandler, Elias	0 land, 1 white poll, \$.37½ tax [Sam & Sarah (Sessums) Courtney's eldest dtr married a Chandler c1847]
Gill:	NO
<b>Odom, Shadrick</b>	1 white poll, \$.37½ tax [William's eldest son; proposed husb. of Marg. Williams]
<b>Odom, William:</b>	NO
Rayburn:	NO
<b>Sessums, Jacob:</b>	NO [He was a householder enumerated in June; but he is past the age of 50]
<b>Sessums, Thos.</b>	0 land, 1 white poll, \$.37½ tax
<b>Sessums, Solomon</b>	0 land, 1 white male poll, \$.37½ tax <sup>88</sup>
Williams, Neil:	NO

COMMENT:

Even though Neil Williams was not taxed in Newton in this year 1840, he was enumerated there on the census, adjacent to Polly's brother Thomas and Thomas's in-laws.

**1 JUNE 1840**  
**NEWTON COUNTY, MS**

Census

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<sup>86</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book G: 341–42; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > images 677–78.

<sup>87</sup> Lawrence Co., MS, Deed Book G: 42; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 008134329 > image 678.

<sup>88</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Newton > County tax rolls 1840–1859, Box 3711 > images 4 (Breland, Cooksey, Courtney, Chandler), 10 (Odum) 11 (Sessem).

(p. 137; begin line 25)

William & Catharine Evins

Robert Jones

Peter Robeson

Willis W Warren

[W]right Hix

William Johnston Sr.

Joseph Spradley

James Dunn

Henry Thomas

George F. Smith

<b>Jacob Sessions</b> <sup>89</sup>	1 white male	60–70	1 white female	50–60	0 slaves	5 total
	1 white male	20–30 [Solomon]				4 in ag
	1 white male	15–20 [Jacob Jr.]				
	1 white male	10–15 [Reuben F.]				

[end of page]

(p. 137b, begin line 1)

John Pullen [no entry]

George Stuart

W. R? Stuart

James Jones

Jesse M. Pace

Dempsey Pace

Dempsey Smith

COMMENT:

Four pages separate Jacob Sessums from his other family members. Although I identified the lands of each landholding neighbor on this census and platted them on a county map that depicts early roads, I could not discern a pattern that the census taker took from one house to the next. Jacob appears to be in a "catch all" section where, perhaps, the enumerator listed individuals from throughout the county whom he had missed on his initial rounds.

(p. 141, begin line 1)

Joseph Johnston

**John Parks** [& wife Nancy Cooksey, bro-in-law of John & Sam'l Cooksey and Thos Sessums]

<b>John Cooksey</b>	1 white male	30–40	1 white female	15–20	3 total	1 in ag
			1 white female	0–5		

G. A. Johnson

John Woodward

W. W. Johnson

Benjamin Berter

Edmon Johnson

Anderson Pinson

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<sup>89</sup> *Ancestry's* database mis-transcribes his surname as "Syson."

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

<b>Wm. Odum</b>	1 white male	50–60	1 white female	40–50
	2 white males	10–15	1 white female	20–30
	1 white male	0–5	1 white female	15–20
<b>Shadrack Odum</b>			1 white female	10–15
	1 white male	15–20	1 white female	20–30
	2 white males	0–5		

**COMMENT:**

Evidence is ambiguous as to whether the female enumerated with Shadrack Odom is his first wife (proposed to be Margaret Williams) or second wife (Elizabeth Cooksey). Factors to consider:

*Timing:*

- Shadrack’s second child by his first wife was born 2 February 1840.<sup>90</sup>
- Shadrack’s first child by his second wife, a daughter Rhoda, was born in June 1841 (according to the 1900 census).<sup>91</sup> Therefore, she was conceived about September 1840.
- The official census date for 1840 was 1 June. Rural households were visited across the next several months, but data was supposed to be collected as of 1 June.
- If the first wife were still alive on 1 June and the second wife conceived in September, then Shadrack’s “period of mourning” was three months or less. If his first wife died from childbirth, then he might have waited nine months before remarriage. In either case, a quick remarriage is not surprising, considering that his wife’s death left him with two infants under age three.

*Location:*

- The 1840 federal census, above, enumerates Shadrack adjacent to his parents. **The early 1841 state census, below, enumerates his parents adjacent to Neil and Mary Williams**, the parents proposed for Shadrack’s first wife—while placing Shadrack adjacent to his second wife’s brother, Samuel Cooksey. The suggestion is that, between the two censuses, he moved to be near his new wife’s family.

*Age of wife on census:*

- A death certificate exists for the second wife, which cites her death on 27 May 1917 at the age of 96 years, 11 months, and 19 days—dating her birth to 8 June 1820. She would have turned 20 on 8 June 1840.
- The official census date for 1840 was 1 June, but rural households were visited across several months thereafter. If Shadrack’s wife’s age were cited as of the day the enumerator arrived and inquired, then Wife No. 2 would have been correctly entered into the 20–29 age bracket. If her age was cited to 1 June 1840, as regulations required, then her tick mark should appear

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<sup>90</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Oktibbeha Co., Miss., pop. sch., Beat 4, ED 93, sheet 13, dwell./fam. 245, John Odom. Also “Mississippi Confederate Pension Applications, 1900–1974,” database, *FamilySearch* ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) : 1 August 2013), “Oakes–Ormond,” images 101–4, E. J. Odom, Widow (John Odom, Pvt., Co. E, 4th Cav., Featherstone’s Brigade), affidavits 30 August 1913 and 10 August 1916.

<sup>91</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Leake Co., Miss., pop. sch., South Half of Beat 3, ED 34, sheet 14, dwell./fam. 229, George W. and Rhody Moore.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

in the 10–19 bracket, along with Shadrack. If the proposed Wife No. 1 was still alive, then her tick mark should also appear in the 10–19 column.

Isaac Hollinsworth	[taxed 1826 in Copiah; 1834 in Neshoba]			
Elias Chandler	1 white male	40–50	1 white female	20–30
	1 white male	10–15	1 white female	10–15
	1 white male	5–10	1 white female	0–5
	2 white males	0–5		
Michael Thomas				
Daniel Johnston				
James Johnston				
N.B. Smith				
Wm. Boyd				
<b>John Boyd</b>	[His son James in 1841 m. a daughter of John Parks above; their daughter Elizabeth Boyd in 1856 m. Sam Odom, who was born c1838 to Shadrack Odom & his first wife, the carrier of Sessums DNA]			
Franklin Boyd	[son of John, above]			
Benjamin McCulloch	[brother-in-law of John Boyd, above]			
John A. Thompson				
<b>Haden Watts</b>	[cousin of Zilphy (Watts) Cooksey; mother of John & Samuel Cooksey, Zilphy (Cooksey) <b>Sessums</b> , and Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom, the second wife of Shadrack Odom. His first known record is 1827 U.S. land entry in Rankin Co.]			
Michael Miller	[father-in-law of James William Cooksey, a brother-in-law of Thomas Sessums]			
Benjamin Rollins				
J. D. Phelps				
Jas. Walton				
E. S. Phelps				
Thomas Jones				
Enoch Philips				
Wm. Evins				
 (p. 142, begin line 1)				
S? Y? Lewis				
Wm J? Pace				
L. D. Grayham				
<b>Isaac Parker</b>	[1830 Copiah, 3 households from Redding Sessums]			
James Grayham				
Anthony Grayham				
Edward Grayham				
Richman Pace				
Samuel B. Windham				
A. J. Windham				
Levi McDaniel				
James Vance				
<b>Samuel Cooksey</b>	1 white male	20–30	1 white female	20–30 [Cynthia Odom, dtr of Wm.]
	1 white male	0–5	2 white females	0–5
Zilpha Cooksey	1 white male	20–30	1 white female	50–60 [mother of Thomas Sessum's wife & of Shad Odom's second wife]

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

<b>Thos. Sessoms</b>	1 white male	30–40	1 white female	20–30 [Zilphy Cooksey, Jr.]
	1 white male	10–15		
	2 white males	5–10		
	1 white male	0–5		
<b>Neil Williams</b>	1 white male	40–50		
	1 white female	30–40		[Mary "Polly" Sessums, dtr of Jacob]
	[1 white female	15–20		in household in 1830; is missing here in 1840; this is the female proposed to be Margaret, first wife of Shadrack Odom]
	1 white female	15–20		[—?—, b. 1825–30, according to 1830 census]
	2 white males	10–15		[John b. c1825; and Thomas b. c1827]
	[1 white female	10–15		in household in 1830; is missing here in 1840]
	2 white females	5–10		[Penny A. b. 1831–32; and —?—]
	2 white males	0–5		[Jacob b. 1833–34; Solomon D. born 1835–36]

Jacob Hollinsworth

**COMMENT:**

Neil Williams, Jacob's son-in-law, is on Newton's 1840 census, but not the tax roll.

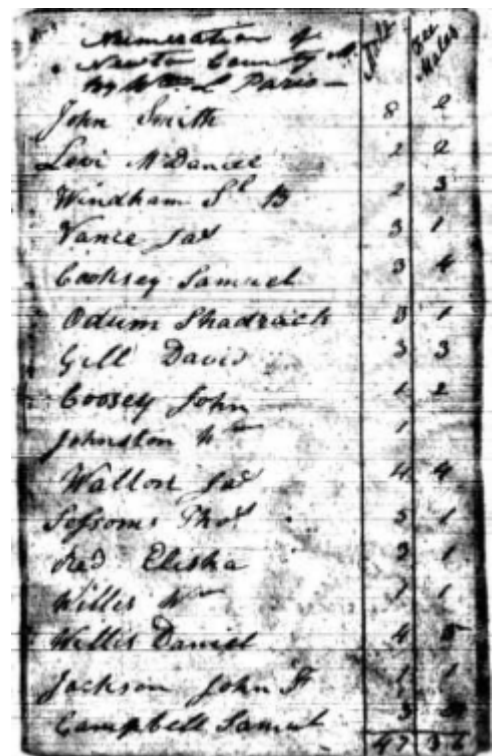
**1841**

**NEWTON COUNTY, MS**

State census<sup>92</sup>

(image 1) →

John Smith	8 males	2 females
Levi McDaniel	2 males	2 females
Windham S <sup>l</sup> B	2 males	3 females
Vance, Jas.	3 males	1 female
<b>Cooksey, Samuel</b>	3 males	4 females
<b>Odum, Shadrack</b>	3 males	1 female
Gill, David	3 males	3 females
<b>Coosey, John</b>	1 male	2 females
Johnston, Wm.	1 male	
Wallon, Ja <sup>s</sup>	4 males	4 females
<b>Sessoms, Tho<sup>s</sup></b>	<b>5 males</b>	<b>1 female</b>
Red, Elisha	3 males	1 female
Willis, W <sup>m</sup>	1 male	1 female
Willis, Daniel	4 males	5 females
Jackson, John F.	1 male	1 female
Campbell, Samul	3 males	2? females



<sup>92</sup> "Mississippi, U.S., State and Territorial Census Collection, 1792–1866," database with images, Ancestry (Ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1125/images/v229\_2-0626 : accessed 21 June 2021) > images 1 and 3.

**Neil Williams  
Mary "Polly" Sessums**

	Males	Females
Boyd James Sr	1	2
Coats John W	1	2
Hollinsworth Isaac Jr	5	5
Williams Neil	5	4
Odum William	4	4
Johnston Joseph	5	1
Johnston Mary	2	3
Davidson Wm	2	2
Parks John	6	3
Stuart H. H.	1	1
Stuart James	1	
Ellis Jas	6	6
Heard Samuel	1	
Waterman Ralph	1	
McDaniel Silas	1	
Walker Silas	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>37</b>

← (image 3, col. 1)

Boyd, James Sr.	1 male	2 females
Coats, John W.	1 male	2 females
Hollinsworth, Isaac Jr	5 males	5 females
<b>Williams, Neil</b>	<b>5 males</b>	<b>4 females</b>
<b>Odum, William</b>	<b>4 males</b>	<b>4 females</b>
Johnston, Joseph	5 males	1 female
Johnston, Mary	2 males	3 females
Davidson, Wm.	2 males	2 females
Parks, John		6 males 3 females [wife Cooksey]
Stuart, H. H.	1 male	1 female
Stuart, James	1 male	
Ellis, Jas.		6 males 6 females
Heard, Samuel	1 male	
Waterman, Ralph	1 male	
McDaniel, Siras	1 male	2? females
Walker, Silas		2 males 4 females

1841

**NEWTON COUNTY, MS**

Tax roll

Semi-alphabetized by first letter of surname

<b>Cooksey, John</b>	120a \$600, 1 wh poll, \$2.25 tax
<b>Cooksey, Saml.</b>	0 land, 1 wh poll, 1 slave, \$1.25
Cooksey, James	0 land, 1 wh poll, \$.50 tax
Coartney, Samuel	NO
Gill, David	0 land, 1 wh poll, \$.50 tax
<b>Odom, Shadrick</b>	<b>0 land</b> , 1 wh poll, \$.37 ½ tax
<b>Odom, William:</b>	80a \$600, 25 cattle, 0 polls, 0 slaves, \$1.75 tax
Rayburn:	Joel W. but not James or Levi
<b>Sessums, Jacob:</b>	NO
<b>Sessums, Thos.</b>	0 land, 1 white poll, \$.50 tax
Watts, Haden	0 land, 1 white male poll, \$.50 tax
<b>Williams, Neal</b>	0 land, 1 white male poll, \$.50 tax <sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Newton > County tax rolls 1840–1859, Box 3711 > images 3–4 (Cooksey), 5 (Gill), 9 (Odom), 10 (Sessums), 12 (Watts, Williams).

1 JULY 1842  
NEWTON COUNTY, MS

Tax roll

Semi-alphabetized by first letter of surname

<b>Cooksey, John</b>	0 land, 1 wh poll, \$.50 tax	
<b>Cooksey, Saml.</b>	0 land, 5 cattle, 1 wh poll, 0 slaves, \$1.27 1/2	
Cooksey, James	0 land, 1 wh poll, \$.50 tax	
Gill, David	0 land, 1 wh poll, \$.50 tax	[Wife Catherine Cooksey]
<b>Odom, Shadric</b>	0 land, 1 white poll, \$.50 tax	[2d wife Elizabeth Cooksey]
<b>Odom, William:</b>	0 land, 15 cattle, 0 polls, 0 slaves, \$.15 tax	
Rayburn:	Joel W. but not James or Levi	
<b>Sessums, Jacob:</b>	NO	
<b>Sessums, Thos.</b>	0 land, 1 white poll, \$.50 tax	[Wife Zilphy Cooksey]
<b>Sessums, Solomon</b>	NO	
Watts, Haden	75a [no value stated], 1 white male poll, \$.50 tax	
<b>Williams, Neal</b>	75a [no value stated], 1 white male poll, \$.50 tax <sup>94</sup>	

COMMENT:

- Neil did not purchase any Newton County land from the federal government. If he bought land from another individual, that purchase (along with its subsequent sale by him) would have been recorded in deed books that have been destroyed by Newton's several courthouse fires.
- Similarly Haden Watts took out no government land in Newton County (although he patented several other tracts in Rankin (1827), Kemper (1841), and Lauderdale (1841).
- One other circumstance existed in which a man might pay tax on land he did not own—i.e., he rented a tract under a lease that assigned the tax liability to him.

1842–1846

COMMENT:

The extended Sessums family broke apart in this period. Neil and Polly (Sessums) Williams moved northward into Attala County. Her father Jacob Sessums and her sisters who married the Courtneys migrated to Panola County, Texas. Her brother Thomas Sessums followed them and was absent for a year or so, but returned to Mississippi. I have found no evidence that Neil and Polly went to Texas with her father and siblings.

One of the claimants for Choctaw land (and tribal status) asserted that Jacob's wife Penny died in Mississippi in 1845. No evidence has been found for her death place. For detailed evidence relating to the time frame of the move, see the previously cited research notes for Jacob Sessums & Penny Fisher.

1843–45

Tax roll

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<sup>94</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Newton > County tax rolls 1840–1859, Box 3711 > images 3 (Cooksey), 5 (Gill), 9 (Odum), 11 (Sessems), 12 (Watts, Williams).

COMMENT:

Neal Williams does not appear in Newton or Attala. The 1845 tax roll of Attala, if it still exists, is not filmed.<sup>95</sup>

**19 OCTOBER 1846 (CERTIFIED DATE)**

**ATTALA COUNTY, MS**

Tax rolls

*Consecutive entries:*

Williams, James O.	0 land or other taxable items, 1 poll, \$.50 tax
<b>Williams, Neil</b>	0 land or other taxable items, 1 poll, \$.50 tax
Williams, John	0 land or other taxable items, 1 poll, \$.50 tax <sup>96</sup>

COMMENT:

- Other Williams males, not in this cluster, had been in the county since 1835.
- James O. Williams, perhaps coincidentally, appears two households from Neil on the 1850 census of Attala. At age 39, he was 17 years younger than Neil. A male of his age does not appear in Neil's 1830 or 1840 household. He is also said, by that 1850 census, to be a native of South Carolina rather than North Carolina; however, we do not yet know the migration path taken by Neil's parents between their NC and MS residences.

**1847**

**ATTALA COUNTY, MS**

Tax rolls

*Consecutive entries:*

<b>Williams, Neil</b>	NO <sup>97</sup>
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COMMENT:

- James O. was taxed again this year, as was a John "M."
- Neil has now turned 50 and is no longer liable for the poll.

**1848–49**

**ATTALA COUNTY, MS**

Tax rolls

*Consecutive entries:*

<b>Williams, Neil</b>	NO <sup>98</sup>
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<sup>95</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse.

<sup>96</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PXZ-9GCC> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Attala > County tax rolls 1835–1873, Box 3607 > image 327.

<sup>97</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PXZ-9GCC> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Attala > County tax rolls 1835–1873, Box 3607 > images 381–82.

<sup>98</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PXZ-9GCC> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Browse > Attala > County tax rolls 1835–1873, Box 3607 > images 435–38. 502–5.

COMMENT:

There also exists a land tax roll for 1848 and 1850, approximately 75 pages each, organized by land description, not alphabetical. However:

- the federal lands database does not show Neil taking out land in Attala.
- The 1850 census places him in a block of pages said to cover Township 15 North, Range 8 E and he is credited with \$300 in real estate. I have read this township & range in the land-tax register and did not find Neil.

**25 OCTOBER 1850**  
**ATTALA COUNTY, MS**  
Census<sup>99</sup>

1107/1110	Kitchens, William	39	m w	Min. G.	\$100	b. Tn	
	Nicy	31	f w			b. Miss.	can't r/w
	Malinda	16	f w			Do.	
	Geo. W.	13	m w			Do.	
	Elisabeth	12	f w			Do.	
	Charles	9	m w			Do.	
	Zephaniah	6	m w			Do.	
	William J.	2	m,2			Do.	
1108/1111	Kitchens, Zephaniah	26	m w	farmer		b. Ala.	
	Catharine	20	f w			b. Miss.	
	Mahala	4	f w			b. Miss.	
	Marietta	2,	f w			Do.	
	Benjamin	69	m w	farmer		b. Georgia	
1109/1112	Fletcher, William	37	m w	farmer	\$120	b. Miss	
	Amanda	21	f w			Do.	
	George	6	m w			Do.	
	Jane	4	f w			Do.	
	Rachael	2	f w			Do.	
	Roson, Elisabeth	10	f w	orphan		Do.	
1110/1113	<b>Williams, Neal</b>	56	m w	farmer	\$300	b. NC	can't r/w
	Mary	42	f w			Do.	can't r/w
	Penny A.	18	f w			b. Miss.	attended school
	Jacob	16	m w			Do.	
	Solomon D.	14	m w			Do.	
	Sarah	6	f w			Do.	
1111/1114	Ellington, Pleasant	[28 GA; Rachael 26 TN, Nancy 2 MS, William 5/12 MS]					
1112/1115	<b>Williams, Jas. O.</b>	39	m w	farmer	\$500	b. SC	
	Dorcas	37	f w			b. Tenn.	
	Emanuel	4	m w			b. Miss.	
	John	12	m w			Do.	
	Jas. W.	7	m w			Do.	

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<sup>99</sup> 1850 U.S. census, Attala Co., MS, pop. sch., T15 R8E, p. 328 (stamped).

1114/1117 <b>Williams Beauchamp</b>	49 m w farmer	\$2000	b. NC
Avera	47 f w		b. NC

COMMENT:

- T15 R8E lies above Kosciusko, about a half-dozen miles to the NE, along the Yockahockany River between Kosciusko and Ethel.
- Neither the Kitchens nor Fletcher neighbors took out federal land whose legal description we could use to more precisely locate Neal and Polly's residence.
- A Washington *Ellington* took out land in Section 29 of T15 R8E in 1841, according to the BLM online database.

**1851–1852**

Tax rolls

COMMENT:

Attala's tax rolls are missing.

**1853–55**

**ATTALA COUNTY, MS**

Personal tax roll

**Williams, Neil:** No<sup>100</sup>

**1853**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Land tax roll

WILLIAMS, NEIL: NO<sup>101</sup>

COMMENT:

Four years would elapse before the next land assessment roll in Madison Co.—that of 1857. In that interval, Neil Williams, as a resident of Attala Co., went to the U.S. Land Office at Columbus (Lowndes Co.) and selected a tract of federal land in Madison Co. As shown below under 1854, 1857, and 1859: he paid cash for the tract and paid taxes on it, but the patent would not be issued to him until 1859.

**12 DECEMBER 1854**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Land entry

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<sup>100</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GR32-SC4B> : accessed 12 May 2021) > Attala > County tax rolls 1853, Box 3608 > images 38–40. Also <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9R32-S4W9> > Attala > County tax rolls 1854, Box 3608 > images 46–48. Also <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9R32-S7LR> > County tax rolls 1855, Box 3608 > images 44–46.

<sup>101</sup> "Mississippi State Archives, Various Records 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RD4-4Q> : accessed 5 July 2021) > Browse > Madison > County tax rolls 1853, Box 3719 > image 124.

Neal Williams E½ SE¼ S223 T12N R5E 80.32 acres @ \$.50 per acre; total \$40.16  
Entered 12 December 1854 Certificate 37137<sup>102</sup>

1855

RANKIN COUNTY, MS

Personal tax roll

Williams, Neil NO

Consecutive entries:

Williams, Simon 5 slaves under 60 years of age; tax: \$1.87 ½

Williams, Joel 4 slaves under 60 years of age; tax: \$1.50<sup>103</sup>

COMMENT:

- I have captured the data on Simon and his consecutive name because one Simon/Simeon Williams appears on the 1832 tax roll of Simpson County consecutive with Neil.
- Neither Simon nor Joel would appear on Rankin's land assessment roll this year.<sup>104</sup>
- Neither Simon nor Joel would not appear on Rankin's next tax rolls, 1856–57.
- Other Williamses in county: Samuel, L.D., J.W., S.S?, Thos., M.S., S.M., C.M., Rebecca, Dr. David, Charls [sic], P.H., A.J., John, Robert, W.J. [second of that name], W.B.
- Considering the impermanency of Simon and Joel's residence, though each was charged above with several enslaved people, they may have been overseers on the lands of absentee owners.

1857

MADISON COUNTY, MS

Land tax roll

Williams, Neal E½ SE¼ S23 T12 R5E, 80a, value per acre: \$2.50; total value: \$200; county tax: \$.32; state tax: \$.32; total: \$.64<sup>105</sup>

COMMENT:

This land is located in the extreme NE corner of Madison County—less than a mile S of the Attala line, slightly more than a mile W from the Leake line, and c15 miles E of the line Madison shared with Holmes Co., where Neil and Polly's daughter Penny settled with her husband Jeremiah Gatlin.

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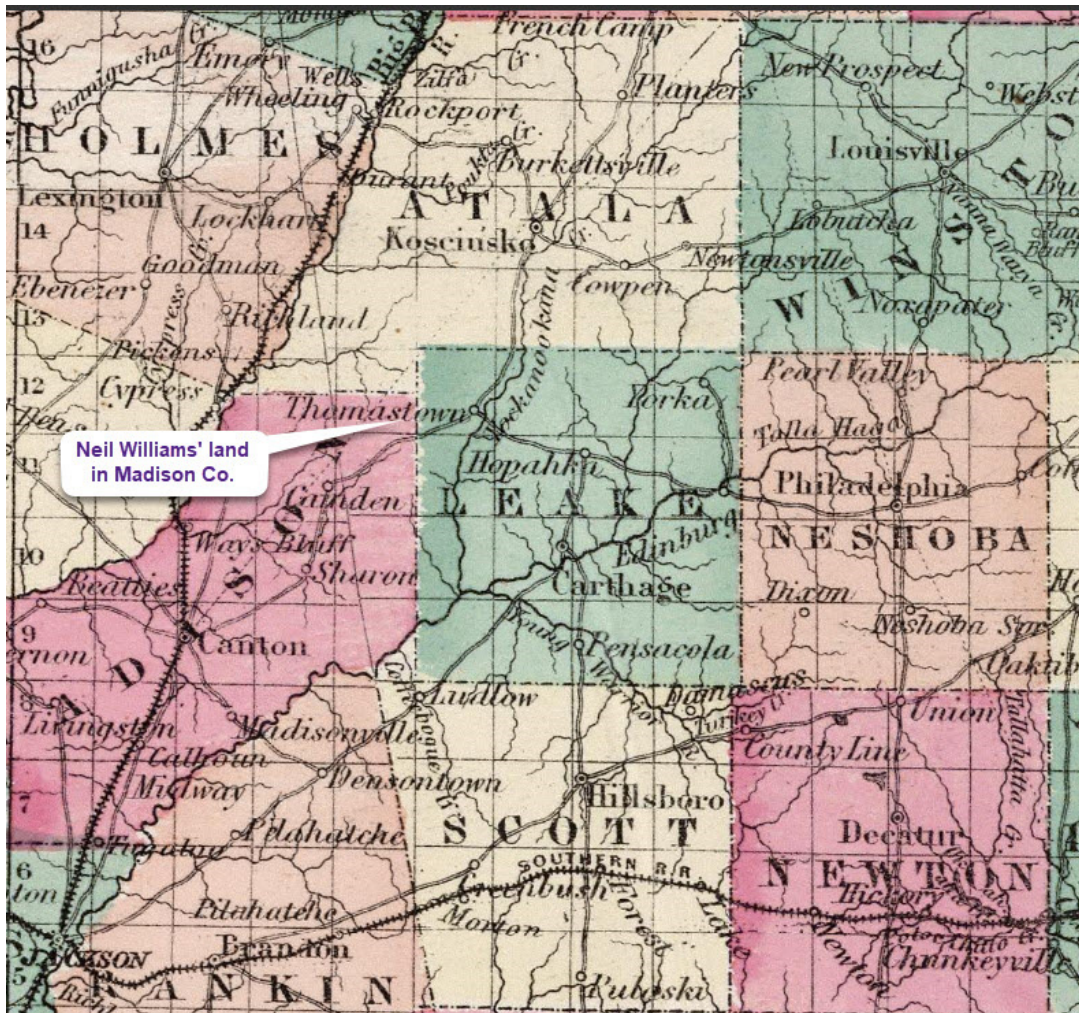
<sup>102</sup> "United States Bureau of Land Management, Tract Books, 1800–c. 1955," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99W3-477K> : accessed 19 July 2021) > Mississippi > Vol. C3 > image 143, being original page 140.

<sup>103</sup> "Mississippi State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GRD4-ZTW> : accessed 5 July 2021) > Browse > Rankin > County tax rolls 1855, Box 3932 > image 34 (Simon and Joel Williams).

<sup>104</sup> "Mississippi State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PGL-9TJZ> : accessed 5 July 2021) > Browse > Rankin > County tax rolls 1855, Box 3759.

<sup>105</sup> "Mississippi State Archives, Various Records 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RD4-4Q> : accessed 5 July 2021) > Browse > Madison > County tax rolls 1857, Box 3719 > image 124.

Neil & Polly's Location in Madison County, MS<sup>106</sup>



**FEBRUARY 1858**  
**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Incompetency proceedings

“To the Hon. Isaiah Simmons, Judge of the court of probates of Madison County, Mississippi.

The petitioners **John Williams & Thomas Williams** of said Madison County respectfully Show That **Neill Williams** of said County is their father and from his nativity was a person of unsound mind. That said Neill Williams has a small property, but is incapable of managing the same from the cause aforesaid. They therefore pray that a writ, *De lunatic Idiotia inquirendo* issue and that all proper proceedings be had to cause an inquest to be taken & that your honor appoint a Committee to take charge of the person & estate of said Neill Williams &c. [Signed] C. G. Allen.

“By the Probate Court, February Term 1858. To the Sheriff of Madison County. Greetings. You are hereby Commanded to summon twelve good and lawful men of your County who are in no way related

<sup>106</sup> Snipped from *Gray's Atlas Map of Mississippi* (Philadelphia: Stedman, Brown & Lyon, 1873).

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

to the party to make inquisition thereof on Oath, who shall make full inquiry, be evidence? and by examination of the party if they think proper as to whether **Neil Williams** is a lunatic, Idiot, or *non Compos mentis* and whether said Neil Williams is incapable of taking Care of himself and his property, and they Certify under their hands and seals to this Court, the result of their proceedings in this behalf with all Convenient speed. Witness the Hon<sup>l</sup> J M Simmons Judge of Probate of said County the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in February AD 1858, seal of said Court Issued 8<sup>th</sup> February A. D. 1858. John T. Cameron? Clerk.

“We the Jury believe from the Evidence adduced before us that **Mr. Neil Williams** is incapable of Managing his own property. [Signed] J. V. Fitch (also Fickett), R. E. Leonard, J. R. Powell, Willis Lyons, J. W. Crane, J. H. Bishop, David Dean Senr., Alen H. Dinkins, Lewis? Kenoyer, Philip Raiford (also P. Rayford Sen.), E. G. Carson, J. N. Holliday. (List of names on backside also includes L. Montgomery.<sup>107</sup>)

COMMENT:

There are no further loose papers in this record set, saying who was appointed guardian or administrator of his estate. I have examined the only three relevant record books, imaged by *Family Search* or *Ancestry*, that cover this time frame:

- Chancery Court, Final Record 1, 1856–1869, digital film 008630914—begins April term 1856. Image 103 (p. 189) begins January 1858. March court begins image 131 (p. 244). There is no February court session. July term begins image 134 (p. 250).
- Probate Court, Minutes, v. 7 (pp. 558–end), 1838–59 [should be 1858–59; begins 16 December 1858]
- Probate Court, Minutes, v. 8–9 (1859–1867); see below.

**FEBRUARY 1858**  
**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Probate minutes

“In the matter of the application of the relatives of **Neil Williams** represented *non Compos Mentis* ...” court ordered “twelve good discreet and lawful men of this county to make inquisitions [etc. as stated in the “loose paper”].

“In the Matter of the Guardianship of the person and Estate of **Neil Williams**, non compos ... Ordered that said Inquisition be Confirmed; and **N. B. Stewart** having this day appeared and applied for the Guardianship of the person and estate of said Neil, it is further ordered upon the hearing and consideration of said application that letters of Guardianship of the person and Estate of said Neil be granted to said **N. B. Stewart** on his taking the oath prescribed by law and entering into Bond in the sum of Six Thousand Dollars, with **Colman Nichols** and **John N? Bishop** as his securities, which is approved by this Court.” Court Adjourned.<sup>108</sup>

COMMENT:

The 1860 census tells us the following about Stewart and his association with Neil Williams as a literate and fairly prosperous neighbor.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Madison Co., MS, Chancery Cause 915, Neall Williams; imaged *FamilySearch* digital film 005818715 > images 646 through 650.

<sup>108</sup> Madison Co., MS, Probate Minutes, Book 7, 1834–1838 [1858], pp. 481–82; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 005818262 > images 788–89.

<sup>109</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., Canton p.o., p. 72.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

521/519	<b>N. B. Stewart</b>	50 m w	Farmer	\$4000/4500	b. SC
	Catherine	47 f w			b. Miss.
	Noel	18 m w			b. Miss.
	Sarah	13 f w			b. Miss
	Elizabeth	11 f w			b. Miss
	Chas. Allen	33 m w	Overseer		b. Geo.
	Rebecca	21 f w			b. Miss.
	Henry A.	5 m w			b. Miss.
	Catherine	4 f w			b. Miss.
	Robt. N.	1 m w			b. Miss.
	Edwin J.	1 m w			b. Miss
	F. M. Hollingsworth	23 m w	Laborer on farm		b. Miss
	Mary J.	17 f w			b. Miss.
	Jno. Cochran	21 m w	Farm Laborer		b. Geo.
522/520	Adam McWillie	38 m w	Planter	59,900/116,600	b. SC
	Lucy A.	32 f w			b. SC
	[etc.]				
523/521	E. H. Downing	50 m w	P.D. Minister	/2875	b. Mass.
	Mary A.	37 f w	teacher		b. Mass.
	[etc.]				
524/522	Edward H. Anderson	32 m w	Physician & planter	25,700/57,500	b. SC
	Sarah C.	30 f w			b. SC
	[etc.]				
525/523	Wm McWillie	64 m w	planter	63,000/287,125	b. SC
	Katherine	47			b. SC
	[etc.]				
526/524	Wm. Canehen?	32 m w	Overseer	/2500	b. SC
	Nancy A?	22 f w			b. GA
	[etc.]				
527/525	Mary Tucker	20 f w			b. Miss.
	Sally Tucker	16 f w			b. Miss.
	[no other family]				
528/528	G. C. Nichols	23 m w	Planter	/320	b. Miss.
	Margaret A.	19 f w			b. Miss.
	W. W. <b>Stewart</b>	22 m w	Farmer	/375	b. Miss.
529/527	W. B. Stinson	20 m w	Planter}	3,000/10,650	b. SC
530/528	D. G. Stinson	24 m w	Planter}		b. SC
531/529	Jno. <b>Stewart</b>	50 m w	[no occ]		b. SC
	Martha	38 f w			b. Miss.
	[Etc.]				
532/530	Leona? Parker	57 f w			b. "Indiana"
	Alexander	25 m w	Farmer	550/235	b. Miss.
533/531	<b>Williams, N.</b>	64 m w	—	700/350	b. N.C.
	Mary	57 f w			b. NC
	Sarah	17 f w	—	—	b. Miss.
534/532	<b>Williams, Solomon</b>	23 m w	farmer	\$—/100	b. Miss.
	Ellen	17 f w			b. Miss.

COMMENT:

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

- At the time that John and Thomas Williams appealed to the court for aid with their father, neither seem to have been residents of Madison Co., even though the petition drafted by their lawyer described them as such. Neither appears on Madison’s tax rolls or the census. The oldest son still at home, Solomon D., was still a minor at the time of the proceedings.
- John in 1860 resided across the county line in Leake.
- Thomas has not been found on the 1860 census indexes in any Mississippi county. Although many Thomas Williamses appear, none have compatible data.

**1 OCTOBER 1859**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Land patent

**Williams, Neal** 10/1/1859, Doc. 37137, Choctaw Meridian, E½ SE¼ S23 **T12N R5E** “Madison Co.”<sup>110</sup>

The screenshot shows the BLM General Land Office Records website. The header includes "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR" and "BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT". Below the header is a navigation bar with "Search Documents", "Reference Center", "Support", and "Shopping Cart". The main content area displays a search result for a land patent. The result is shown in a table with columns: Image, Accession, Names, Date, Doc #, State, Meridian, Twp - Rng, Aliquots, Sec. #, and County. The data row shows: Image (document icon), Accession (MS1570 .080), Names (WILLIAMS, NEAL), Date (10/1/1859), Doc # (37137), State (MS), Meridian (Choctaw), Twp - Rng (012N - 005E), Aliquots (E½SE¼), Sec. # (23), and County (Madison). A "Printer Friendly" link is visible to the right of the table.

Image	Accession	Names	Date	Doc #	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Sec. #	County
	MS1570 .080	WILLIAMS, NEAL	10/1/1859	37137	MS	Choctaw	012N - 005E	E½SE¼	23	Madison

**COMMENT:**

This land lay along Hinds Creek in the corner where Madison, Leake, and Attala all meet—almost due west from the Thomastown area of Leake where Sam Odom (proposed son of Margaret Williams) lived. Neil’s land is about 25 miles SW of the Attala community in which he was enumerated in 1850. (See map, p. 31.)

In search of a reason (kinfolk being the usual reason) why Neil chose this land in Madison County, I have analyzed the others who owned or entered land within a two-mile radius prior to Neil’s selection of the land, using the BLM database and the 1857 Madison County tax roll.<sup>111</sup> The image numbers cited below are to the tax roll.

His **adjacent** landowners in Madison County were

- on the EAST: W½ of **S24** was issued 1842 to John Henderson & Gordon D. Boyd; Boyd was a surveyor and large-scale land speculator operating largely in Leake and Attala. Everyone else

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), database with images (<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>).

<sup>111</sup> “Mississippi State Archives, Various Records 1820–1951,” database with images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3357-9RD4-4Q> : accessed 5 July 2021) > Browse > Madison > County tax rolls 1857, Box 3719.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

in S24 patented the land between 1824 and 1841: Thompson Harvey, Jacob K Hill, John & William Huddleston, William W. Lloyd, Richard Ratliff, and Evan H Spencer.

- on the SOUTH: E½ of NE of **S26** was issued 1824 to Jacob K. Hill. Others in S26 also patented the land between 1824 and 1841 except for an Alexander C. Parker purchase in 1875, a John & Riogrande Ketchen purchase in 1881, and three Levy purchases in 1890 and 1891. The 1824–41 purchasers were Silas Allen, George Barnes, Benjamin Cooper, **Enos Fletcher** (NE¼ SE¼), Elisha Greenlee, William Hagan, D. Hardiman, William W. Lloyd. 1857 land tax roll includes Hardeman & Pugh J.T. (Heirs), A. C. McCurtney, Silas Allen, J. W. Hines, and J. S. Prichard. (image 124)

TO DO:

- Determine whether John and Riogrande “Ketchen” might be from the Kitchens families who were Neil’s 1850 neighbors in Attala.
- Determine whether Enos Fletcher was related to the **William Fletcher** who lived adjacent to Neil in 1850 Attala.

Within a mile of Neil Williams’ 1859 purchase, we find:

- same section: **S23**: Gordon D. Boyd (1860), Elisha Greenlea (1824, 1840), Ann Hemingway (1884), John Henderson (1842), Jacob K. Hill (1824-25), William S. Lloyd (1824–41), Robert Martin (1848), Adam McWillie (1850 & 53), George Pope (1848). Madison’s 1857 land tax roll includes E. H. Anderson, E. W. Lott heirs, who apparently made their purchases via deeds from one of the original patentees (image 124).
- on NORTHEAST: **S13**: Gordon D. Boyd, Meredith Gowin, George W. Grant, John Henderson, Jacob K. Hill, William W. Lloyd, Harman Powell, James H. Smith & Sylvester Pearl. All except Smith (whose patent is dated 2 April 1860) patented their land 1826–42 (image 124). Madison’s 1857 land tax roll shows this is not in Madison Co. It lay on the Attala side of the county line.
- on EAST: **S24**: Gordon D. Boyd, John Henderson, Jacob K. Hill, William W. Lloyd, Harman & James Powell, James H. Smith assignee of Sylvester Pearl; Smith’s patent says his land lay in Attala County. All but Smith patented 1824–42. Madison’s 1857 land tax roll includes Mary Hinds, E. H. Anderson (image 124).
- on SOUTHEAST: **S25**: Silas Allen, Thomas S. Anderson, George W. Grant, John & William Huddleston, “Chapman Levy, William McWillie & Edward H. Anderson,” Margaret A. Nichols (1882), Alexander C. Parker (1875), Thomas & William R. Spencer, Richard Thacker. All except Nicholas and Parker patented 1824–42. Madison’s 1857 land tax roll includes John Stewart, Silas Allen, Wm. Hemingway (images 124–25).
- on SOUTHWEST: **S27**: George Barnes, “James Blackman, John & William Huddleston,” Simon Bowdon, Bowdon & Huddleston, “Serrena E. Lloyd, Henry L. Knight, Wesley W. Funchess, Minerva Morgan, Ho Ti Kah (1852),” William S. Lloyd, Sidney & Alexander J Mitchell, James L. Muse & Po Tubbee (1895), John M. Scott, Anthony G. Smith & Samuel F. Butterworth. Patents were 1824–42 unless otherwise noted. Madison’s 1857 land tax roll includes J. Rawls (Heirs), J. A. McMurtray, Stephen Rimmer, W. B. Lott, Wm C. Caldwell.
- on WEST: **S22**: James Batsill, John M. Betsill, John H. Bishop, Bowdon & Huddleston, John C. Finklea, William W. Lloyd, Adam McWillie (1859), John Seaton. Patents 1824–41, except for McWillie.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

- on NORTHWEST: **S15**: James Batsill, William W. Lloyd, David McCaleb, William McWillie, Alexander J & Sidney Mitchell, John Robinson (all 1820–41) James H. Smith assignee of Sylvester Pearl (1860).

**1 OCTOBER 1859**

**ATTALA & MADISON COUNTIES, MS**

Land patent

"80 Preemption Certificate 37137"

"Whereas **Neal Williams** of Attala County, Mississippi, has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Columbus, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said Neal Williams according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 1820, entitled 'An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands,' for

the East half of the South East quarter of Section twenty three in township twelve North of Range five East, in the District of Lands Subject to Sale at Columbus Mississippi containing eighty acres, and thirty-two hundredths of an acre

according to the official plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said tract has been purchased by the said Neal Williams.

Now Know Ye, that the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided, have given and granted, and by these presents do give and grant, unto the said Neal Williams and to his heirs the said tract above described: To have and to hold the same together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said Neal Williams and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, James Buchanan, President of the United States of America, have caused these Letters to be made Patent and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the first day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty nine and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty fourth.

By the President, James Buchanan

By J. A. B. Leonard, Secretary.

J. N. Granger, Recorder of the General Land Office.

Neil Williams  
Mary "Polly" Sessums

80  
*Presumptive*  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
CERTIFICATE }  
No. 87137

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas *Neal Williams of Attala County Mississippi*

has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of THE REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Columbus whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said

*Neal Williams* according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th, of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the East half of the South East quarter of Section twenty three, in township twelve north of Range five East, in the District of Lands Subject to Sale at Columbus Mississippi, containing eighty acres, and thirty two hundredths of one acre.

according to the official plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tract has been purchased by the said *Neal Williams*

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said

*Neal Williams* and to his heirs, the said tract above described: To have and to hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said

*Neal Williams* and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof I, *James Buchanan* PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the *first* day of *October* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *fifty nine* and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES the *eighty fourth*.



BY THE PRESIDENT:

*James Buchanan*  
*J. B. Leonard* Secretary.

*W. Spranger* Recorder of the General Land Office.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

**11 AUGUST 1860**  
**MADISON COUNTY, MS**  
Census<sup>112</sup>

532/530	Parker, Leona?	57 f, w	—	—	[illegible]	can't r/w
	Alexander	25 m w	farmer	\$550/235	b. Miss.	
533/531	<b>Williams, N.</b>	64 m w		\$700/350	b. N.C.	can't r/w
	Mary	57 f w	—	—	b. NC	can't r/w
	Sarah	17 f w	—	—	b. Miss.	
534/532	<b>Williams, Solomon</b>	23 m w	farmer	\$—/100	b. Miss.	mar'd within year
	Ellen	17 f w			b. Miss.	" "

COMMENT:

Sons John and Jacob were in adjacent Leake Co. this year, as follows:<sup>113</sup>

532/532	<b>Jacob Williams</b>	25 m w	farmer	\$250/400	b. Miss.	can't r/w
	Mary A.	30 f w			b. Miss.	can't r/w
	Savannah Q V E	3 f w	[Queen Victoria Eng?]		b. Miss.	
	Sarah F. B.	1 f w			b. Miss.	
	Martha Holbrooks	17 f w			b. Miss.	
533/533	<b>John Williams</b>	34 m w	farmer	\$400/400	b. Miss.	can't r/w
	Minetta	33 f w			b. Miss.	can't r/w
	Newton N. R.	14 m w			b. Miss.	
	James A. J.	13 m w			b. Miss.	
	Jordan A.	10 m w			b. Miss.	
	Ebenezer N.	8 m w			b. Miss.	
	Dicy A. V.	6 f w			b. Miss.	
	Cicero B. H.	4 m w			b. Miss.	
	Mary D.	2 f w			b. Miss.	

- Martha Holbrooks, 17 (from Jacob's household), also seems to be cited six households later, in the home of Cintha Holbrooks 46, b. Miss. (\$50) with children Wm. 22, Martha A 17, Margrett 15, Samuel 14, Sarah J 9, **Pernecia 6** (dwell./fam. 538/538). Note: Pernecia/Permesia is a relatively uncommon name that Redding Sessums also gave to a daughter.
- Jesse Fisher 50, b. NC (\$2500/6200) is at 563/563

**1861**  
**MADISON COUNTY, MS**  
Personal tax roll

COMMENT:

This is the first personal tax roll available for Madison County since 1857. The label on the box says that this series runs from 1858–1868; however, there are no tax rolls for 1858–60. The first roll is dated 1861. The next is dated 1868.

<sup>112</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o.: Canton, p. 74.

<sup>113</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o.: Carthage, p. 82.

(p.34, *Consecutive entries*)

Watts, David S.

**Williams, Solomon D.** 1 free white poll 21–50 \$.40; military tax \$.20; county tax \$.20; "military relief tax \$.14; total \$.95

Welder, Talbot G.

*Certified "for the fiscal year 1861,"* 20 September 1861.

COMMENT:

Other taxpayers named Williams: Wiley, Richard, Thomas, John W. (consecutive with Mrs. Lucinda Williams)<sup>114</sup>

### 5 JANUARY 1863

#### MADISON COUNTY, MS

Legal notice

"Be it remembered, that a regular meeting of the Board of Police of Madison County, Mississippi, was begun and held at the Court House thereof, in Canton, on the first Monday and 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, A.D., 1863, according to the Statute provided. ...

"Ordered, by the Board, that the following accounts be allowed and paid out of any monies in the county Treasury, of the military fund not otherwise appropriated. ...

To John Steward, furnishing Mrs. Parker provisions, the sum of \$ 15.00

To John Steward, for furnishing Mrs. E. Steward 30 bushels Corn \$130.00

**Ellen Williams'** account 3.13

To **Neal Williams**, furnishing **Mrs. Gatlin** 227 lbs. pork 27.50

To William Hemmingway, for use of **Mrs. Gatlin** 20.00

[Etc.]<sup>115</sup>

COMMENT:

Ellen Williams was née Fisher, having wed Neil's son Solomon D. Williams in 1859. "Mrs. Gatlin" could be either of two daughters of Neal Williams: Luvicy who married Francis Marion Gatlin; or Penny, who married Jeremiah Gatlin.

### 16 MARCH 1863

#### MADISON COUNTY, MS

Legal notice

"Be it remembered that a special or called meeting of the Board of Police of Madison County, Mississippi, was begun and held at the Court House thereof, in Canton, on the third Monday and 16<sup>th</sup> day of March A.D. 1863, according to notice previously given. ...

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<sup>114</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-95HV-4BG> : accessed 6 July 2021) > Madison > County tax rolls 1858–1868, Box 3699 > image 37.

<sup>115</sup> *The American Citizen*, Canton, MS, 9 January 1863, p. 2; imaged, *Newspapers Publishers Extra* (<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/82890583> : 6 June 2021).

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

"Ordered, That the following accounts be allowed and paid out of the different funds in the Treasury, not otherwise appropriated:

To N B Stewart, articles furnished Mrs. Hollingsworth, M R F [sic] \$ 22.00  
To Wm McWillie, articles furnished to Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Parker, **Mrs. Gatlin**,  
Mrs. Smith and **N. Williams**, as per bill. M R F \$200.00  
[Etc.]<sup>116</sup>

**1861–1865**

COMMENT:

No other records have been found for Neil or Polly during the Civil War years. Military records document the enlistment of at least three of their sons and the deaths of at least two of those sons in service, as well as the service of two sons-in-law. For each, see the brief biographies at the beginning of this paper.

No record has been found to document the death of Neil, which likely occurred during this period, or the disposition of his land. Madison County deeds, probates, and court records all have a gap 1859–1865.

**11 NOVEMBER 1866**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Marriage record

"Sarah Ann Lecor [Leeor?] Williams" married N. C. Dees, before William Bailey, J.P. and Mayor of Canton, by bond dated 7 November 1866, for which L. T. Bell was bondsman.<sup>117</sup>

COMMENT:

- I have not found Dees and wife Sarah on the 1870 or 1880 censuses of any state.
- No Dees family is enumerated in Madison County in 1860 or 1870, suggesting that N.C. was not raised in Madison.
- The only L\_\_\_\_\_ Bell enumerated in Madison in 1870 was one Leonidas Bell, a 37-year-old wagon maker living in the city of Canton.<sup>118</sup> This would suggest that N.C. Dees may have been an urban laborer also. The site of Neil and Mary's land, in the NE corner of Madison Co., was about as far from Canton, the county seat, as it was possible to be and still remain within the county.

**1868**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Personal tax roll

(p. 99)

**Williams, Sol                      1 dog, 1 free male, \$2.40 tax.**

*Certified 7 November 1868.*

COMMENT:

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<sup>116</sup> The *American Citizen*, Canton, MS, 27 March 1863, p. 1; imaged, *Newspapers Publishers Extra* (<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/59479763> : 6 June 2021).

<sup>117</sup> Madison Co. Marriage Book H: 1860–1874: 158; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 007724350 > image 144.

<sup>118</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., City of Canton, p. 38, dwell./family 162/257.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

This is the first personal tax roll available since 1861. The assessment covers a long list of personal property; every “male inhabitant” was charged \$2. There is no distinction between white and black, and no identification of freedmen.

This “Sol” Williams should *not* be Neil and Mary’s son Solomon D. Their Solomon is said to have died in CW service, leaving a widow Ellen—neither of whom have been found thereafter.

Other taxpayers named Williams: Henry, Watt, Richd., Granville, Billy, Wiley, Calvin, Wiley [again], Dave, Bob, Jordan, Jerry, Sam. Robert, Mike, Pat, Willis, Henry, **Sol.**, William, Meclin, Jno., Jeff, Peter, Robert, Sam, Isaac, Jasper Sr. & Jr., and Henry.

**20 MAY 1870**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Marriage record

“Miss Sarah Williams” married William A. **Cauthen**, before W. McMurtray, M.G., by bond dated 13 May 1870 for which R. J. Cunningham was bondsman.<sup>119</sup>

COMMENT:

This second Sarah Williams marriage is the only other Sarah Williams marriage in Madison Co. Evidence is ambiguous as to whether she might be the same-name daughter who was still at home with Neil and Polly in 1860 but the weight of the evidence appears to negate the possibility:

- Although the county records yield no deed, probate, or court record by which Neil and Polly conveyed their land, the first surviving tax roll after 1860—that of 1887, below—shows Neil and Polly’s land being taxed to **J. B. Cauthen**.
- The 1870 census below identifies one **J. B. Cauthen** as a son of **William A. Cauthen** who had just married Sarah Williams.
- However, that 1870 census places William A. and Sarah Cauthen next door to a widowed **Elizabeth Williams**, aged 60, suggesting that the Sarah who married Cauthen was Elizabeth’s daughter.
- The 1860 census shows the widowed Elizabeth Williams with a daughter Mary A. (29) and **Sarah J.** (23), living next door to **Milton Cauthen** (53), **wife Sarah** (33) and children—just nine houses from Neil, Polly, and their daughter Sarah. One **Jno. B. Cauthen**, aged 28, with \$3350 in land, lived adjacent to Milton on the other side.<sup>120</sup>
- The 1860 census shows **William A. Cauthen**, with wife Nancy and children Wm. A., James M., Ann J., Josephine, and Jno. B. living eighteen houses from the widowed Elizabeth Williams.<sup>121</sup>
- All things considered, it appears that the Cauthens who seemingly intermarried with the Elizabeth Williams family was in possession of Neil Williams’ land simply because they were neighbors who had bought the land from Neil’s guardian, widow, or heirs.

**9 AUGUST 1870**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Census<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Madison Co. Marriage Book H: 1860–1874: 252; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 007724350 > image 204.

<sup>120</sup> 1860 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o.: Canton, p. 76; dwell./family 542–4/546–8.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73, dwell./fam. 526/524.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary "Polly" Sessums**

183/183	<b>Williams, Elizabeth</b>	60	f w	Keeping House	b. S. Carolina	cannot write
	— Almina E.	28	f w	Asst. House Keeper	b. S. Carolina	
	Williams, Dina	9	f b	Domestic Servant	b. S. Carolina	
184/184	<b>Cauthen, William A.</b>	43	m w	Farmer \$1200/1180	b. S. Carolina	
	— <b>Sarah</b>	33	f w	Keeping House	b. Miss.	
	— William A.	18	m w	Farm Laborer	b. Miss.	cannot write
	— Milton J.	16	m w	Farm Laborer	b. Miss.	
	— Ann J.	14	f w	Asst. House Keeper	b. Miss.	
	— Josephine	12	f w	Asst. House Keeper	b. Miss.	
	— John B.	10	m w	Laborer	b. Miss.	
	— Jefferson D.	8	m w		b. Miss.	cannot write
	— Lucy A.	6	f w		b. Miss.	
	— Bettie	2	f w		b. Miss.	
	— Nancy A.	35	f w	No Occupation	b. Miss.	
	LyAcken [ <i>sic</i> ], John	18	m w	Farm Laborer	b. Miss.	

**1870**

**MADISON COUNTY, MS**

Census

COMMENT:

Neil Williams and his wife or widow Mary "Polly" Williams have not been found this year.

**1880**

**LEAKE COUNTY, MS**

Census

[Good Hope, MS: unnumbered households]

**Sessums, Thomas** white male, 73, married, farmer, cannot read, b. Ky., father & mother b. NC  
 — Zilphy white, female, 67, married, b. Miss., father & mother b. GA  
 — Zilphy white, female, 27, Daughter, unmarried, cannot r/w, b. MS, f. b. KY, m. b. GA  
**Williams, Mary** white, female, 84, Sister, widowed, b. Ky, father and mother b. NC<sup>123</sup>

COMMENT:

Good Hope lay in the SW corner of Leake about 15 miles SE of the land that Neil and Mary "Polly" Williams owned in Madison County.

Other members of Thomas and Zilphy's family—specifically Zilphy's sister Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom, Elizabeth's offspring by Shad Odom, and her stepson Sam Odom (born to Shad's first wife)—were clustered at Thomastown in Leake Co., just across the county line from the land Neil and Mary had owned.

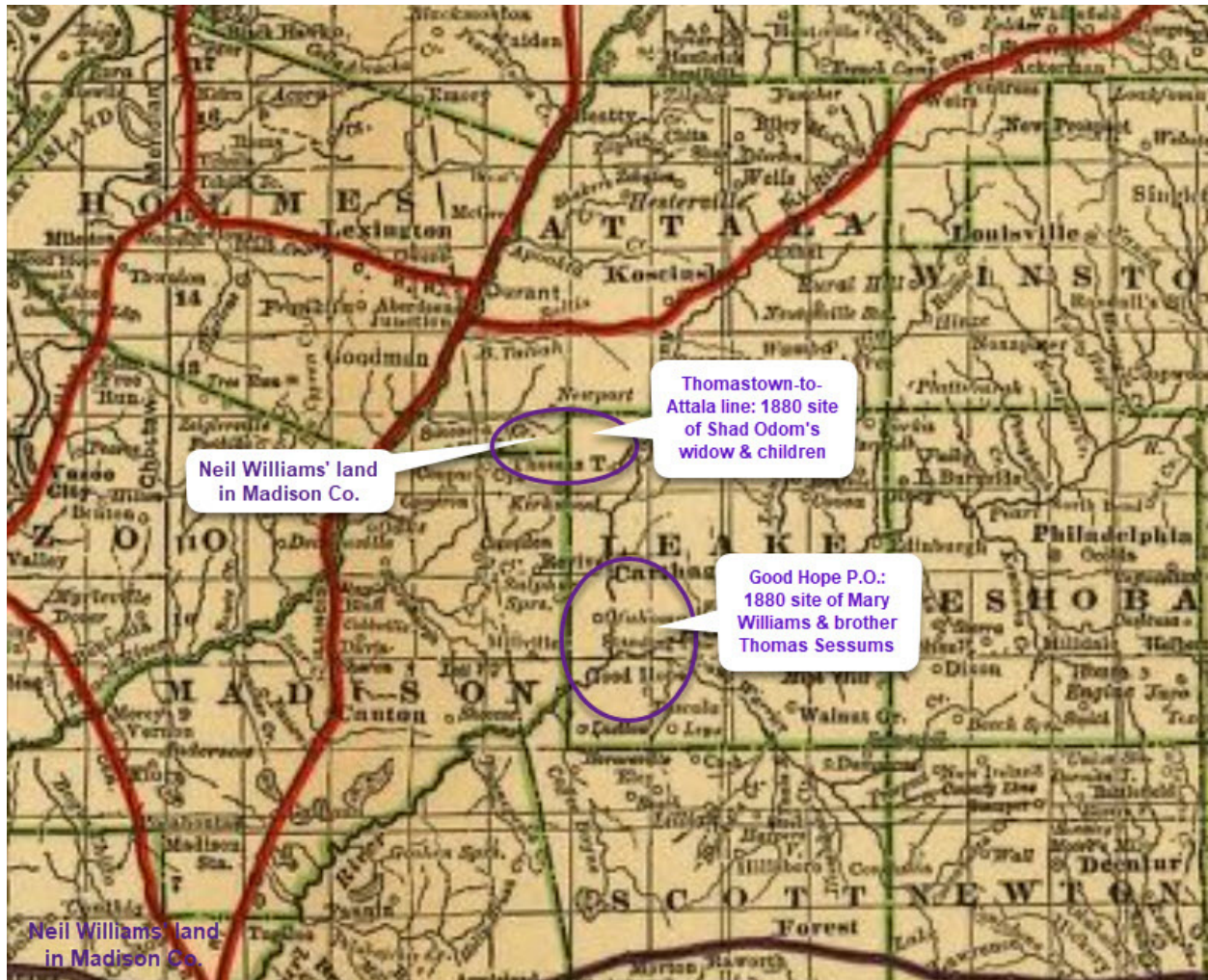
<sup>122</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Madison Co., MS, pop. sch., p.o.: Camden, Police Dist. No. 5, p. 24.

<sup>123</sup> 1880 U.S. census, Leake Co., MS, pop. sch., stamped p. 427-C, ED 51, p. 35, unnumbered dwellings and households.

**1880 Location of Widowed Mary "Polly" (Sessums) Williams**

Including the Location of Her Prior Residence in Madison County &  
The 1880 Residences of the Offspring of Her Proposed Daughter Margaret by Shadrack Odom

*Note that each square represents one township—i.e., six miles square.*



1887

MADISON COUNTY, MS

Land tax roll

**Cauthen, J. B.** E ½ SE ¼ S23 T12 R5E 80 acres, value: \$400, tax: \$1.40<sup>124</sup>

<sup>124</sup> "Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-95PG-QMM> : accessed 6 July 2021) > Madison > County tax rolls 1887–1888, Box 3940 > image 151.

COMMENT:

- This is apparently the first land tax roll that survives for Madison since the 1857 roll that charged this tract of land to Neil Williams—at least no other roll appears in the imaged State Archives Collection and none are among the local courthouse tax books filmed by *FamilySearch*.
- A transfer of the land from the Williams family (or N. B. Stewart, Neil's legal guardian) has not been found in surviving deeds, probates, or court records.

### Re: Alleged Native American Ancestry

Between 1896 and 1914, about eighty-six descendants of Jacob Sessums and Penny Fisher, residing in Oklahoma, filed claims to be recognized as Choctaw—most with the Dawes Commission. All claimed to be descendants of the “full-blood Choctaw Penny Fisher, who married the white man Jacob Sessums.” **All claimed “family tradition.” None had any evidence of any type to support their claims.** As background:

“The Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes was appointed by President Grover Cleveland in 1893 to negotiate land with the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole tribes. It is called the Dawes Commission, after its chairman, Henry L. Dawes, [and those who were approved appear on ] the "Final Rolls of the Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory".

Tribe members were entitled to an allotment of land, in return for abolishing their tribal governments and recognizing Federal laws. In order to receive the land, individual tribal members first had to apply and be deemed eligible by the Commission.

The first application process for enrollment began in 1896, but was declared invalid. So the Dawes Commission started all over again in 1898. People had to re-apply in order to be considered, even if they had already applied in 1896. The Commission accepted applications from 1898 until 1907, with a few additional people accepted by an Act of Congress in 1914.

The resulting lists of those who were accepted as eligible became known as the Dawes Rolls.”<sup>125</sup>

The descendants of Jacob and Penny who applied for Choctaw citizenship (and free land) descended through four of their children:

1. **Redding Sessums**, who moved to Texas in the 1840s and died 1879 in Bowie County. The principal claimant in this line was his son
  - **Wilson Russell Sessums** (Claim No. 452)<sup>126</sup> who first applied in 1896 under the Congressional Act of 10 June 1896 (29 Stat.L., 321); but he and his offspring were rejected. They appealed their case to the U.S. Dist. Court for Indian Territory, and on 20 January 1898, the court overturned

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<sup>125</sup> “Native American Heritage: Dawes rolls,” *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes/tutorial/intro.html>).

<sup>126</sup> Senate Documents, 62d Congress : 3d Session, December 2, 1912–March 4, 1913, vol. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1913).

the tribal decision and admitted them. That admission was overruled in 1906 for lack of any evidence that Penny Fisher was a Choctaw.<sup>127</sup> A more-detailed synopsis of the case *W. R. Sessums vs. Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations*, was published amid Senate Documents in 1913.<sup>128</sup>

The initial success of Wilson Russell Sessums in 1898 prompted his cousins to apply.<sup>129</sup>

2. **Reuben Fisher Sessums**, who also moved to Texas in the 1840s and allegedly died 1873 in Fannin County, Texas. The principal claimants for this line were his sons:
  - **William Thomas Sessums** (Dawes Packet MCR 119, 14 pp.)
  - **Reuben P. Sessums** (Dawes Packet MCR 473, 25 pp.)
  - **John Washington Sessums** (Dawes Packet MCR 641, 18 pp.)
3. **Mary (Sessums) Williams**, who remained in Mississippi. Her son John Williams died in the Civil War; his widow (née Jeanette Johnson) and several children moved to Texas about 1870 and then to Oklahoma before 1900, first to the Chickasaw Nation and then the Choctaw. Two lines of his descendants joined the Sessums cousins who were already filing claims:
  - **James A. J. Williams** (Dawes Packet MCR 5571; also see MCR 184)
  - **Dacey (Williams) Wren** (Dawes Packet MCR 5808; also see 5812, 5813 5814, 5815, 6153)<sup>130</sup>
4. **Thomas Sessums**, who remained in Mississippi. One line of his descendants joined the cousins in filing claims. The principal representative was Thomas’s son and grandson:
  - **William John Sessums** (Dawes Packet MCR 183, 17 pp.)
  - **John Sessums** (Dawes Packet MCR 184, 89pp.; also see MCR 119, 132, 183, 186, 473, 474, 475, 641, 5571, 5529)

The following offers a sampling of the depositions taken and “evidence” provided. Many of the claims were consolidated into the John Sessums case and affidavits by the other claimants appear therein.

### **Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums** **12 June 1900**

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<sup>127</sup> As summarized in Choctaw MCR 5081, Lillie R. Sessums, ruling dated 18 February 1907; imaged, “Dawes Packets,” *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54525771> and next five images).

<sup>128</sup> Senate Documents, 62d Congress : 3d Session, December 2, 1912–March 4, 1913, vol. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1913).

<sup>129</sup> To quote from the affidavit of John Washington Sessums, son of Reuben Fisher Sessums: “**Q:** Why do you believe that you are entitled to be identified by this Commission as a Mississippi Choctaw? **A** Why, I have people that is on the roll enrolled up there by the United States Court in 1896 ... **Q** Is that the only basis of your claim ... the fact that you have had relatives that have been admitted to citizenship by the United States Court of the Indian Territory? **A** Yes sir.” See “Choctaw MCR 641,” John Washington Sessums; imaged in “Dawes Packets,” database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54819077>).

<sup>130</sup> “Choctaw MCR 5571, James A. J. Williams (See MCR 184)”; imaged in “Dawes Packets,” database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/56063519>), 16 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898–1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 147.

Examination of claimant. Age: 64 years. Post Office: Cumberland, I.T. [Indian Territory], have lived there for 6 months. Before that, lived at Ryan, I.T. for 10 years. Before that, lived in Texas but can't say how long. Came to Texas from Missouri [sic]. **Father was Thomas Sessums, "part Choctaw.** I don't know what [proportion of Choctaw blood] he claimed to have [but] **I claim to be ¼."**

He is married to Luticia. "Q: Is she a white woman? A No, she is a full blood Irish lady. She never was in Ireland I don't suppose." They married in Mississippi "a long time ago," but he doesn't recall when. He has no record of the marriage. The claims of his children, who live with him, have the "same foundation." They are *Maggie L* (18), *Lilly M.* (16).

"And then I have seven grandchildren that I am keeping under my control as guardian; their father and mother is dead and I have to take charge of them." They live with him. Two are Sessums, the children of his son. The "other bunch of five" are children of his daughter, *Eliza Maderis*. When asked who was Joseph V. Sessums, he answered that this was his dead son. *Joseph Virgil Sessums* (10) and *Sarah Ellis Sessums* (8) were his children. The children of his daughter [which he is said to have read "from a meme"] are *John O. Maderis* (10), *Thomas E. Maderis* (8), *Clarence Maderis* (6), *Mary L. Maderis* (4), and *Lilly B. Maderis* (1).

When pressed, John said that he does not claim under any specific treaty and does not know of any ancestor who were beneficiaries under the provisions of Art. 14 of the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.

#### Undated list of claimants in this set of consolidated cases

("pages" 6–11 in the imaged file)

"All of the applicants herein testify orally that they reside in the Indian Territory.

"The proof ... consists of a transcript of the court proceedings in citizenship case No. 10 [i.e., that of Wilson Russell Sessums] ... and the affidavits of W. R. Sessums and J. R. Sessums. These affidavits show the blood relationship of the applicant, John Sessums, to the affiants who are parties plaintiffs in said citizenship case No. 10; by reference to the affidavits of A. B. Sessums and **S. B. Perry** as shown by the transcript, **a conflict is found as to the residence of Pennie Sessums, nee Fisher, the common ancestor.** In the affidavit of A. B. Sessums it is averred by him that he is a descendant of Pennie Fisher a full blood Choctaw Indian woman who died in Mississippi in about 1845. S. B. Perry in his affidavit makes averment as follows: 'knew Pennie Fisher who was a full blood Choctaw woman. She married a white man named Jacob Sessums. Didn't know the names of their children as they were small last time I saw them. I knew Pennie Fisher below Doaksville she died down there somewhere.'"

"Doaksville is located in the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. ... This is the only evidence disclosed by the transcript in this case as to the residence of the common ancestor. ...

"No proof, either oral or documentary, is offered to show any act of compliance on the part of the ancestors of these applicants with any of the provisions of article fourteen of the treaty between the United States government and the Choctaw tribe of Indians, concluded September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1830.<sup>131</sup>

#### COMMENT:

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<sup>131</sup> "Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums (See MCR 1323, 119, 183, 186, 473, 641, 5571, 5529, 475, 474)"; imaged in "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold 3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/5r726775>), 89 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898–1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 86.

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

While “Doaksville” was in Oklahoma, many Oklahoma sites carry names of earlier sites in MS. “Doaks” was also the name of a “stand” on the Pearl River in Mississippi where the Choctaw Treaty of 1821 was signed. It is now in southeast Madison Co., MS, near the boundary line that Madison shares with Leake Co.—about six miles due west of (and across the Pearl River from) the Leake Co. community of Good Hope, where Thomas Sessums and his widowed sister Mary (Sessums) Williams lived in 1880.<sup>132</sup> The land that Jacob Sessums obtained from the U.S. government in the newly created county of Simpson was land ceded by the Choctaw at the Treaty of Doaks Stand in 1821.

**21 January 1902**

**Muscogee**

(File pages 15–21)

Examination of claimant **John W. Sessums** [son of Reuben Fisher Sessums]. Age 44, Post Office: Ryan, Indian Territory. He has lived “in Ryan and near Ryan for about thirteen years. He is the “identical **John Washington Sessums** who appeared before this Commission at Muskogee, Indian Territory, August 30, 1900, and made application for the identification of [him]self and minor children as Mississippi Choctaws.”

John W. claims “**my grandmother was supposed to be or said to be a full blood ... Pennie Fisher.**” His grandfather was a white man, Jacob Sessums. He claims through his father, **Reuben Fisher Sessums, who was one-half Choctaw.**

He does not remember whether, in 1900, he claimed under the fourteenth article of the 1830 treaty. “I told them I knew nothing about the article, and I couldn’t say whether I complied with that article or not. ... No sir ... I don’t understand anything about the provisions of the fourteenth article [or] the treaty of 1830.” [Details of both were explained at length to him at this point.]

“I don’t know whether my foreparents have complied with it or not; I have never heard they [*sic*] say, and [was] never taught whether they did or not. I notice in some of the affidavits of W. R. Sessums [Wilson Russell Sessums, son of Redding], my cousin, in the courts, where **they claimed that Pennie Fisher and Jacob Sessums came to the Choctaw nation with the tribe, but they ... never**—my father died when I was small, that is, comparatively small, and he never did tell me anything about it whether they came to the territory or not. ... I suppose she [Pennie Fisher] died in Mississippi, but I don’t know where.” (pages 15–18)

“Applicant offers the joint affidavit of Wilson R. Sessums and Margaret Bailey averring that John W. Sessums et al., are ‘legal heirs and representatives’ of Reuben F. Sessums.”

Names of children: *Jacob Sessums; Mattie Pearl Sessums, William Edward, John Henry, Roy Lee*. Yes, his brothers and sisters made application also; their names are *William, Reuben P., Elizabeth* (who married J. F. Sessums, “a son of W. R. Sessums Sr., he and his wife ... are ... second cousins”), *Amanda Pettigrew, Penny Dry, and Martin Van Sessums*. Reuben P.’s wife is *Blanche*. Both Amanda and Penny have families. Penny has appeared before the commission; he doesn’t know whether “Manda J.” has.

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<sup>132</sup> “Doaks Stand (historical),” *Anyplace America.com* (<https://www.anyplaceamerica.com/directory/ms/madison-county-28089/locales/doaks-stand-historical--683236/>).

**Neil Williams**  
**Mary “Polly” Sessums**

When asked whether he knows “A. B. Sessums,” he replied: “I don’t know whether I know him by his initials or not.” He knows the children of “William Sessums deceased” and could name his children “probably by studying a little bit. I haven’t been with them so long I have forgot the names of some of them—*Elizabeth Sessums* ... her husband’s name was *A. Harrison*. And there was *Janie Sessums*, she married a *Stephens*. ... Yes sir, *J. R. Sessums* is a son of William Sessums deceased. ... Yes sir, *Buchanan Sessums* ... and there was one they called *Alex* but I don’t remember his initials. He was just a lad like when I saw him last. ... *Mattie Sessums* who married *Fleming* was [also a daughter who is] party to this suit.” [William Buchanan Sessums was brother of Reuben Fisher Sessums, both sons of Redding.]

“Q Do you know any of the children of *Thomas Sessums, deceased*? A No sir, I don’t.” [Thomas, the older brother of the claimant’s father Reuben, had remained in Mississippi.]

“Q Do you know *John Sessums*? A I know a John Sessums ... he’s somewhere about sixty probably; upwards of sixty. ... [His children are] *William John* ... *Eva Goodwin, Thomas R. Sessums*, and there [is] a single girl at home—*Lillie Sessums*, and *Maggie*. ... They made application before the Commission.”

When pressed, the claimant said he knew nothing about whether his ancestors complied with provisions of the treaty, etc.

*Interrogator’s note: “The applicant has light brown hair mixed with gray, grayish blue eyes, fair complexion, and doesn’t speak or understand the Choctaw language.”*<sup>133</sup>

## **21 January 1902**

### **Muscogee**

(File pages 21–24)

Examination of claimant **William Thomas Sessums**. Age 42, post office: Colgate. Same man as the “William Sessums, forty-one years of age, post office Coalgate, Indian Territory, heard at Atoka, Indian Territory, on June 6, 1900.” When told that he made his earlier claim under the fourteenth article of the 1830 treaty, he responded: “Don’t know nothing about that fourteenth article.” When asked whether he heard the examination of “your brother who just preceded you” [John Washington Sessums], he said *yes*.

The long explanation of the fourteenth article was read to him, after which he said “I don’t know sir, whether they did or not.” Yes, **he claimed through Pennie Fisher, who was his grandmother**. No, he didn’t know whether she got any land as a Choctaw. Yes, he made application at Atoka in June 1900 for his children also. Those children are *Laura Estelle, Julia Evaline, Viola May, William Wesley, Hardy Clifton, Joy, Bert, Elmore, and Edna*. Yes, the last two are twins. Yes, he wants the evidence submitted in his brother’s claim to be considered in his and for their cases to be considered together.

Did he make a claim to the Choctaw Tribal council? Answer “Nothing only through McPherrin ... my attorney.” No, he doesn’t know whether McPherrin made application with the tribe on his behalf. No, he was not “a party ... in the case of *W. R. Sessums et al. vs. Choctaw Nation*.” **No, he does not know**

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<sup>133</sup> “Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums (See MCR 1323, 119, 183, 186, 473, 641, 5571, 5529, 475, 474)”; imaged in “Dawes Packets,” database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/5r726775>), 89 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898–1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 86.

where Pennie Fisher died or whether she was living and a head of family in 1830, or where she lived in 1830. "I was small when my father died." No he does not know whether Pennie Fisher made any compliance with article 14. No, he has no other proof aside from the transcript of the proceedings in the case of W. R. Sessums et al. vs. Choctaw Nation.<sup>134</sup>

**21 January 1902**

**Muscogee**

(File pages 24–29)

Examination of claimant **Reuben P. Sessums**. Age 36 "this coming April." Post office: "Wayne, now. It was McGee." Have lived in Indian Territory since '87, that is, permanently; nowhere else since '87 and have been in and out ever since '83." He is the same Reuben P. Sessums who appeared before the Commission on 21 June 1900 at Colbert, Indian Territory, applying for identification as Mississippi Choctaws for "self and [his] minor children and [his] brother Martin Van Sessums." Also applied for "intermarriage rights" of his wife. He made no application before this to any other Commission of the Five Civilized Tribes. "We sent once to meet you at Caddo, the year before. And by McPherrren putting us off—[saying] that he would present the papers—but still he didn't put it before you. [He was] Charles E. McPherrren ... a Lawyer," not connected with the Commission, just acting as "our attorney." "That was in August '99; I guess."

On what did he base his claim? "**Well ... I had always been taught, that my father was a Mississippi Choctaw and that if he ever derived any land or anything of the kind why that was more than I know anything about.**"

Was his father "a member of the old Choctaw tribe of Indians living in Mississippi? A Well he ought to be according to our knowledge. He was raised right there in Mississippi." Q "What right did that give your ancestor and give you as Mississippi Choctaws? A Well he was Mississippi Choctaw—Choctaw raised there."

After the explanation of the fourteenth article was read to him, he was asked if that's what he claimed under and he responded "Yes sir." **He was claiming under Pennie Fisher.** Didn't know whether she got lands under the treaty. As for whether she "was married and the head of a family at that time," he responded "Why, I guess she was."

Yes, he's a brother of William Sessums and John Washington Session who also appeared that day. The children for whom he made application at Colbert in June 1900 were *Levinia Burnice*; *Allen Sessums*, *Lettie Evaline* (yes, she's the same as "Leta" from the 1900 claim). Yes, he's a cousin to the W. R. Sessums "who was ordered admitted to citizenship by order of the United States Court." Yes, W. R. Sessums Sr. is the father of W. R. Sessums Jr. No, no other member of his family was party to that suit. Yes, Mary E. Harrison and Martha Fleming who were admitted in that suit are his cousins.

Any other evidence to present? "Well, I would like to state about W. R. Sessums there [Wilson Russell Sessums]—**the old man W. R. Sessums**—I went to get him to come up here and he said he thought it was of no use as they had his testimony. He is old and in very poor health. ... He said that as he was in

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<sup>134</sup> "Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums (See MCR 1323, 119, 183, 186, 473, 641, 5571, 5529, 475, 474)"; imaged in "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/5r726775>), 89 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898–1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 86.

such feeble health ..." [cut off at this point by another question]. Yes, Penney A. Dry and Manda Jane Pettigrew are his sisters.

Note by interrogator: *"This applicant has light brown hair, bluish gray eyes, fair complexion, features and appearance of a person of white parentage and doesn't speak or understand the Choctaw language."*<sup>135</sup>

#### INDIAN TERRITORY

15 MAY 1902

#### Choctaw MCR 5571, James A. J. Williams:

Examination of claimant. Age: "Will be fifty-five in June," receives his mail at Morvin, Oklahoma, where he will have resided for "ten years in June." Before that, he lived in the Chickasaw Nation for four years and before that in Texas.<sup>136</sup> He was "born and raised in Mississippi" and left when he was 23. His father, John Williams, "died in the Civil War." His mother is Jeannette Williams. He claims Choctaw blood through his father, saying "my grandmother was a half breed."

James stated: "I claim that **my grandmother was a daughter of Penny Fisher**; it was a name that was kept up in the Fisher family." His grandmother was Polly Sessums who married Neil Williams. When pressed, James stated that

- He does not speak the Choctaw language.
- He knows of no family member who was enrolled in the Choctaw tribe by tribal authority; but (when asked if any of his ancestors complied with the 1830 Choctaw treaty), his answer was "Any of my aunt's sisters." He did not name that aunt.
- He did not know the name of any "Choctaw ancestor who lived in Mississippi or Alabama in the old Choctaw nation in 1830 and was the head of a family there then."
- He did not know any who went to the "Choctaw Nation West of the Mississippi River with the other Indians between 1833 and 1838."
- He did not know of any ancestors who held land under the Choctaw Treaty or received scrip for land in "Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, or Arkansas as a result of treaty-claims adjudications of the 1840s."
- He has no proof of the marriage of his father and mother, does not know when they married, but they married in "Keller County" Mississippi (Atalla County).
- His wife Henrietta is a white woman. They were married in "Keller County" by a minister, under license.
- Their unmarried, minor children are *Walter* (15), *Dovie* (12), *Calvin* (10), *Mertie* (7). Their adult and married children are *Millie Boggus*, living "up in the Pott Country of Oklahoma, p.o, Morvin, who is

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<sup>135</sup> "Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums (See MCR 1323, 119, 183, 186, 473, 641, 5571, 5529, 475, 474)"; imaged in "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54726775>), 89 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898-1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 86.

<sup>136</sup> James A. J. Williams did not say where he lived in Texas. However, his daughter Ida (Williams) Henderson applied; in her affidavit of 9 May 1902 she stated that she was thirty-five and had lived for "fifteen or sixteen years" in Oklahoma, but was born in **Johnson County, Texas**. If correct, that places the family's migration just after the Civil War, at which time they migrated to the county in which their father's first-cousin Redding Sessums resided. For Ida, see MCR 5529; imaged in "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/56062798>).

not a claimant; *Ida Henderson*, "Tom Henderson's wife" (who has filed a claim of her own) and other "sons and daughters that are married."

- He knows the two claimants "John Sessums. One is "a nephew of **Russ Sessums**" [Wilson Russell Sessums] and the other a son of Reuben Sessums. "One of them [one of the Johns] is a second cousin to me and the other one is a third cousin. The father of the third cousin was William Sessums.

The interrogator, G. Rosenwinkel, wrote: "*This applicant has the appearance and physical characteristics of being descended from white parentage. He has dark hair, somewhat gray and gray whiskers and mustache, the applicant says his whiskers were formerly black; he has brown eyes.*"

### 21 June 1902

#### Indian Territory, Southern District

Affidavit of **W. R. Sessums** and **J. F. Sessums** attests "This man **James Williams** claiming a right is a second cousin to me W. R. Sessums. And a third cousin to J. F. Sessums. And is a son of John Williams and John Williams is the son of Polly Williams and Polly Williams was the daughter of Penny Fisher and **Penny Fisher was a Choctaw woman** who married a white man by the name of Jacob Sessums.

### 6 June 1902

#### Muskogee, Indian Territory

(Sent by registered mail)

Letter to James A. J. Williams from "Tams Bixby, Acting chairman," notifies the claimant that a decision has been made in the "consolidated case of

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|-------------------------------------|--------|------|
| • John Sessums et al.               | M.C.R. | 184  |
| • Eva Goodwin et al.                | M.C.R. | 132  |
| • William Sessums et al.            | M.C.R. | 119  |
| • Wm. J. Sessums, et al.            | M.C.R. | 183  |
| • Thomas R. Sessums et al.          | M.C.R. | 186  |
| • Reuben P. Sessums et al.          | M.C.R. | 473  |
| • John Washington Sessums et al.    | M.C.R. | 641  |
| • Many Jane <i>Pettigrew</i> et al. | M.C.R. | 474  |
| • Penny A. <i>Dry</i> et al.        | M.C.R. | 475  |
| • James A. J. Williams et al.       | M.C.R. | 5571 |
| • <i>Ida Henderson</i> et al.       | M.C.R. | 5529 |

Also: "under the provision of law above quoted, no person is entitled to identification as a Mississippi Choctaw by marriage, and [thus] the application made by Reuben P. Sessums for the identification of his wife Blanchie Sessums, as an intermarried Mississippi Choctaw, should, therefore, be refused, and it is so ordered."

**The claimants**, who applied "under the provision of the act of Congress of June 28, 1898 (w) Stats. 495)" **have not produced the required evidence to support their claims and are therefore denied.** The letter provides a long list of all claimants who participated in these eleven cases.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> "Choctaw MCR 5571, James A. J. Williams (See MCR 184)"; imaged in "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/56063519>), 16 pages; citing *Applications for Enrollment in the Five*

COMMENT:

The tradition of Indian ancestry through Penny Fisher may point to her ancestry, even though she clearly was not Choctaw and was not born in Mississippi. At the time of her birth in Duplin > Sampson County, NC, the region had numerous families with Indian roots.

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*Civilized Tribes, compiled 1898–1914*, microfilm publication M1301, 468 rolls (Washington, DC: National Archives, n.d.), roll 147.