

THE GRAYSONS

The North Carolina Connection

by Richard R. Grayson, M.D.

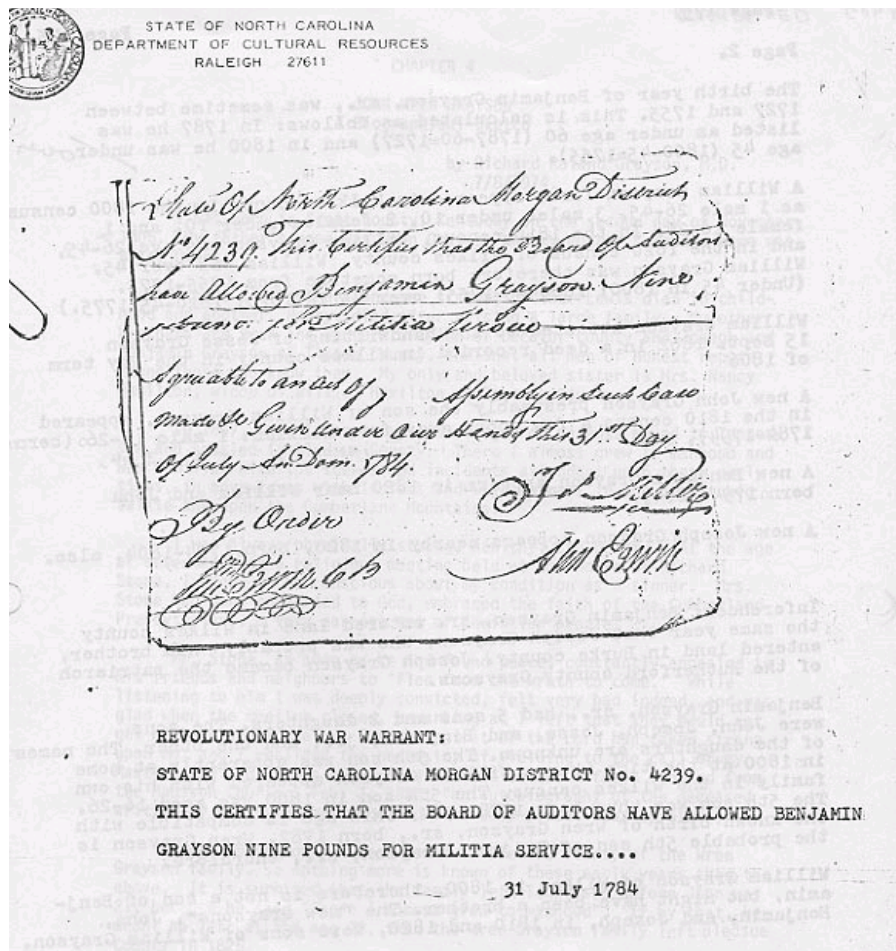
The earliest land record of a Grayson in Wilkes County, North Carolina is recorded in the Land Book of Wilkes County entry No. 530 dated 7th December 1778. The writing is difficult to read but appears to be for four hundred acres of land on Kings Creek adjoining the land of Edmond T. Estinding.

The second entry, even more illegible, appears to be also for Benjamin Grayson, dated June 19th 1779. The entry is numbered 1038.

On page 651 of Deed Book D, dated 1784, the State of North Carolina granted 290 acres of land to Benjamin Grayson. This land was on Kings Creek and went West to "the dividing ridge between the county of Wilkes and Birk". The grant number was 544.

Benjamin was in the Revolution

This was the same year that "Benjamin Grayson of the State of North Carolina, Morgan District No. 4239, received nine pounds for militia service", dated 31 July 1784. (Pay voucher on record at N.C. Department of Cult. Resources, Raleigh.)



The first two entries prove that Benjamin Grayson was a resident of Wilkes County before the time that Wren Grayson Sr. said he was born in North Carolina in 1782.

Since no other Graysons were in North Carolina at this time according to the records (see below regarding Rutherford County), the evidence is compelling that the Benjamin Grayson of Wilkes County above was the father of Wren Grayson, Sr.

The N.C. State census, 1784-1787, confirms the presence of Benjamin Grayson in Wilkes County, Capt. Isbell's district, p. 176: Benjamin Grayson age 21-60, 5 white males under 21 and above 60, 3 white females, and no slaves.

In 1790 one son had left home and one daughter apparently; the 1790 census showed: Wilkes County; 9th company, p. 123: Benjamin Grayson; 3 males over 16, 2 males under 16 and 2 females.

The son who had left home was no doubt the John Grayson of the 1790 census living nearby, listed as 1 male over 16 and 1 female.

It must have been the above John Grayson who bought 100 acres of land for "60 pounds current money" from Thomas Shepherd on the middle fork of Kings Creek, The deed is dated 1st April 1791 and was "proved in court in the July term, 1791 by the oath of Benjamin Grayson,"

(Wilkes Co. N.C. Deed Book B-1, p, 148.)

John Grayson sold this same 100 acres of land for 55 pounds to Ann Wisdom on 16 Nov, 1794 . The deed was not proven in the Wilkes County until the January term in 1797.

The date of sale of the land by John Grayson in Wilkes County is too close to the date of a deed in Knox County, Tenn. to be a coincidence, for on 16 March 1797 a John Grayson bought land in Knox County, (Copy of deed from the county clerk,) This John Grayson, therefore must be the son of Benjamin Grayson of Wilkes County, N.C.

John Grayson also appeared on tax lists in Knox County, Tenn. in 1806, 1807, 1812, 1827, and 1828 indicating that he lived there for at least 31 years.

A Benjamin Grayson witnessed a will (Tenn. Records, V.6) in Knox County 21 Nov, 1792, suggesting that the father of John moved to Tennessee after his enumeration in the 1790 N.C. census. Benjamin Grayson was on tax lists in Knox County in 1802, 1806, and 1807. Was this the elder Benjamin Grayson of Wilkes County? Benjamin Grayson also was listed in 1802 in Capt, John Walker's company in Roane County and was on the first jury in Roane County in 1805. Was the Roane County Benjamin the same person as the Knox County Benjamin? Roane County was established Nov. 1st, 1801 and extended from Anderson County and Knox County to the southern boundary of the state.

In Wilkes County, N.C. another mention of a Benjamin Grayson was in 1817 when will books 3 and 4 show Benjamin Grayson marrying an apparent widow with children, Mrs. Elizabeth Hubbard Kilby. The marriage is in the marriage book and Benjamin is listed as guardian for the children in the will book. Who was this Benjamin? Was it the senior or the junior? If it is assumed that the elder Benjamin went to Tenn. in 1792, then the 1817 Benjamin could be either his son or grandson. Elsewhere it is seen that there is no evidence for a son named Benjamin, so the 1817 Benjamin must be the grandson of Benjamin sr.; a son of either John or William but not of Joseph or Wren, since their sons are known not to include a Benjamin.

A third Benjamin Grayson exists who could be confusing; Benjamin Grayson, born in 1792 in North Carolina, married Nancy Regney in Knox County, Tenn. in 1815, was in the war of 1812 and was in Lawrence County, Indiana from 1836 and on. The date of his birth suggests he was the son of John Grayson (1790 Wilkes census) and the fact of his marriage in Knox County (where John went) would support the notion. Therefore the second Benjamin Grayson (who married Kilby in Wilkes County in 1817) must be the son of William Grayson rather than John. This fits the facts well, because William was the last one to leave Wilkes County, apparently selling out about 1824.

A Joseph Grayson, presumably a son of Benjamin, sr., married Patsy (Elizabeth) Brazeale on Dec. 10, 1798 in Knox County, Henry Brazeale was bondsman,, (Knox County; Tenn. Marriages p. 415.) Joseph Grayson paid \$500,00 to Henry Brazeale for 400 acres of land in Knox County on 20 July 1801. (from copy of deed.) He also bought 400 acres of land from Stockley Donelson 24 April 1801. (from copy of deed)

There are no land records for Joseph Grayson in Wilkes County, suggesting that Joseph came to

Knox County with his father Benjamin when he was under age, There likewise are no land records in Wilkes county for Wren Grayson suggesting the same. Wren would have been about 10 years old in 1792 if that is when the family moved. from N.C. to Tenn.

However, the possibility exists that the elder Benjamin Grayson did not move to Knox County in 1792. In the first place, his son Jesse Grayson did not buy land until 1796 in Wilkes County, suggesting that he was home until then. Jesse had other land transactions in 1798, 1804, and 1805, when he apparently moved to Knox County, Tenn. where he appeared on the 1806 tax list.

Furthermore, another of Benjamin sons, William Grayson first bought land in Wilkes County in 1799. There were other land transactions for William in 1800,1801, 1809, 1810, and 1811. But what William Grayson was on a tax list in Knox County in 1807? There he was again in 1826. It looks as if William and Jesse bought their first land in North Carolina after the 1792 mention of their father Benjamin in Knox County. Perhaps Benjamin was scouting out the area in 1792 and then he returned home till about 1800-2, for he first appeared in Knox (and Roane) Counties in 1802.

A final argument showing Benjamin Grayson still in Wilkes County after 1792 is his name on the indenture for Jesse Grayson 16 August 1796 wherein Jesse bought land from Mr. Coffey for 100 pounds on Kings Creek. Benjamin Grayson was a witness to this deed.

The importance of the name of Jesse Grayson lies in the fact that Jesse was a witness to the will of Joseph Grayson in Marion County in 1822. Jesse therefore, links Joseph and his brother Wren to himself and this fact assures us that John and William and Benjamin were related.

Furthermore, Jesse Grayson obtained 200 acres of land by grant from Tenn. on the NW side of the Sequatchie River in Tenn. on 9 June 1826 (grant #1613) and he and his family were in the 1830 census for Marion County, Tenn.

Knox County

The Benjamin Grayson of Knox County (1792, 1802, 1806 and 1807) and of Roane County (1802 and 1805) is the probable father of John Grayson of Knox County (1797-1828) and Jesse Grayson of Knox County (1807) who witnessed his brother Joseph Grayson's will in Marion County (1822). William Grayson also was in Knox County (1807-1826) and may have gone to Monroe County. If the Knox County Benjamin (Sr.?) in 1805 was in Roane County, it seems possible that the Stacey Grayson who married William Brown in 1805 in Roane County (from early marriage records from Roane County clerk) was Benjamin's daughter Stacey, married 28 Oct. 1805.

The only other early female Grayson marriage in that region was Nancy Grayson who married John Edmondson 16 Sept. 1809 in Knox County. Therefore, Stacey and Nancy could have been the two daughters of the Wilkes County Benjamin Grayson. Stacey would have been born about 1785 and Nancy about 1789 or earlier. This may be wrong because one of the 3 females of the 1784-7 census had left home in the 1790 census of Benjamin in Wilkes County.

The Virginia Connection?

The importance of the Stacey Grayson marriage in Roane County lies in the name Stacey Grayson; there was a Stacey Grayson in Fairfax County, Va. In the will of Ellzey Lewis (Fairfax Co, wills p. 47, 62), the daughter of Ellzey, a Stacey Lewis married 1st Burgess Berkeley, second a Benjamin Grayson. What Benjamin Grayson was this? Their youngest children were Benjamin 2, Susan 3 Sarah 4. Ann (Grayson). Does this record link the Wilkes County Graysons with someone in Virginia?

The only record of a Grayson found by the clerk of Fairfax County, Va. (Jan. 1974) is an inventory of the estate of Benjamin Grayson from the county of Loudoun. The appraisal and inventory were sworn at a court in Fairfax County April 16th, 1760.

Apparently this Fairfax Benjamin Grayson is from Loudoun County rather than from Fairfax County. Is he the same Benjamin who married Stacey Lewis? Does anyone know who that Benjamin was? Could this information be the missing link to the Virginia Graysons?

The dates on the Ellzey Lewis will are 1 Oct. 19 Dec. 1786. What relationship could the Stacey Grayson of Roane County be to the Stacey Grayson of Fairfax County, Va.? This is the only lead available at present for tracing the Graysons of Wilkes County, North Carolina.

The John Grayson listed in the Wilkes County, N.C. census of 1790, son of Benjamin of Wilkes, was probably the oldest son of Benjamin Grayson of Wilkes, as discussed previously. This John Grayson, in Knox County, Tenn by 1797, was probably the father of the Benjamin Grayson, born in N.C. in 1792, who married Nancy Regney in Knox County, Tenn. in 1815, and was in Lawrence County, Indiana from 1836 on. The 1830 Federal census in Knox County shows John Grayson and his wife living alone, both 60-70 years old. Presumably this is the same John Grayson as above. If so, John was born 1760-11170, and if he married at age 20, he was born 1n 1770, making him 12 years older than his brother Wren Grayson, sr.

Another John Grayson, probably son of William Grayson appeared in the 1810 census of Wilkes County age 16-25, 1 female 16-25 and 1 female under 10.

William Grayson, born about 1768, presumably a son of Benjamin, sr., was in Wilkes County in the 1810 census, age 26-44 with 4 males under 16, 1 female 26-44, 1 female 16-25 and 4 females under 16. Thus we have 2 William Graysons: Who was the William Grayson on the 1807 tax list in Knox County?

William Grayson bought land in 1799, had a land grant in 1800, bought land in 1801 and 1807, had a land grant in 1815, and sold land in 1824, all in Wilkes County and all on Kings Creek. Possibly he is the same William Grayson who appears in the 1830 census in Monroe County, Tenn. Living nearby are 4 other Grayson men who are probably his married sons:

The Monroe County Graysons, 1830

William Grayson b, 1760-70 and family

1. Benjamin Grayson b. 1790-1800 family
2. John Grayson b. 1790-1800 and family
3. Joseph Grayson b. 1790-1800 and family
4. Henry Grayson b. 1800-1810 and family

Inferences:

It would seem that Benjamin Grayson I ca. 1740-48, was in the N.C. militia during the Revolution in Wilkes County; he received grants of land in 1778, 1779, and 1784, His first son was John, b. ca. 1770 married by 1790 who bought land in 1791 and who had children, one of whom was Benjamin b. 1792, who married Nancy Regney in Knox County, Tenn. in 1815. Benjamin Grayson I had 5 sons and 2 daughters, Benjamin I went to Knox County, Tenn., and was last on a tax list in 1807 .

Bledsoe County

Benjamin Grayson, Sr., Wren, Joseph, Benjamin (jr.?), and Jesse Grayson were in Bledsoe County, Tenn. in 1809 on a [petition](#).

Marion County

However another mystery Benjamin Grayson family existed in the 1830 Marion County census. Consider Benjamin Grayson: oldest man 15-20. Oldest woman 40-50 1 boy under 5. 2 boys 5-10, and 1 boy 10-15; 1 girl 5-10; 1 girl 10-15.

Where was the head of this household? Was he a Benjamin Grayson same age as the oldest woman (born 1780-1790)? Was he away or dead at the time of the census? There was no man present in this household who could have been old enough to be father to all the children. Let us consider all the Benjamin Graysons of the Wilkes County clan: 1. The oldest Benjamin was born perhaps 1740-1748 and would have been over 80 years old in 1830. 2. Benjamin Grayson who married Mrs. Kilby in 1817 was the probable son of William, son of Benjamin, sr., and if so was in Monroe County, not in Marion Country in 1830. 3. Benjamin Grayson born 1792, son of John, son of Benjamin, sr., married Nancy Regney 1815, was in Arkansas by 1824 according to the birthplace of a child in the 1850 census from Indiana. 4. Benjamin F. Grayson, son of Joseph, son of Benjamin, sr., was too young. 5. Benjamin, the son of Wren was too young. 6. Could there have been another son of Benjamin named Benjamin? This could explain a Benjamin Grayson simultaneously in Knox and Roane Counties in 1802.

It will be interesting to see if there indeed was a "lost" brother of Wren Grayson named Benjamin who came to Marion County with Joseph and Jesse,

Benjamin, sr.'s sons followed him to Tennessee. John came first in 1797 to Knox County, possibly with Joseph, his brother. Joseph married in Knox County in 1798. Jesse sold out in Wilkes County about 1805 and was on a tax list in Knox County in 1806. Joseph went to Anderson County then to Bledsoe and then to Marion County. Jesse Grayson went to Marion County before 1823. William Grayson went to Monroe County where 4 of his sons married and all 5 families were living in the 1830 census,

Wren Grayson

Meanwhile, Wren Grayson, Sr., probably the youngest of the 5 sons of Benjamin the first of Wilkes, born 1782, in N.C., left home for Scott County, Ky., before 1805, married Betsy Owens, and then came to Bledsoe County, Tenn. in 1807 with his first son, John Wren Grayson age 2, probably to be near his brothers Joseph and Jesse. There is no record available to show what happened to their father Benjamin Grayson the first, but it is interesting that the last tax list mention of him in Knox County was in 1807. This suggests that the father might have died or moved to Bledsoe County with Joseph and Jesse, there to meet Wren.

Where was the home that Wren Grayson, Sr., left before he was age 23? Was it in Knox or Roane County, Tenn.? Or was his father still living in Wilkes County?

John Abbott of El Dorado, Arkansas reported a Joseph and a young Ben Grayson in the 1800 and 1810 census of N.C., in a county adjoining Wilkes,

Rutherford County

What about the Rutherford County, N.C. Graysons? We have not ruled out the possibility that Wren Grayson descended from that county. In the Colonial and State Records of N.C. pp. 157-200 a Joseph Grayson witnessed a bill of sale in Rutherford County in the year 1782. This happens to be the year of birth of Wren Grayson Sr.

Other records from Rutherford County are marriages in 1807: (Ruth. Cty. M. bonds, pp. 109-110.) 1.) Joseph Grayson md. Lettice J. Malton 19 Mar. 1807; 2.) Isaac Grayson md. Polly Melton 20 Aug. 1807; 3.) Wm. Grayson md. Susanna Login 17 Oct. 1807; 4.) Joseph Grayson md. Rachel Vanzant 17 Dec, 1807.

The grantee index for Rutherford County lists many land transactions for Joseph Grayson from 1792 and on. The first entries for William Grayson and Benjamin Grayson are 1806 and for Isaac is 1808. A Joseph Jr. is listed 1807.

Rachel Grayson's will is dated 7 June 1828. William Grayson's will is dated 1841. He mentions a son Benjamin and 3 daughters, Sally Deviney, Patsy Queen and Elizabeth Grayson. John M. Grayson was a witness,

The 1810 census for Rutherford County, N.C. shows 3 older Graysons and 2 younger, each head of a household:

The first Joseph Grayson of Rutherford County apparently stayed there and had a son named Joseph Grayson, jr, who stayed there. The second Joseph Grayson (jr.) is the one who married Rachel Vanzant. But who was the Joseph Grayson who married Lettice Melton (Malton?) the same year (1807)? Even though a Joseph Grayson witnessed a bill of sale in 1782 in this county, that does not prove he lived there. The first land records of 1792 suggest that no Graysons actually were in residence till 1792.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my opinion that circumstantial evidence is strong for Wilkes County as the home of Wren Grayson, sr., and his 4 brothers and 2 sisters rather than Rutherford County. There was probably a familial relationship between the Benjamin Grayson (1778) of Wilkes County and the Joseph Grayson (1782) of Rutherford County, North Carolina. Could they have been brothers?