

Benjamin Davis Wilson

A Unique 19th Century Tennessean

by James T. Bueche

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Prologue

Tennessee sent many native sons into the Wild West during the 1800s, but none accomplished more than Benjamin Davis Wilson, who started life in 1811 in a humble Hickman County home. He belongs in the pantheon of Scots-Irish pathfinders moving the American frontier westward when making way from Tennessee through Mississippi, New Mexico and ultimately California. In a lifetime less than seventy years he excelled in many fields: frontiersman and trader; spirited public citizen; politician; militia man; agribusiness man in citrus, wheat, cattle and vineyards; mercantile entrepreneur; real estate investor, speculator and developer. Wilson experienced the competition of commerce as well as more dangerous combat with Choctaw, Chickasaw, Apache, Pueblo, Ute and Navajo natives. He was also the Presidential appointee as Commissioner for Indian Affairs in Southern California.

The story of Wilson's life includes tales of escape from seven near-death episodes, which surely speaks to his superb instincts for survival. In less tumultuous times he employed hundreds in his California enterprises, demonstrating a great capacity for leadership. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Wilson was the grandfather of an American hero, the distinguished Five-Star General of the Army, George S. Patton.

Although the story of Wilson's Western experiences and business success has been chronicled, few sources exist that describe Wilson's formative years -- his life before arrival in California at age twenty-nine. *Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico*, a memoir which Wilson dictated to a Bancroft Library researcher remains the primary source document. Without this, there would be no story. However, *Observations* depicts only heroic, engrossing elements of an eight-year sojourn in the Mexican territory of New Mexico. Meaningful coverage of his Tennessee and Mississippi experiences is lacking.

Dr. Doyce Nunis, University of Southern California biographer, responded in 2002,
I have been working on his biography for some years, but it is not publishable since I can find out little or
nothing about his life prior to his appearance in California in 1841.



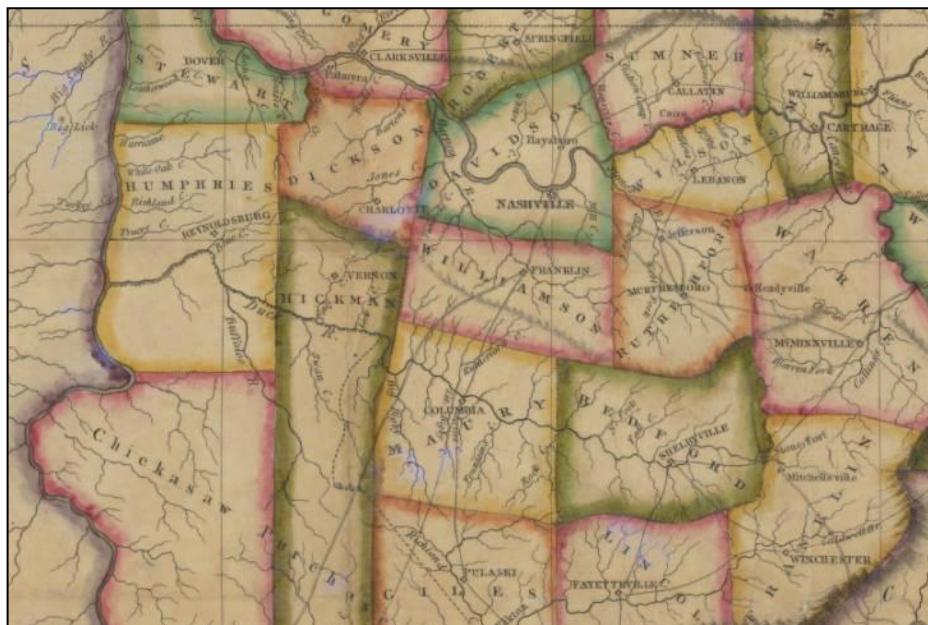
Benjamin Davis Wilson and wife, c. 1852
Raised in Tennessee, Wilson became a true
hero of the Wild West.

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Biographical material appears in two recent publications: *Don Benito Wilson*, by Nat B. Read published in 2008, and Midge Sherwood's *Days of Vintage, Years of Vision* (2007) concentrate on Wilson's life after arrival in California. The Huntington Library and Gardens, located on what was once Wilson's 128-acre Lake Vineyard estate, now in San Marino, California, maintains Wilson's papers. Despite access to these papers for more than a century Wilson's Tennessee and Mississippi adventures remain obscure.

This article reveals Wilson's early years in Tennessee and Mississippi. More than a decade of research among Mexican and American archival records; biographies of relatives, colleagues and combatants, and other sources provide original insight and facts to help create a new analysis..

The story of Benjamin Wilson remains unfamiliar to most Americans. Publicizing this stirring, All-American experience brings well-earned recognition to the intrepid Don Benito.



1818 Map of Tennessee by John Melish
Hickman County is shown extending to the Alabama state line
(Historical Map Collection (online), Tenn. State Library & Archives)

Tennessee Period

Prior to his death in 1878, Benjamin Wilson recapped his life to a transcriber from the Bancroft Library of Berkley, California. *Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico*¹ briefly describes his adolescent years in Tennessee:

I, Benjamin David Wilson of Nashville, Tennessee, was born December 1, 1811. My father was born in a Fort in the Territory of Tennessee in 1772, in what is now Wilson County. He died when I was eight years old, having lost by bad speculation, his fortune, which left his family poor. We however were assisted to some education by our grandfather.

Wilson kept it simple describing his origin by the nearest large city. In fact, he was born fifty miles southwest of Nashville on his father or grandfather's farm ten miles north of Centerville on the Piney River in Hickman County.

While the family may have stopped briefly in Wilson County on their way west, records indicate that John Wilson was probably born at his father's residence in or around Washington County, North Carolina (later Tennessee). Benjamin Wilson's middle name was his mother's maiden name, Davis². David was likely a translation error by the Bancroft Library.

When the Wilson clan descended on what was then West Tennessee at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Indian warfare and statehood were recent events. These intrepid settlers from well-established Greene County in eastern Tennessee would have found civilization less advanced. The patriarch of the family, Grandfather Adam William Wilson, Sr. (1745-1824) was the son of Scottish-immigrant parents, Adam Wilson and Margaret McCullom. They, along with his sister, Hannah Wilson, are buried in Nelson Parish, Northumberland, New Brunswick, Canada. Adam himself had thirteen children, the majority of whom joined him in populating Hickman County. This table reflects how the family established roots by 1820.

1820 Census records, Hickman County³

Name	Age	Page #	# Residents
James Wilson	39	2	7
William Wilson	45	2	11
James Davis	51	3	4
Adam Wilson	75	10	4
Benjamin Wilson	34	19	6

Adam William Wilson Clan in 1820

Name	Age	County Residence	In Will
Polley	52	Greene	N
John	48	Hardin	Y
William B.	45	Hickman	N
Joseph R.	43	Hickman	Y
Eleanor	41	Hickman	N
James	39	Hickman	Y
Margaret	36	Hickman	Y
Benjamin	34	Hickman	N
Adam Jr.	32	Hickman	Y
Mary R.	29	n/a	N
Nancy	25	Hickman	Y
Lucretia	20	Hickman	Y

Adam purchased several Washington County land grants in 1782 from North Carolina and served on the first Grand Jury for Washington County in 1788. Adam with most of his clan spent more than a decade until the early 1800s in Washington County and Greene County, which was created out of Washington in 1783. Early Greene County census records do not exist but tax lists report Adam, John and William Wilson on the rolls⁴. Marriage records show that Adam's children Polley, William and Joseph married in Greene County⁵. But shortly after the turn of the century, Adam and his clan moved about 300 miles west, into the new land acquired from the Indians just beyond Nashville.

Grandfather Adam settled on the Piney River at the mouth of Mill Creek in Hickman County.

Near the mouth of Mill Creek, Adam Wilson cultivated the first crop of corn cultivated by a white man within the present limits of Hickman County. This was in 1806 and Wilson made no clearing, save the cutting away of the cane.⁶ Adam Wilson, from East Tennessee, was the first settler on Piney River, he clearing away the cane and undergrowth in 1806, and raised the first crop in the county⁷.

During 1804 and 1806, Adam invested in nearly 3,000 acres along the Piney in five transactions totaling \$3,280, a large sum at the time. Six months later, he sold one section⁸ to Joseph, 540 acres to James and 100 acres to John. By 1808, all six brothers and daughter Eleanor with her husband, James Davis, resided along the Piney River in close proximity to one another.

Real Estate Transactions - Wilson Clan⁹¹⁰

Date	Sell	Buy	\$	Acres	County	Deed Book	Page	Grant #	County Ref
2/20/1804	W P Anderson	Adam Willson	500	320	Dickson	A	65		65
8/20/1805	James Robertson	Adam Willson	700	640	Dickson			1899/1407	66
2/4/1806	Joseph Greer	Adam Willson	400	640	Dickson			1899	91
2/10/1806	Alexander Greer	Adam Willson	400	640	Dickson			1407	104
2/21/1806	James Robertson	Adam Willson	1,280	640	Dickson				89
8/23/1806	Adam Willson	John Willson	100	100	Dickson				105
8/23/1806	Adam Willson	Joseph Willson	600	640	Dickson				106
8/23/1806	Adam Willson	James Willson	500	540	Dickson				107
4/15/1808	James Wilson	Edward Rickey	200	140	Hickman	A	4,5		
2/10/1808	Adam Willson	Robert Bowen	1,280	640	Hickman	A	35-37		
7/18/1808	Joseph Wilson	Ben Wilson	320	320	Hickman	A	8,9,10		
8/3/1811	James Wilson	Town Vernon	0.00	25	Hickman	B	29-30		
7/28/1811	Adam Willson	James Davis	100	140	Hickman	B	31,32		

That eldest son John purchased just one hundred acres is an indication of his poor financial condition highlighted in *Observations*, "having lost by bad speculation, his fortune, which left his family poor." John later moved his family south to Hardin County sometime before 1820 and died there between April and July 1823. His son Benjamin Davis Wilson would have been eleven years old.

In his will¹¹ Adam bequeathed his remaining three plots of land, comprising two hundred acres, to his surviving wife and then divided between sons James and Adam Jr. Another sixty acres each were devised to sons Joseph and John. Three unmarried daughters, Margaret, Nancy and Lucretia, living on the plantation along with their brother Adam Jr received furniture, livestock and other personal property. Adam William Wilson, Sr., passed away between January and April of 1824.

Adam Wilson's Children

William Benjamin Wilson

William Benjamin was the politician of this clan, serving as the first appointed Justice of the Peace or Magistrate in Hickman County and Chairman of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for their inaugural session in 1808. Essentially the top governmental official responsible for all administrative and judicial functions of the County, he was elected Chairman by his peer Magistrates, a role his nephew, Benjamin Davis Wilson, performed fifty years later for Los Angeles County for three terms.

William located around 1805/6 on Beaver Dam Creek which flowed into the Piney River above Pinewood, a few miles upstream from his father's plantation. By the time of the Federal Census of 1820, William had moved with his expanding family onto part of his brother James' five hundred acres in Vernon. Of note was the birth of his daughter, Jane, "first white child" in Hickman County. One of nine siblings born to William Davis and Polly Henderson, Jane Wilson was born December 27, 1806.¹² William and Polly Henderson married on January 19, 1802 in Jefferson County (partly formed out of Greene)¹³.

Joseph Wilson

Each county was responsible for a standing regiment of militia. Officers selected by popular vote and Joseph Wilson was twice elected Major, first in 1808. That same year, Joseph sold half of his land on the Piney River to his brother Benjamin for six hundred dollars. He appears again on the 1840 US Census married with two children and next-door neighbor to Benjamin. Joseph married Abby Alexander on August 30, 1804 in Greene County, Tennessee,¹⁴ preceding their departure for Midwest Tennessee and the Piney River.

Eleanor Davis Wilson

Aunt Eleanor Wilson married James Davis after his arrival in Tennessee. Davis acquired property in 1810¹⁵ on both sides of the Piney River at what is now Pinewood with a gristmill and a cotton gin. Upon Eleanor and James's deaths in the 1840s, their nephew, Albert Wilson, took over until through further resale, the mills expanded and the community of Pinewood formed to provide housing for the workers. Eleanor, James and Albert Wilson are interred in the Russell Cemetery in Pinewood. James Davis, with his brother-in-law James Wilson, provided funds to support John Wilson's family after his death as recorded in Hardin County Court Minutes¹⁶.

James Wilson

James Wilson, although in his twenties, invested well when he selected property in the Seventh District that became Vernon, the first county seat of Hickman, located a few miles down the Piney River from his father's plantation. James was also appointed Magistrate of Hickman County by the State Legislature to the third term of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions held in 1811.

Benjamin Wilson

Benjamin purchased land furthest from the patriarch, Adam, possibly due to his vocation as whisky distiller and seller. His home was located on Leatherwood Creek in the second district closer to the Natchez Trace. Benjamin married Polly Ann Joslin and in 1808 purchased half of his brother Joseph's section so that now every child resided on or owned land near Adam Sr.

Adam Wilson, Jr.

Adam William Wilson Jr., the youngest of these brothers, resided with and helped Adam run the plantation along with James¹⁷, surviving two wives while raising ten children. Adam's first wife Anna Easley died in 1824 and was

interred in Hardin County. This Adam may have moved his young family south to Hardin to provide shelter for John Wilson's four orphaned children.

John Wilson

Meanwhile, the father of Benjamin Davis Wilson remained in the shadows while brothers, sister and cousins prospered and multiplied. The Wilsons succeeded in farming, ranching, politics, real estate, distilling and brewing in Hickman County, yet sources that reveal the many activities of this clan say little regarding the family of John and Ruth Davis Wilson. Hardin County court minutes shed greater light than Wilson's oral history.

Hardin County, Tennessee, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, Minutes of Proceedings¹⁸

1823 July Term¹⁹ *Ordered by the Court that Willie B Wilson be appointed guardian of the infants heir of John Wilson, deceased, Green Wilson, Madison Wilson, Benjamin Wilson, Columbia Wilson, given bond with Adam Wilson security in the sum of one thousand dollars.* [This fixes the period of death of John G. Wilson between April and July 1823.]

1823 July Term²⁰ *a guardian bond from Willie? Wilson and Adam Wilson to County Court of Hardin County was duly acknowledged in open court and ordered to be certified for registration.*

1823 October Term²¹ *Willie? Wilson, guardian of minor heirs of John Wilson decd. declares into open court as follows, payment made Sept 26, 1823 this is to certify that I have or will the full amount of money from James Davis and James Wilson for children which I am appointed as guardian which is in the sum of one hundred and forty dollars.* [This record was signed by Wiley? Wilson, the oldest son of Ruth Davis Wilson and John Wilson probably born in Greene County, Tennessee in 1801. When appointed guardian he would have been twenty-two years old or ten years older than his brother Benjamin. The middle initial as signed is not clear, an R or a B but his middle name is Richie or Ritchie. In essence, it is an IOU or receipt from Wiley to his uncles and the Court. The Court Clerk continued writing his name as Willie throughout these minutes.]

1824 January Term²² *A Deed of conveyance from James Wilson and Jacob Humble to Adam Wilson for 200 acres land was duly proven in open court by John Reynolds and Joseph Wallace __ ? __ ? __ thereto and ordered to be certified for registration.* [This refers to Adam Wilson, Jr. Adam Wilson senior died on his plantation in Hickman County between January and April 1824. Minutes also confirm Adam Jr. had moved from his father's plantation in Hickman and was residing with his family in Hardin County. Jacob Humble married Polly Ann, the widow of Uncle Benjamin, and acted with his wife's brother-in-law on behalf of the family.]

These court minutes bring to life Benjamin Davis Wilson's siblings, his age when orphaned (eleven), and prove the place where his family resided for some period. A stipend of one hundred and forty dollars, an amount two thousand, five hundred dollars today, could have been one of several installments made by concerned uncles and aunts. It is remarkable that these records survived the Civil War, as the Battle of Shiloh occurred thirty-five years later leveling much of Hardin County including the courthouse.

The records indicate that the children's father was the last parent to die. Reference to *infant heirs* and the fact that Benjamin was twelve suggests some of his siblings were younger. Wiley's service as guardian explains their close relationship in later life, when Benjamin invited Wiley to leave Mississippi and join him in California after the Civil War.

Sherwood's²³ description of Wilson during his East Coast trip in 1870 is helpful in understanding why he had so little to say about his early life when he was interviewed:

Whether or not Wilson also stopped off to see James Harvey Davis, his uncle, in Mississippi, is not known. If so, he did not mention it in his letters home. Nor did he dwell on his return to his birthplace in Nashville, Tennessee - when it came to his own personal background, Wilson was no more communicative than a Mountain Indian, and just as adept at covering his tracks. So far as he was concerned, his life began when he crossed the Mississippi River.

Sue²⁴ once explained that her father insisted upon being the beginning of a family, rather than the shirt-tail end of one, as so many were in the South.

Dictated five decades after leaving Tennessee prior to death at age sixty-seven, Wilson's oral history blended incomplete and sometimes self-serving memories. Perhaps this line by an eminent mystery author²⁵ best explains Wilson's recitation of early years... *our memory is the servant of our interests.*

Life was not easy in 1820 when the State created Hardin County ... no roads, bridges, yet plenty of wolves, mountain lion, bear and wild game. Court Minutes report frequent payments to citizens for bringing in animal scalps and pelts, proving the predator had been killed. Churches, schools, mills came later in the decade but life in Hardin County remained an arduous frontier existence.

Orphaned, left in the care of an older brother, relying on relatives to subsist in frontier country in uncertain living conditions surely colored Benjamin Wilson's memories while exerting an enormous influence on his appetite and need to prosper and succeed, as we shall see.

Mississippi Period

Benjamin D. Wilson gave a brief summary of his Mississippi sojourn in *Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico:*

When I was about fifteen years of age [1826], I went into business for myself, at Yazoo City, on the Yazoo River above Vicksburg, where I kept a little trading house, to do business with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians. My health entirely broke down, and I was told by physicians I could not live in that country, must either leave or die. Then [1832] went up the Arkansas River to Fort Smith, an outer post then of the country.

The paragraph does little to enlighten, a modus operandi of Wilson when discussing life in Tennessee, Mississippi and New Mexico. What attracted Wilson to Yazoo city or Mississippi for that matter? How could a teenager subsisting on the charity of relatives afford to travel to Mississippi much less launch a trading post? Residents of Mississippi in early nineteenth century would know that the Choctaw Nation was in full retreat from the avaricious intentions of the United States Government. In fact, before Wilson arrived in Yazoo in 1826, Mississippi gained statehood and Yazoo County was no longer Choctaw territory. By the time of Wilson's departure, the First and Second Choctaw Removals to Oklahoma Indian lands were underway, this exodus resulting in the tragic *Trail of Tears.*

Locating records of his maternal uncle, Wiley Davis, lifts some mystery. In 1820 Davis resided south of Choctaw Territory in Warren County, Mississippi. The U.S. Census, enumerated in August of that year²⁶ indicates that Davis' family included a son, daughter, wife and relative. Two months later the Treaty of Doaks Stand was signed ceding five million acres of Choctaw Territory to the United States in exchange for land west of the Mississippi.

Mississippi Period Timeline

YEAR	ACRES	TREATY	COMMENTS
1801	2,700,000	Fort Adams	First Choctaw Cession to United States
1803	4,150,000	Mt Dexter	Cession from Natchez district to Tombigbee rivershed
1817			Mississippi admitted to the Union
1820			Wiley Davis residing in Warren, MS
1820	5,170,000	Doak's Stand	Choctaw exchange land in MS for parcel in Arkansas
1826			Wiley Davis awarded first land patents in Warren County
1826			B. D. Wilson arrives in Warren County
1830	10,500,000	Dancing Creek	Choctaw cede all territory east of the Mississippi River
1831			First Choctaw removal begins
1832			Second Choctaw removal begins
1832			B. D. Wilson departs Mississippi for New Mexico
1833			Third Choctaw removal begins

Like thousands of white Americans, Wiley Davis was poised to take advantage of the rich farmland now available. He purchased four land patents from the U.S. Government in July 1826. The patents were located in the Township designated 018N - 005E, and contained three contiguous parcels of land totaling 320 acres.²⁷ Today this property rests on the Warren/Yazoo County line in Warren County, though in the early 1820s that county border did not exist. Less than twenty-five miles from Yazoo City but actually closer to Vicksburg, Wilson in his *Observations* kept his story simple by referring to nearby towns recognizable to most people rather than his specific location.

The U S Census of 1830²⁸ identifies Wiley Davis residing in Yazoo with his wife, daughter, and son, plus one male fifteen to nineteen years old and three enslaved males in their twenties. The U S Census of 1820 does not identify such a male in the household. It is reasonable to assume Wilson was the fifteen to nineteen-year-old male listed in the Census. During his sojourn in Mississippi, Wilson assisted his uncle clearing and farming the new plantation, this labor-intensive occupation would require contribution of all five younger males living there. The land was prime Yazoo riverfront acreage and it is probable the teen-age Wilson spent free time boating, fishing and swimming the Yazoo, a great improvement over Hardin County even considering the rugged labor necessary on plantations in earlier 1800s.

Wiley Davis' Land Patents

Bureau of Land Management Land Office Records²⁹

ACCESSION	NAMES	DATE	DOC	MERIDEN	TWP	ALIQUOTS	SECTION	COUNTY
MS0110 .444	Davis, Wiley	7/20/1826	1928	Washington	018N-	W½NW¼	3	Warren
MS0110 .446	Davis, Wiley	7/20/1826	1930	Washington	018N-	Lot/Trct 8	4	Warren
MS0110 .449	Davis, Wiley	7/20/1826	1933	Washington	018N-	½NW¼	9	Warren
MS0120 .050	Davis, Wiley	7/20/1826	1995	Washington	018N-	Lot/Trct 7	4	Warren

That Benjamin Davis Wilson arrived in the Yazoo region the same summer that a Wiley Davis acquired 320 acres of virgin Yazoo River bottomland speaks of a plan to employ one's relative . . . the orphaned Tennessee teenager. Wiley Davis needed manual labor to clear this land and create a farm. Three slaves already resided with Davis and Benjamin would have been a valued addition to the family.

Four years prior to Wilson's arrival Choctaws were relocating further north and east to their remaining lands, from the first green shaded dogleg area below to the off-yellow dogleg area moving toward upper right, see map. There

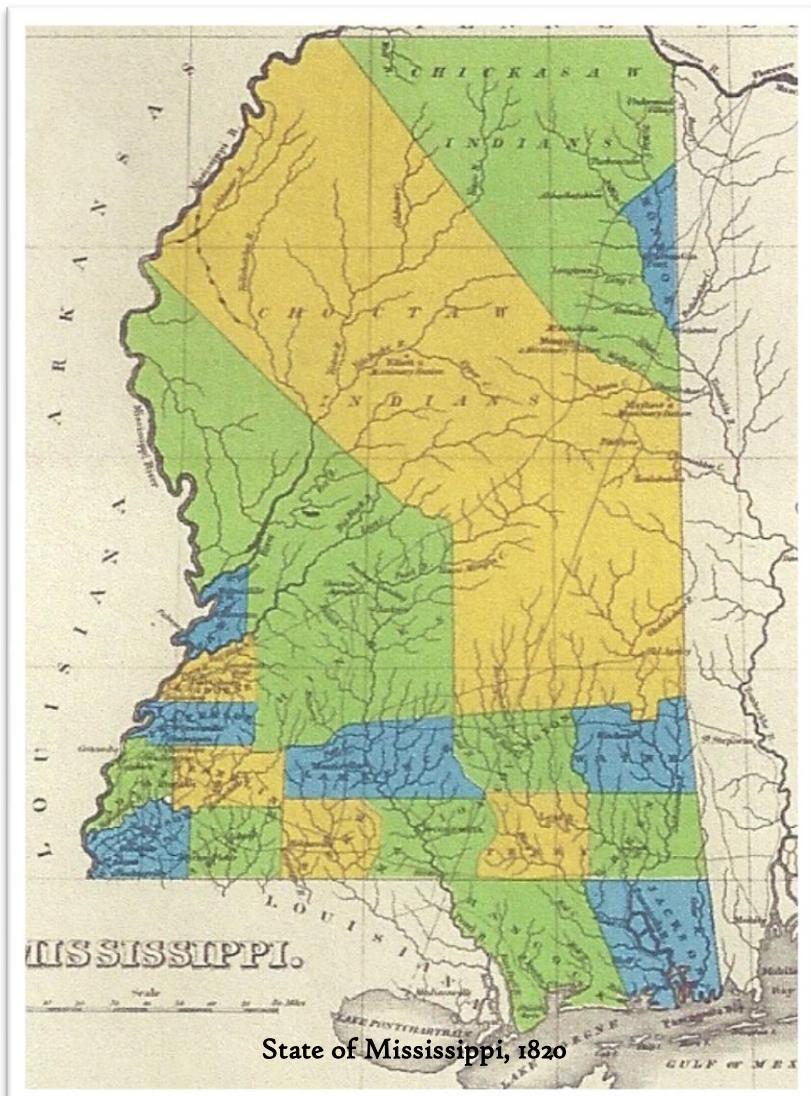
were few, if any, Choctaw Indians available for trading activity. Whether the young Wilson started a trading house with the Choctaws as he stated in the *Observations* or if, in fact, he ever traded with Native Americans, has not been proven. We do know that in his next destination, New Mexico, he bartered and traded quite successfully with several Indian Nations. Why would Wilson mention Chickasaws whose lands were more than a hundred miles north of Yazoo? In fact, these Native Americans lived much closer to Wilson's home in Hardin County, Tennessee, than his new residence.

Just who Wiley Davis was leads us back to 'Benjamin's mother, Ruth Davis Wilson. We can only speculate about her life story as mother and wife. The given names of her children with John Wilson as found in the Hardin County court minutes were Wiley Wilson, Benjamin Wilson, Columbia Wilson, Green Wilson and Madison Wilson.

It is likely that Ruth Davis Wilson's first son Wiley received her father's name. Her second son received the given name of Benjamin from his father's family, and the middle name Davis to acknowledge his mother's family. The names of the younger children -- Columbia, Green and Madison -- indicate a different approach and may indicate that these children were born to a different mother. Hardin County minutes show Ruth predeceased her husband, John Wilson. It is possible that John remarried after the birth of Benjamin in 1811 and had three children prior to his death in 1823 at fifty-six. As step-siblings, Wilson would not have the same feelings nor concern for them as he shows for brother Wiley in later life. In fact, the author is not aware of any communication by Benjamin Wilson with these siblings.

Benjamin's claim that he departed Mississippi because of his health seems unlikely. That a twenty-year-old Tennessean in the nineteenth century would be under a doctor's care and unable to carry on due to Mississippi climate is implausible. He reached maturity during this tenure with his uncle. It was a logical time for him to set out West to seek fame and fortune where, in New Mexico and California, he most admirably achieved both, as we shall see.

Benjamin Wilson could never have foreseen nor predicted the next fifty years. Arriving penniless in Santa Fe he gained employment with a copper mine located at the end of an arduous 10-day journey into Apache country. He stayed for 18 months, earning enough money to fund an expedition into Apacheria with five fellow frontiersmen before settling in Santa Fe.



First as employee then as an entrepreneur acquiring store goods, he stocked muskets, powder and alcohol to barter with Native American tribes surrounding Santa Fe and Taos. Apache, Ute, Navaho and Pueblo Indians bartered mules, mustangs and plunder obtained raiding northern Mexican states of Chihuahua and Sonora.

In 1841, Wilson joined twenty Americans and some New Mexicans departing New Mexico in the first overland wagon train to Los Angeles, seeking a new start in a more stable Province of Mexico. With his New Mexican riches, Wilson climbed quickly into the top rung of society when he married a sixteen-year-old señorita of California society. Wilson purchased, constructed and equipped a wheat, cattle ranch with vineyards on three thousand acres of what is now Riverside, California. His success in four decades in Southern California, detailed in biographies noted above, is remarkable.



**Benjamin Wilson's daughter, Ruth Wilson Patton, with her children
George and Nita, in 1892.**

(The Patton Saber, Winter 2007 www.generalpatton.org)



General George S. Patton, Jr. (1885-1945)
Grandson of Benjamin D. Wilson

Notes on the Mississippi Period

The Warren County borderline with Yazoo and Hinds Counties was finalized in the years following the 1820 Treaty of Doak's Stand. In this Second Cession, the Choctaw ceded land wrapped around Warren County on the north and east. Warren County took advantage of this to expand to its present limits. During most if not all of the 1820s Wiley Davis' plantation was located in Yazoo County but after resolution of county borders, this property ended up in Warren County. For these reasons land patents and Census of 1830 show Wiley Davis in Yazoo. However, in the 1820 Census, enumerated in August 1820, he shows up in Warren County, the exact location not yet defined. The only way he could have resided in 1820 on the four land patents he purchased in 1826 would have been by squatting on Choctaw land, a common experience after 1820 in Mississippi.

The original survey of this property commenced January, 1823, Land Patents from the Jackson, MS office issued in July, 1826 for all townships designated by number 18. Northern townships in Warren County represent the final Choctaw land surveyed and sold. The entire Second Cession survey completed before county borders established

which accounts for a three-year gap between survey of his specific acquisition and issuance of respective Land Patent.

The List of the Purchasers of Public Lands at the various Land Offices shows a mean purchase price per acre around one dollar and twenty-five cents. Wiley Davis would have spent around four hundred dollars for these four Patents, about eight to ten thousand dollars today.

A Wiley Davis of Yazoo County purchased six land patents between 1826 and 1827 in Yazoo and Hinds Counties. A Wiley Davis of Holmes County purchased one hundred eighty-eight patents in seven Mississippi counties between 1840 and 1842. A Wiley Davis of Hinds County purchased five patents in Hinds County in 1824 and 1837, plus three in Coahoma County in 1840. Other researchers must sort out if more than one Davis acquired these patents. According to Federal and State Censi, just one Wiley Davis resided in Mississippi between 1800 and 1850.

Endnotes for “Benjamin Davis Wilson”

¹ Wilson, Benjamin Davis. *Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico*. (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1877).

² Steel, Edith Shorb, interview by E Leontine Denson and CA Notary Public for City and County of San Francisco. 1930. *Mrs. Steel's Affidavit attesting to Benjamin Wilson's middle name as DAVIS* (October 24). Edith Shorb Steele was the daughter of J. de Barth Shorb, granddaughter of B D Wilson.

³ 1820 US Census; Hickman County, Tenn.

⁴ (Tennessee State Library and Archives c 1997-2014 Ancestry.com 2009)

⁵ *Tennessee Marriages to 1825*, Ancestry.com. database online, 1997.

⁶ Spence, Jerome D., and David L. Spence. *A History of Hickman County Tennessee*. (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Publishing Company, 1900).

⁷ *Hickman County History*. (Chicago and Nashville: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887).

⁸ One section equals 640 acres or one square mile.

⁹ *Dickson County, Tenn., Deeds, (1804–1806)*, Register of Deeds.

¹⁰ *Hickman County, Tenn., Deeds, (1808–1818)*, Register of Deeds.

¹¹ *Dickson County, Tenn., Wills*, Book A, p. 74-76. Last Will and Testament of Adam Wilson, 1822. County Court Clerk.

¹² Spence and Spence, 1900.

¹³ Dodd, Jordan, Tennessee Marriages to 1825.

¹⁴ (Dodd, Jordan, Tennessee Marriages to 1825.

¹⁵ Spence and Spence, 1900.

¹⁶ *Hardin County, Tenn., Court of Pleas and Quarter Session Minutes*, Book A (1820-1823), October Term 1823. County Court Clerk.

¹⁷ *Dickson County . . . Adam Wilson will, 1822*.

¹⁸ *Hardin County . . . Minutes*, July Term 1823.

¹⁹ *Hardin County . . . Minutes*, July Term 1823

²⁰ *Hardin County . . . Minutes*, July Term 1823

²¹ *Hardin County . . . Minutes*, Oct. Term 1823

²² *Hardin County . . . Minutes*, Jan. Term 1824

²³ Sherwood, Midge. *Days of Vintage, Years of Vision*, (San Marino: Orizaba Publications, 1982).

²⁴ Benjamin Davis Wilson's daughter

²⁵ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

²⁶ 1820 U.S. Census, Warren County, Miss. p. 120.

²⁷ *General Land Office Records*,” patent numbers 1928, 1930 and 1933 issued in 1826 to Wiley Davis of Yazoo County, signed by President John Q. Adams, online database of U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management.

²⁸ 1830 U.S. Census, Yazoo County, Miss., p. 292.

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