

# John Williamson

## Maryland to Kentucky, 1776-1855

Three months before Congress declared Independence, John Williamson was born to Charles and Mary in the British Colony of Maryland. John seems to be their first child, who would be followed by nine (known) brothers and sisters over the next twenty years. Captain Charles Williamson commanded a company of Calvert County militia from 1778-1779<sup>1</sup>.

Unfortunately, the 1790 census for Calvert County no longer exists. The 1800 census shows them to be living in All Saints Parish, Calvert Co. It appears that both parents and all 10 children are living at home.

By the 1810 census<sup>2</sup> (Calvert Co), it seems that the children of Charles and Mary Williamson, now mostly grown, have lost both of their parents, their father three years before. The Williamson household is now enumerated in John's name, being the eldest son, now 34 years old. The others appear to be his brother, Charles, age 23, and three of his sisters, Elizabeth, 28, Sarah, 25, and Rebecca, 14. There are two other females between the ages of 10 and 15. Sister, Ann, married about 1804 and lived her life in Baltimore MD. Mary, known as 'Polly', had recently married and remained in the area.

It seems that John and two of his sisters, 21-year-old Elizabeth and 15-year-old Rebecca, migrated from Maryland to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, probably in 1811, since he is in Calvert County in 1810 and then marries in Jefferson County KY in January of 1812. Elizabeth married in June of the same year, and Rebecca in 1815, both also in Jefferson County.

John married Susannah (Lawrence) Dorsey, widow of Edward Dorsey, also from Maryland on 6 January 1812. She brought her four youngest children with her to her new home. John and Susannah had a daughter, later in 1812, who they named Susannah. Sadly, as her tombstone was inscribed, she died 'in her 2nd year'. The Williamson home was just a little south of what is present day, Old LaGrange Road, off Factory Lane. It is believed that with the death of this little one, she would be the first of many interred in what would become the 'burying ground' John refers to in his will (1855), probably not far from their home.

The Louisville Daily Courier (Louisville KY) - 12 Dec 1845, Fri, page 2: "DIED ~ On Wednesday morning Mrs. Elizabeth E. Speed, wife of Mr. John Smith Speed, and only child of John Williamson, Esq., of this county." (Newspapers.com)

The Louisville Daily Courier - 30 Jun 1848, Fri, page 1: "Whig Meeting in Jefferson. At the meeting of the Whigs of Jefferson County, in Jeffersontown, on the 28th of June 1848, John Williamson, Esq., was called to the Chair, and J. W. Thixton appointed Secretary." (Newspapers.com)

From Kentucky Place Names<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> *Thomas Williamson in the North America, Family Histories, 1500.* Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2636460:61157?indiv=try&h&db>. Accessed 13 May. 2022. Daughters of the American Revolution, Lineage Book, NSDAR: Volume 091: 1912

<sup>2</sup> "John Williamson in the 1810 United States Federal Census." Ancestry [https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/80187:7613?indiv=try&h&\\_phsrc=WCo7453&db](https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/80187:7613?indiv=try&h&_phsrc=WCo7453&db). Accessed 18 Jun. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *Kentucky Place Names*, by Robert M. Rennick, The University Press of Kentucky, 1984

O'Bannon (Jefferson): oh/baen/ən (Anchorage). This hamlet with extinct po and L&N RR station is centered where Factory and Collins Lanes join LaGrange Rd (KY 146), 13 mi e of downtown Louisville. The po was est as Williamson on Feb 12, 1850, with John B. O'Bannon, [postmaster], and named, as was the rr station, for the family of pioneer John Williamson, owner of several thousand acres in that area. In 1859 the name was changed to O'Bannon for John B. or his family. John B., son of Virginian Isham O'Bannon (1767-1845), was a farmer and businessman who built his home on Lagrange Rd around 1830. The po closed in 1964.

On the 22nd of August 1850, John Williamson was included in the Agriculture enumeration for District One in Jefferson Co, as having:

275 Improved acres, 165 Unimproved; \$12,000 Cash value of Farm; \$165 Value of farming Implements and Machinery; 11 Horses, 17 Milch Cows; 17 Other Cattle; 70 Sheep; 200 Swine; \$1,000 Value of Live Stock; 500 Bushels of Wheat; 4,000 Bushels of Indian Corn; 800 Bushels of Oats, 150 lbs. of Wool; \$50 Value of Produce of Market Gardens; \$520 lbs. of Butter; 15 Tons of Hay; 100 lbs. of Flax; 15 Bushels of Flaxseed; \$750 Value of Animals Slaughtered. These were very similar numbers to his son-in-law, Isham O'Bannon, who lived next door. Both had slaves, as did their neighbors.

The Louisville Daily Courier - 6 Jul 1855, Fri, page 4: "DIED ~ On the 5th inst., in Jefferson county, Mr. John Williamson, in the 80th year of his age. His funeral will take place from his residence Friday morning at 9 o'clock." (Newspapers.com)

Tombstone inscription:

John Williamson

A Native of Maryland

Born April 10, 1776

Died July 4, 1855

An Honest Man the Noblest Work of God

Would You Know Him. Ask Your Neighbours

Excerpt from John's will pertaining to the cemetery now known as 'Williamson-O'Bannon Cemetery, 3515 Colonial Springs Rd, Louisville KY:

“And I further direct that in selling my land my family burying ground as enclosed shall be reserved with free privilege of ingress & egress forever as a burying ground for my family & relations and all such persons as may at my death have friends buried therein and if not done before my death, I direct my aforesaid Executors to have a good frame and gate of iron with lock put to said graveyard...”

Burials began in this family graveyard as early as 1814 (one of John's little daughters) and continued through 1859, including John's in 1855. It seems that soon after John's death, family began being interred in other cemeteries in Jefferson County, including Cave Hill Cemetery.

The burying ground has been in great need of restoration, after several events occurred, from thievery and carelessness, to neglect and severe weather. Most of the original five-foot-high stone walls have *disappeared*, leaving the massive capstones scattered about. A very large tree that had been allowed to

grow *in* the west wall, fell into the burying ground, knocking obelisks over and breaking tombstones and tablets. And it seems that when the foundation for a house next door was being excavated, and the street to the west was being graded, the dirt was deposited or pushed onto the remains of the north and west walls and several fallen tombstones, that became barely visible. Evidence of the original gate is on the (east) side of the cemetery. The frame and gate are long gone, however the iron hardware that were drilled into the stone that is flush with the ground, remain. The opening is 5' wide. Some restoration efforts were made in 2022-23, however some tombstones may never be recovered or repaired.

"WILLIAMSON, JOHN age-78; b. Maryland, d. July 4, 1855, of apoplexy; parents not given.<sup>4</sup>"

Susan Nielsen, 2023

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<sup>4</sup> Kentucky Vital Statistics, The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY (Jan. 1957) Vol. 55, No. 1; STATE ARCHIVES; Transcribed by Vicki Bryan and Cathy Anderson