

The Pickel Family of South Carolinaⁱ

JACOB PICKEL

Jacob Pickel, a German, not known when born nor when he came to South Carolina, but was living in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. He was killed in that war by the Tories under the following circumstances:

He was a Whig and took part in the guerilla warfare and scouting against the Tories. On one occasion he was surprised by a party of Tories. He was at his home at the time and was, at the time that the enemy came upon him, engaged in dressing a buckskin. He broke and ran to a thicket or swamp when one of the Tories overtook him and set upon him with a sword. He wrested the sword from the Tory, but about that time the others came up and set upon him and hacked him down. [I have often heard it that before he was himself slain in this encounter, he slew one of the Tories. J.M. Pickel]

This [event] occurred in Orangeburg. Don't know his trade or profession but was perhaps a farmer. Don't know whether he had any brothers or sisters, but William Pickel, his son, was often heard by James Elbert Pickel, to speak of a highly esteemed aunt by the name of Esther Sawyer. He [Jacob Pickel] had two wives and a son by each. These sons were William and Micah. Don't know which was the older, Micah went off West, but is said to have once visited his half-brother, William, in South Carolina while the latter was yet a young man. What finally became of him [Micah] is not known.

WILLIAM PICKEL

William Pickel, son of Jacob, was born October 30, 1776 in Orangeburg District, South Carolina, on or near the Edisto River. He died at Williamston, Anderson County, South Carolina, at the home of James Elbert Pickel, on February 26, 1867. He [William] was about seven years old when his father died (was killed). He remembered his father well and often talked of him and the manner of his death to his children. He [William] was bound to an uncle (?) who had a son who abused and badly used William. In consequence he ran away, when about sixteen years old, from his master. He married Elizabeth Wilson who survived him.

This marriage must have taken place when they were quite young. They were very poor (e.g. had not tableware.) He made their plates and tableware of wood ¹, worked hard, cleared and cultivated land, and became a well-to-do, but not rich, land and slave owner, making his living mainly by farming.

¹ I have seen my own father do this same thing for himself, though he kept a soft of shop only for his own use. J.M.P.

He possessed a high degree of mechanical skill both in wood and iron. He made his own wagons, doing the entire work, both wood and iron, himself, getting the timber from the forest himself. He worked at the blacksmith trade, keeping a shop for the public, was a skillful horseshoer [sic] making, as was customary in that day, both the shoes and the nails. ²

He was a skillful preparer and administrator of home remedies, followed the "botanic system." He possessed and diligently read the works of Howard and Thompson, botanic doctors, and administered his remedies to his neighbors gratis.

He was a devout member of the Baptist Church, the greater part of his life, serving as a deacon, and dying in that communion. The writer of this [his grandson, James Marion Pickel] remembers him well, was frequently at his home spending days at a time. This was during and immediately after the war of 1861-65. The writer remembers the well-kept little farm; large, fine apple orchard; yard full of large oak trees; barnyard full of fowls; the deep well with trough where horses, hogs, cows, and sheep were watered. He kept at that time only two horses – large, fat, dark bays. He had also a nice old fashioned one-horse, four seated carriage, in which he would ride to church, to visit my father (James Elbert Pickel) and go on his other journeys on which his wife always accompanied him.

He owned at that time several slaves (owned them to the close of the Civil War), four certainly; two grown middle-aged men, Joe and Harry; a middle-aged woman, Frankie; and the cook, a mulatto girl, Mary. The men cultivated the farm and took care of the stock. The cook and the girl did the cooking and housework, etc.

The house in which he lived was a small three or four roomed, one story framed cottage with a veranda along one side. It was a model of plain, neat, homely comfort, my grandmother Pickel being a most industrious and skillful farm housekeeper.

Pickel was a man of vigorous physique, medium stature, blue eyes, fair complexion. In his 84th year, he made in one day a trip of about 28 miles (14 each way) on horseback to visit my father who was lying dangerously ill.

After the close of the war and the freeing of the slaves, my grandparents broke up housekeeping and came in about 1866 to my father's where they lived till they died (in Williamston, South Carolina. They are buried in the Big Creek Baptist Church yard near Williamston and about a mile from Holland's ford on the Saluda River.

² I have heard him, his wife or my father relate how in his early married life he [William Pickel] worked even by torch light, felling trees and cleaning off land for cultivation. J.M.P

ELIZABETH WILSON

Elizabeth Wilson, wife of William Pickel, was a daughter of James Crawford Wilson. He was an Irishman, a regular physician, and a member of the Masonic fraternity. He and his wife died when Elizabeth was quite young, and the latter [Elizabeth] was "bound out." Her father owned a large bleaching yard in Ireland and made visited back to Ireland. She was of medium height, fair complexion and had blue eyes. She was a woman of great energy and force of character, and was a skillful horse-woman. She served among her neighbors as a midwife. In those early days, physicians among the pioneers were rarely, if ever, to be had.

The following incident of her girlhood will illustrate her courage. She was after dark engaged in washing clothes out in the edge of the yard. A young man, son of the people to whom she was bound, thinking to have fun out of her, attempted to frighten her by playing the ghost. He threw over himself a white sheet and came out from among the dark bushes. But instead of running away from the would-be ghost, she ran at him with a gourd full of boiling water. He turned, fled and leaped up into a window (or door) to escape through the house, whereupon she dashed the gourd of boiling water upon him

William and Elizabeth Pickel moved from Edgefield District to the Hurricane Creek in Anderson County (at that time part of Pendleton District) in December 1815. Elizabeth was sick and "out of her head" at the time the start was made on the journey. She had shortly before that ridden horseback, taking her infant son, James Elbert, sixty miles from her home in Edgefield to the home of her sister, Mrs. Jane Tyler, in Orangeburg. Her sister's family were at the time afflicted with the "cold plague". Eighteen of the family (black and white) died of it. Among them her husband, Jno. Tyler. Elizabeth remained with them two weeks. On her return home, she took the "cold plague". In Consequence, the child, James E. was reared "on the bottle."

JAMES WILSON

James Wilson, the father of Elizabeth, had the following children:

1. Jane, married John Tyler and after the latter's death, a Riley, lived in Orangeburg District on the Edisto River. She was never seen by James Elbert Pickel except in his infancy.
2. Elizabeth, married William Pickel.
3. Mary, married David Williams. Lived in Anderson District. Moved to Hall County, Georgia about 1825. (Was personally known by James Elbert Pickel, J.E.P.)
4. John never married. Went to Georgia. (Was never seen by J.E.P)

WILLIAM AND ELIZABETH WILSON PICKEL

William (2 May 1782 – 1 Mar 1869) and Elizabeth (30 Oct 1776 – 2 Feb 1866) had the following children:

1. Lei (born Nov. 4, 1798; died after 1872)
Lei (pronounced Le-i) married Jas. Simpson, moved from South Carolina to Georgia about 1837. Lived in or near Gainsville. (She was once (about 1872) on a visit to James Elbert Pickel at Williamston, South Carolina when I saw and knew her. (James Marion Pickel, J.M.P.)
2. Esther (born Jan 27, 1801; died about 1866)
Esther married William Cason, lived in Anderson Co., S.C. near Pisgah Baptist Church. Had children: John, William, Austin, James Hampton, Synthia (married first James Long, then Benj. Irby).
3. Mary married James Booker. Moved to East Tennessee about 1835. (James Booker was a German – perhaps the name should be spelt Bucha.) Had children: Nancy, Elizabeth, Lei, Jacob, Thornton, James Elbert.
4. Jacob married Patty Pegg. Had children: John, Sarah, William and others. Lived and died in Pickens County, South Carolina
5. Jane married Franklin Cobb. Had one child, Sallie, who married first “Chuck Turner” and then ??????. Lived in Anderson and Greenville Counties, South Carolina.
6. Theresa married Andrew Cason (brother of William above). Lived near Pisgah Baptist Church in Anderson County, South Carolina. Had children: William, John, and Elizabeth (married a Gilliard).
7. James Elbert married Mary Welborn of Oct. 19, 1837. Lived in Anderson County near Pisgah Baptist Church then on the Three and Twenty Creek about 7 – 9 miles from the old town of Pendleton, South Carolina then at Williamston from about 1852-53 to 1875 or 1876 and then in and near Pendleton four or five years and then again to Williamston, South Carolina where both husband and wife died. Children: two infants who died immediately after birth and the following: Louisa died March 13, 1844. Born 13th, 1840, Jane Olivia, Savilla Ann, Rebecca, Amanda, Elbert, Jacob, William Crawford, James Marion, Thomas Gwin, Frank Welborn, Walter L.
8. Crawford Wilson married Bettie Murphey. Lived in Anderson County (mainly at Williamston) until about the year 1868, when he moved with all his children

(except one who had died) to Anderson County, Texas. Children: Elizabeth (married Dr. Paul Williams), Fannie (married a Williams), William C. ("Bud"), Savannah ("Sis"), Ida, Charlie, (and several others who died in infancy.)

9. William Chesly married Polly Murphey (sister of Betty above). Lived in Anderson County till the year 1858 when he moved to Anderson County, Texas. (I remember his departure for Texas. I went with father and mother to bid them goodbye, and have a distinct recollection of the covered wagons that stood in the yard prepared for the start. I was at that time three years old. It is, of course, that the recollection I have in mind is some other leave-taking and departure; but I have, at any rate always (as far back as I recollect) connected the event with the departure of my uncle "Chesly". (James Marion Pickel)

10. Obediah A. married Carrie Bailey. Lived at Greenville Courthouse till about the year 1877 or '78 or '79, when he moved with all his children to Tyler (or Palestine), Texas. Children: Iva, Bettie (married a "Vis" Sharp of Abbeville County, South Carolina), Lucius C., Surrie (married a Watson), Lou (married Lovelace), Nina (married Brown), Pauline (married _____).

Note: William Crook's translation of the eighth German edition of Rudolf Wagner's "Handbook of Chemical Technology contains the following statement on page 645:

"As regards the artificial production of gas from coals, Clayton and Hales, 1727 to 1739, made the first observations on this subject; while the Bishop of Llandaff, 1767, exhibited how the gas evolved from coal might be conveyed in tubes. Dr. Pickel, Professor of Chemistry at Wurzburg, lighted his laboratory, 1786, with the gas obtained by the dry distillation of bones."

I set this extract down here as a curious fact merely, and not as implying that there was any connection between my ancestor, Jacob Pickel, and this Dr. Pickel. Nothing was known by my father or grandfather of our family in Germany – the bare fact that it was German as set forth on the following pages. I spent a night in the fall (Sep. or Oct.) of 1883, enroute from Geneva, Switzerland to Gottingen, Germany in Wurzburg. But at that time, I was not aware that a man of my name had a hundred years previously been the professor of Chemistry there – in the University of Wurzburg presumably, of course; else, doubtless, I should have tarried a day. My own three years of study of Chemistry in Germany was completed in Aug. 1884 at Gottingen from which (the University, Georgia, Augusta) I received the degree of Ph.D. J.M. Pickel, March 1907.

ⁱ "September 26, 1895, Williamston, South Carolina – Notes on the Pickel family written by James Marion Pickel based on information received this day from James Elbert Pickel [his father]."

This version is a transcription of a document taken from a leather-bound notebook, handwritten by James Marion Pickell, Senior. The original document was transcribed, and this version is transcribed from the original transcription to improve its readability. It also separates the notes regarding the Pickel family from the notes regarding the Wilborn family.