

John Wilson of Walnut Creek and the Road to Wilson County

A Documentary Timeline — Edgecombe County, North Carolina, ca. 1769–1847

Overview

This article follows two threads of Edgecombe County Wilson research that, on the documentary evidence assembled so far, appear to converge on one man: Isaac Wilson, a Mill Swamp landowner whose will named four sons. One of those sons, John Wilson, is the strongest candidate yet identified for “John Wilson of Walnut Creek” — the small farmer whose name marks a corner in a 1790s land chain and who sued the insolvent estate of Edward Griffin for a ten-shilling debt in 1803. Another son, William Wilson, wrote his own will a generation later naming a son “Lewis D. Wilson” — Louis Dicken Wilson (1789–1847), the Edgecombe-born soldier and state senator for whom the town and county of Wilson, North Carolina, are named.¹ If both identifications hold, Isaac Wilson is grandfather to Louis Dicken Wilson, and John Wilson of Walnut Creek is his uncle — placing the county's namesake inside the same small Mill Swamp neighborhood this research has already mapped. Neither identification rests on a document that states the relationship in so many words; both rest on matching land-tract descriptions, recurring neighbor names, and family-name patterns across independently read deeds and wills. The strength, and the limits, of that evidence are laid out below, and the open questions are carried forward rather than resolved.

¹Louis Dicken Wilson, biographical summary: born 12 May 1789 on his parents' plantation south of the Tar River in Edgecombe County, N.C.; died 12 August 1847 of yellow fever at Vera Cruz, Mexico, days before he was to command troops there; son of William and Elizabeth Dicken Wilson. The town of Wilson, N.C., was incorporated and named in his memory 29 Jan. 1849, and Wilson County was established 13 Feb. 1855, also in his honor. William S. Powell, “Wilson, Louis Dicken,” NCpedia, <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/wilson-louis-dicken>; “Louis Dicken Wilson,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Dicken_Wilson. Both accessed Aug. 23, 2026; neither source elaborates further on his parents beyond their names.

ca. 1769 — Isaac Wilson Buys Land on the Mill Swamp

The earliest record located for Isaac Wilson in this research is a deed by which Richard Sasnett sold him 152 acres on the Mill Swamp.² The boundary calls run in part to Hardy Williamson's line and to [William] Sherrod's line — two neighbor names that recur later in this article. Sasnett, apparently unable to write, signed by his mark; the deed was proved in February Court 1769. This is the same tract Isaac would, a decade later, bequeath by name to his son John.

1779 — Isaac Wilson's Will: Four Sons Provided For

Isaac Wilson's will names four sons — William, James, Willie, and John — and his wife, Susanna. To his son William, already settled on his own tract, Isaac left the home place outright:

“Item I Give and bequeath unto my son William Wilson to him his heirs assigns for Ever, the land & plantation whereon he now lives begining at the mouth of the runing branch... then along my line to the River, then down the river the various courses to the beginning; also one Negro man calld Jupetor, one bed and furniture.”

²Richard Sasnett to Isaac Wilson, deed, 152 acres on the Mill Swamp, boundary calls including Hardy Williamson's line and [William] Sherrod's line; Sasnett signing by his mark, witnessed by Elias Fort, George Wimberley, and William Griffes, proved February Court 1769. “Edgecombe, North Carolina. Deeds 1769-1775,” FamilySearch full-text search, deed body: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-9983-6774>, image 20 of 746; signature and proving clause: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-9983-67QY>, image 21 of 746. Examined and imaged in an earlier pass of this research; not re-transcribed verbatim for this article.

³ To his son Willie, Isaac left the plantation on which he himself still lived, with a reversion clause naming John as the backup heir:

"...unto my Son Willie Wilson to him his heirs & assigns for Ever all the tract whereon I now live lying below the part I gave to my Son James Wilson; but incase my Sd Son Willie Wilson Should not live to the age of twenty one years or die without Ishue then in that case its my will and desire that the aforesaid land be the property of my Son John Wilson him his heirs & assigns For ever."

⁴ And to his son John, Isaac left the specific tract he had bought from Sasnett a decade before:

"Item I give & bequeath unto my son John Wilson to him his heirs & assigns for [ever] the land & plantation I bought of [Recd] Sunet lying on Hillebrews [Mill] Branch..."

³Isaac Wilson, will, undated within the volume but internally dated by context to 1779: "Item I Give and bequeath unto my son William Wilson to him his heirs assigns for Ever, the land & plantation whereon he now lives begining at the mouth of the runing branch then up the Sd branch to the first Branch that makes out of the lower side of Sd branch, then up sd branch to the back line of my patent, then up the Sd line to my upper corner Then along my line to the River, then down the river the Various Courses to the beginning; also one Negro man calld Jupetor, one bed and furniture." "Edgecombe, North Carolina. Wills 1758-1830," FamilySearch full-text search, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-JZ92-LG>, image 496 of 550. Accessed Aug. 22-23, 2026.

⁴Isaac Wilson, will (continuing from note 3): "...unto my Son Willie Wilson to him his heirs & assigns for Ever all the tract whereon I now live lying below the part I gave to my Son James Wilson; but incase my Sd Son Willie Wilson Should not live to the age of twenty one years or die without Ishue then in that case its my will and desire that the aforesaid land be the property of my Son John Wilson him his heirs & assigns For ever." Same collection as note 3, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-JZ92-LX>, image 497 of 550.

⁵ The will thus ties John Wilson directly, by name, to the same Mill Swamp / Hillebrews Mill Branch tract described in the 1769 Sasnett deed above — the anchor for everything that follows.

John Wilson of Walnut Creek — The Deloach–Dancy Chain

Separately from Isaac Wilson's will, an earlier pass of this research identified a “John Wilson” as a boundary landmark — “John Wilson's Corner” — in a chain of 1790s Edgecombe deeds running through a Deloach and a Dancy, placing his land near Walnut Creek. ⁶ This is the John Wilson this research set out to identify; the question this article addresses is whether he is the same John Wilson named as Isaac Wilson's son above.

1803 — John Wilson Sues the Insolvent Estate of Edward Griffin

Edward Griffin died in 1802, and his estate — administered by Joseph Pitt — proved insolvent. ⁷ Among the creditors who sued the estate was a John Wilson, pursuing a debt of ten shillings; ⁸ the court entered judgment in his favor on 17 September 1803, and on 11 March 1804 ordered a tract of Griffin's land executed and sold to satisfy it, the estate lacking sufficient

⁵Isaac Wilson, will (same image as note 4): “Item I give & bequeath unto my son John Wilson to him his heirs & assigns for [ever] the land & plantation I bought of [Recd] Sunet lying on Hillebrews [Mill] Branch...” — the same Sasnett tract described in note 2. Same collection as note 3,

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-JZ92-LX>, image 497 of 550. The will's residual clause also lends Isaac's “beloved wife Susan[na] Wilson” the use of several named enslaved people during her natural life.

⁶An earlier pass of this research read a chain of Edgecombe deeds from the 1790s — including a 1791 conveyance and a related 1799 deed, running through a Deloach and a Dancy — whose boundary calls reference “John Wilson's Corner” as a landmark, placing a John Wilson's land near Walnut Creek in this general neighborhood. This finding has not yet been re-pulled and cited by specific image for this article and should be located and cited precisely before publication.

⁷“Edgecombe, North Carolina. Probate Estate Case Files 1748-1917,” FamilySearch full-text search, folder “Griffin, Edward, 1802,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-L1QY-4PH>, images 459-467. Accessed Aug. 17, 2026. This same case file, and John Wilson's role in it, is also discussed in the companion article, “The Rachel Anderson Story,” notes 11 and 13.

⁸Writ, John Wilson v. Joseph Pitt, administrator of Edward Griffin, deceased, in a plea of debt of ten shillings, dated 16 Sept. 1803. Same collection as note 7, image 462, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-G1QY-4VP>.

personal property.⁹ This is the same suit already documented in the companion article on Rachel Anderson, whose own connection to the Griffin estate runs through an unrelated debt judgment in the same case file. Here, the relevant fact is simply that a John Wilson was propertied and litigious enough in Edgecombe in 1803 to press a small debt through the county court to a land execution — consistent with, though not proof of, his identification as Isaac Wilson's son.

Reading the Boundaries Together

The two John Wilson threads can be tested, imperfectly, against each other through the neighbors named in the underlying land records. The 1769 Sasnett-to-Isaac-Wilson deed calls for Hardy Williamson's and [William] Sherrod's lines; the same two surnames recur among the boundary calls of the 1790s Deloach-Dancy chain that fixes "John Wilson's Corner."¹⁰ Recurring neighbor names across independently read deeds are a standard, if circumstantial, way of showing that two records concern the same neighborhood — in this case, consistent with Isaac Wilson's son John, settled on the Sasnett tract by 1779, being the same John Wilson whose corner is called out on Walnut Creek in the following decade. It falls short of a deed or will that states the identity outright, and should be checked against the full text of both deed chains before being relied upon.

1804–1807 — William Wilson's Own Household and Will

Isaac Wilson's other documented son, William, appears next in his own right: a will dated 16 June 1804, naming his own children.

"In the name of God amen, I William Wilson of Edgcomb County and state of North Carolina... Item, I give and bequeath unto my Son James Wilson to his heirs and assigns for Ever, the Lower part of my Plantation thereon I now live, begining at a Beach on

⁹Judgment of 17 Sept. 1803 on John Wilson's suit, and order of execution dated 11 March 1804, "for want of personal property," levying one tract of Griffin's land to satisfy the judgment. Same collection as note 7, image 463, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-G1QY-4K8>.

¹⁰The Sasnett-to-Isaac Wilson deed (note 2) calls for Hardy Williamson's and [William] Sherrod's lines as neighboring boundaries on the same tract Isaac later willed to his son John (note 5). The same two neighbor surnames recur among the boundary calls read in the 1790s Deloach-Dancy chain that fixes "John Wilson's Corner" (note 6), which is offered as the compiler's observation supporting a shared neighborhood — not a documented, deed-proven identity between the two John Wilsons — and should be checked against the full text of both deed chains before being relied upon.

the River... then Down the Sd Branch to the Runing Branch, then... to the river... But in case my [son] James Wilson[] Should not live to the age of Twenty one years, or die without shew, then... the aforesaid land[] be the property of my son Lewis D Wilson, to him his heirs and assigns For Ever."

¹¹ The will goes on to name a second son, Lewis D. Wilson, as outright heir to the remainder of the plantation; his wife, Elizabeth Wilson, given a life use of a further portion; a third son, Chris B. Wilson; and three daughters, Nancy, Susannah, and Polly Wilson. William appointed his friend Benjamin Dikin as sole executor.¹² The land William describes as his own home plantation — bounded in part by “the Runing Branch” and “the river” — echoes, without being identical to, the tract Isaac Wilson had willed to his

¹¹William Wilson, will, dated 16 June 1804: “In the name of God amen, I William Wilson of Edgcomb County and state of North Carolina, being weak in body, but of Perfect mind and memory... Item, I give and bequeath unto my Son James Wilson to his heirs and assigns for Ever, the Lower part of my Plantation thereon I now live, begining at a Beach on the River Carr Near Gosneys Old ford, then out the courses of mark was 1 to my back line, then up sd line, to the little branch, then Down the Sd Branch to the Runing Branch, then do the Sd Branch to the river, then Down the River, the Various Courses, to the begining; But in case my [son] James Wilson, Should not live to the age of Twenty one years, or die without shew, then in that case, its my will, and Desire, that the aforesaid land, be the property of my son Lewis D Wilson, to him his heirs and assigns For Ever.” “Edgecombe, North Carolina. Wills 1758-1830,” FamilySearch full-text search, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-JZ92-VM, image 501 of 550>. Accessed Aug. 23, 2026.

¹²William Wilson, will (continuing from note 11): “...I Likewise Give unto my Son James Wilson, one Boy, Called Bob, one Bed and Furniture; Item, I give and Bequeath unto my Son Lewis D. Wilson, to him his heirs and Assigns for Ever, all the Remaining part of my land, and Plantation... Item, I lend unto my beloved wife, Elizabeth Wilson, the use of my Plantation, that I Give to my Son Chris B. Wilson, Dureing her Life or widowhood... the Negroes (to wit) Dave, Martin, and Dirak... to be Equally Divided, between my Three Daughters (to wit), Nancy, Susanah, and Polly Wilson... Lastly I consitute and appoint my Friend Benjamin Dikin, to be sole Executor of this my last will and Testament... In Witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and afixed my Seal, this 16th Day of June, in the Year of our Lord, one thousand eight Hundred and Fore.” Same collection as note 11, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-JZ9G-44, image 502 of 550>.

son William a generation earlier.¹³ That echo is offered here as suggestive, not conclusive.

1807 — Probate and a Family Administrator

William Wilson's will was proved at August Court 1807, and its probate record supplies the detail that ties this will directly to the estate-file research already gathered on "William Wilson" of Edgecombe:

"...The within last Will and Testament of William Wilson dec'd was duly proved in open Court by the oath of James Williford one only surviving subscribing witness thereto — and Benjamin Dicken named therein as ex[ecut]or refused to qualify... Administra[tion] thereof was thereupon granted to William D[icken] with the Will annexed — who was duly qualified thereto."

¹⁴ Benjamin Dikin, named executor in the will itself, declined to serve; the court instead granted administration with the will annexed to William Dicken. The surname Dicken — the same surname carried by William's son "Lewis D." — recurring here as the family that stepped in to settle the estate is a small but concrete data point tying the Dicken family to this specific William Wilson household.

1808–1811 — An Insolvent Estate, Again

As with Edward Griffin's estate five years earlier, William Wilson's proved insolvent. The surviving case file — 26 images, almost entirely creditor writs — records suit after suit brought against "William Dicken, administrator of

¹³Compare the boundary language of William Wilson's home tract (note 11) — bounded in part by "the little branch," "the Runing Branch," and "the river" — with the tract Isaac Wilson willed to his son William a generation earlier (note 3), bounded in part by "the runing branch," the patent's back line, and "the River." This is offered as the compiler's observation, not a sourced claim of an identical parcel, and should be checked against the full deed and plat record, if any survives, before publication.

¹⁴William Wilson's will was proved at Edgcombe County Court, August Court 1807: "...The within last Will and Testament of William Wilson dec'd was duly proved in open Court by the oath of James Williford one only surviving subscribing witness thereto — and Benjamin Dicken named therein as ex[ecut]or refused to qualify... Administra[tion] thereof was thereupon granted to William D[icken] with the Will annexed — who was duly qualified thereto. Ordered that the same be certified and the will recorded." Same collection as note 11, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-JZ9L-GG>, image 503 of 550.

William Wilson,” from 1808 through 1811.¹⁵ A representative example, a writ on behalf of creditor Whitmel Falcon:

“...you are hereby commanded to take the body of William Dicken adm'r of William Wilson if he be found in your county & him safe keep... then and there to answer Whitmel Falcon of a plea that he render to him the sum of one hundred & twenty one dollars & fifty cents...”

¹⁶ No inventory, division, or guardian bond survives within this particular case file — it appears to hold only the litigation paperwork, with the estate's actual settlement recorded separately, if at all, in a docket or account book not bundled into this digitized folder.

Louis D. Wilson — Named for His Mother's Family

“Lewis D. Wilson,” the son named in William Wilson's 1804 will, is a period spelling of Louis Dicken Wilson (1789–1847) — the “D.” standing for Dicken, his mother Elizabeth's family name, a common naming convention of the period.¹⁷ Louis Dicken Wilson went on to serve in the North Carolina Senate and as a militia officer, and died of yellow fever at Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1847 while serving in the Mexican–American War; the town and, later, the county of Wilson, North Carolina, were named in his memory.

¹⁵“Edgecombe, North Carolina. Probate Estate Case Files 1748–1917,” FamilySearch, folder “Wilson, William, 1808,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9179-H16>, images 1639–1664 (26 images). Accessed Aug. 17 and 23, 2026. The folder consists almost entirely of capias and fieri facias writs brought by individual creditors — among them Whitmell Cotten, Hudson Adams, Joseph Bell, Robert Spivey, Moses Smith, Marmaduke Bell, and the guardians Jeremiah Hilliard and Josiah Nelms, suing on behalf of wards — spanning 1808 to 1811; not every image has been individually pulled and cited for this article.

¹⁶Writ, Whitmel Falcon v. William Dicken, administrator of William Wilson, in a plea of debt, referencing the May 1808 term and dated 30 June 1808: “...you are hereby commanded to take the body of William Dicken adm'r of William Wilson if he be found in your county...” Same collection as note 15, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-L179-CQY>, image 1640 of 1,894 (within the reel; image 2 of the William Wilson folder).

¹⁷William S. Powell, “Wilson, Louis Dicken,” NCpedia, <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/wilson-louis-dicken>; “Louis Dicken Wilson,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Dicken_Wilson. Both accessed Aug. 23, 2026; both give his parents as William Wilson and Elizabeth Dicken and his birthplace as the family plantation south of the Tar River in Edgecombe County — consistent with, though not itself proof of, the identification proposed in this article.

FamilySearch's own indexed probate collection carries a "Louis D Wilson" estate file, dated 1847, Edgecombe County — an exact match on both name and death year — running to 91 images, and FamilySearch's Family Tree already links that same probate entry to a person profile for "Col. Louis Dicken Wilson, 1789-1847." ¹⁸ Taken together with the 1804 will naming him as William Wilson's son, this is a strong, if not airtight, identification: Louis Dicken Wilson's parents, per his own biographical record, were William Wilson and Elizabeth Dicken — matching this William Wilson's will exactly in the husband's name, and consistent with an unstated but very plausible Dicken family connection through his wife and, evidently, his estate's own administrator.

Putting the Two Threads Together

If William Wilson of the 1804 will is in fact Isaac Wilson's son William — supported by the matching land description in note 13, though not proven outright — then Isaac Wilson is grandfather to Louis Dicken Wilson, the man Wilson County and the city of Wilson are named for. And if John Wilson of the Deloach-Dancy "corner" and the 1803 Griffin suit is the same John Wilson named as Isaac's son in 1779 — supported by the shared Hardy Williamson / Sherrod boundary names in note 10, again not proven outright — then John Wilson of Walnut Creek would be Louis Dicken Wilson's uncle, one generation removed from the county's namesake and settled in the very neighborhood this research has spent the most time mapping. Both links are built from the same kind of evidence: recurring land descriptions, recurring neighbor names, and a family-name pattern (Dicken, echoed in both "Lewis D. Wilson" and administrator "William Dicken") that is consistent rather than incidental. Neither is a document that says, in so many words, "son of Isaac Wilson deceased." Readers should weigh the chain accordingly.

Open Questions

Is the William Wilson of the 1804 will (father of Lewis D. Wilson) the same William Wilson named as Isaac Wilson's son in the 1779 will? The land-tract

¹⁸"Louis D Wilson," Probate, 1847, Edgecombe, North Carolina, 91 images. "North Carolina, Estate Files, 1663-1979," FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V121-VWV> : Wed Jul 24 18:43:30 UTC 2024), Entry for Louis D Wilson, 1847. Accessed Aug. 23, 2026. FamilySearch's own Family Tree already links this probate entry to a person profile "Col. Louis Dicken Wilson, 1789-1847" (Family Tree ID GFYY-5R5) — a crowd-sourced cross-reference offered here as corroborating context, not as an independently verified source in its own right.

language in both documents shares distinctive terms — “the runing branch,” “the River” — for what would, on this reading, be the same home plantation passed from father to son. No deed or will yet located states the relationship directly.

Is John Wilson of the Deloach-Dancy “corner” and the 1803 Griffin estate suit the same John Wilson named as Isaac Wilson's son? The Hardy Williamson / Sherrod neighbor-name overlap between the 1769 Sasnett deed and the 1790s Deloach-Dancy chain supports a shared neighborhood, not a documented identity. The Deloach-Dancy chain itself has not yet been re-pulled and cited by specific image for this article.

Is Louis Dicken Wilson, namesake of Wilson County, therefore a grandson of Isaac Wilson and a nephew of John Wilson of Walnut Creek? This is the article's central hypothesis. It is well supported circumstantially — matching land descriptions, a recurring Dicken family connection, and an exact name-and-death-year match in FamilySearch's own probate index — but it remains a hypothesis, not a proven fact, until a document is found that states a parent-child or sibling relationship outright.

What became of Willie Wilson, Isaac's son who received the home plantation outright (subject to reaching age twenty-one)? A “Willie Wilson” estate was probated in Edgecombe in 1805 — already identified in earlier research — but has not been cross-checked against this article's findings for consistency with Isaac's 1779 will.

Where does the estate's actual settlement — an inventory, a division among William Wilson's children, or a guardian bond for any minor heir — survive, if it survives at all? The 26-image case file examined for this article contains creditor litigation only; no such document was found within it.