

BRUCE FAMILY.

Family recollections state that the Bruce family so far as they know came from Virginia or North Carolina. Definite memories state that the first known ancestor was probably named James Bruce and that he died near Norfolk soon after the War of 1812 as the result of an old wound. I have sought information from both the U. S. war records and those of N. C. and Virginia. The U. S. has no record of most of the troops as they were state militia. Virginia has no record of a Bruce that I could identify as ours. North Carolina has a thick book with no index which had to be searched page by page but which lists all of her War of 1812 records. In that I found a James Bruce and a Charles Bruce from Caswell Co., N. C. The troops from Caswell were in Norfolk during the War of 1812. This James Bruce might be our ancestor.

The family states that after James Bruce's death, his wife married again and that two maiden aunts took the children (some reports say two and others three boys) and went to Georgia. I think that others of the family must have moved, too, because in those days no two middle-aged females would have taken two or three little boys and moved to a new frontier district. Probably they had brothers that moved, too, and I think they must have tarried for a number of years in South Carolina. They eventually ended up in Talbot Co., Ga. but the first record I have found is from the 1850 Talbot Co. Census which lists the following: p. 228

James Bruce, 42 yrs. of age, born North Carolina, farmer (b. 1808)
Annis Bruce, 38, b. S. C. (b. 1812)
George 21, b. 1829
Melissa 17
James Lafayette 15
Martha 13
Clarissa 11
Silas 9
Spencer Jackson 7
William 4
Catherine 1 month

Cecilia Bruce, 76, born North Carolina (b. 1774)
Martha Bruce, 74, born North Carolina (b. 1776)

I do not know just when the family reached Georgia, but an article in The Atlanta Constitution of 24 Feb. 1901 when Annis Bruce died, states that she moved to Columbus in 1837. However, this article also states that she was born in 1807. The age she gave at the 1850 census would have made her born in 1812--therefore I think we can't be too sure of the 1837 arrival in Columbus--or rather the Columbus area for they lived in Talbot Co. Annis states that she was born in South Carolina. She was Annis Barnhill. I have been unable to find the name of her father or any trace of her family. There were a number of Barnhills in S. C. and a number of Bruce families, but I have not been able to make sufficient research to identify them. I think the Bruces must have tarried in S. C., that James Bruce met and married Annis there and that they then moved on to Georgia. However, the obituary of Annis Bruce written in 1901 says that she moved to Columbus in 1837 and had lived in the area for 30 years. That would mean she was born near Columbus. Part of that story is not true, though, for we know from census records that she was living in Talbot Co., Ga. in 1850 and I think she must have lived there from the time they first went to Georgia (probably in the 1830's) until her husband's death (probably about 1860).

Living near James in Talbot or Marion Co. was Spencer Jackson Bruce, his brother. I think he must have been in Marion Co. because I did not find a record of him in Talbot, but they were living fairly close together on the road between Buenvista and Geneva, Ga. (Information from John S. Bruce of Lineville, Ala.) This Spencer Jackson Bruce had two boys Jack and Monroe.

Robert
Charles

One reason that I feel sure we are descended from the Caswell Co./family of Bruces is that listed as serving in the militia, same company with James and Charles Bruce, was one Spencer Jackson. I have looked at records trying to find some connection in N. C. between the Bruces and Spencer Jackson, but have not been successful. There are many records in N. C. and Va. about Bruce families and they seem to believe that all of them came from one Edward Bruce who was in Jamestown, Va. by about 1620. I have many notes on those families but it is not worthwhile to copy them for the family until I can show our connection. I think it is going to be necessary to find out for certain what the name of the ancestor was who fought in the War of 1812 before we can proceed any further.

Caswell Co. records show that Robert Bruce received a land grant there, No. 488, 13 Oct. 1783, on waters of County Line Creek (grant Book 54, p. 304) and that Alexander Bruce received Grant no. 327, 29 Oct. 1782 (Bk. no. 43) on County Line Creek, beginning at Robt. Bruce's line. Chain bearers on these grants are listed as Alexander Bruce and John Bruce on Robert's grant and Robert Bruce and John Bruce on Alexander's grant. It was the custom in surveying tracts in those days to have brothers or sons help hold the chains. So it is probable that these three were brothers.* Wills and marriage records show the following other Bruces--probably sons of the above three: David, md. 1795 to Prudence Zachary; James Bruce md. Peggy Cobb, 7 Oct. 1808. These two can be identified as sons of Alexander because of a deed 5 Sept. 1805 in which Alexander grants to son James property on which he lives and a part which he had previously granted to his son David to whom James is now to pay 50 pounds for his part. I had thought this James Bruce was possibly our ancestor, but the 1810 census record shows that he had two infant girls instead of boys--so unless the census taker made an error, he could not be.

Among other Bruces who married in Caswell Co. were John Bruce to Nelly Browning, 1796; Robert Bruce to Tabitha Cochran, 1789 (he was son of Robert Bruce, Sr. and later moved to Tennessee); Robert Bruce to Lottey Turner, 1801; Thomas Bruce to Jenny Perry 1792; William Bruce to Betsey Hart 1797; William Bruce to Mary Sawyer 1806; and Spencer Jackson to Rainey Brintle 1815.

There are many Bruces in the surrounding counties in N. C.: Person Orange and others. The most suggestive item I have found was a will in Orange Co. by one Thomas Bruce in Feb. 1784 which leaves property to wife Martha and to sons Richard, John William and Robert and to Robert's children James and Martha. Our ancestor was supposedly James and he had a sister Martha. However, the sister Cecilia was born in 1774 and she should have been named also in a will in 1784--so I doubt that that is the family.

I have written out in brief some of the results of hours of research that I have done in county courthouses and records in the Archives, D. A. R. Library and anywhere I thought I'd get a clue. I have a thick note-book of such notes. Perhaps some of the younger members of the family can find something I have missed. If anyone becomes seriously interested, I will be glad to turn over notes to him.

* The 1790 census of N. C. shows the following Bruces in Caswell Co.:
Alexander, Robert, Sr. and Robert, Jr. in Hillsborough District.
Robert, William and John Bruce in Gloucester District.
Caswell Co. was formed in 1777 from Orange and one Arnold Bruce whose descendants came to Ga. fought in the Revolution from Orange.

To get back to facts that I have found on the family, I will quote pertinent parts of the article that appeared at the time of the death of Annis Barnhill Bruce in The Atlanta Constitution, 24 Feb. 1901:

"Mrs. Anice Barnhill Bruce, who died recently at the home of one of her daughters in this city, was almost a centenarian, and was one of the most interesting characters in Columbus. She was ninety-four years of age and survived by between two and three hundred lineal descendants. She had ten children, seven of whom were living at the time of her death, and many grand-children, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Thus, up to her recent death, five generations of the family were in existence; a rather remarkable and unusual state of affairs.

"Mrs. Bruce was born in the year 1807, and her life was, to all practical intents, contemporaneous with the history of the United States. The family seems marked by longevity for her mother at the time of her death had reached the age of one hundred and eleven years and her eldest sister was exactly one hundred when she expired. Mrs. Bruce moved to Columbus in 1837, and had lived around Columbus for thirty years. Of her nine brothers and sisters, all are thought to be dead except Mrs. Brown, who is supposed to be living in Heard Co., Ga.

"The eldest of her children was George Bruce, who is now living near Mountainboro, Ala.----- From him 10 children, etc.

"Her second child was named Melissa. She had 11 children--- She died about 34 yrs. ago. Part of the family is living in Ga. and part in Texas.

"Mrs. Martha Davis has 4 children and 16 grandchildren.

"Another son, James Lafayette Bruce, lives at Lafayette, Ga. He is the father of 9 children, but has no grandchildren.

"Mrs. Isabel Goodlet, who lives on East Highlands, this city, is her daughter. Other children are: Silas Bruce of near Chauncey, Ga. and William Bruce of Utopia, Texas, and Mrs. Charlotte Cooper of Columbus."

The above confirms the list of children and marriages of James and Annis. Aunt Ada gave me the following list with information:

(30) George-married and moved to Alabama. Lived to be very old. Several child.
(37) James Lafayette-served in Virginia under Lee. Married Ann Rodney Godfrey widow of John Godfrey after the Civil War. James Lafayette was born 10 August 1834 and died 5 June 1915.

(44) Silas md. Augustine Rogers of Columbus, Ga. 14 children.

(46) John William- engaged to marry Huldah Rodney, sister of Ann, but they did not marry. He went to Texas to make his fortune and married there.

(45) Spencer Jackson- married and moved to Mississippi. Family later went to Lineville, Ala. and I have had correspondence with John Silas Bruce who was the son of this Spencer Jackson Bruce and who was living in Lineville, Ala. in 1949. He was born Marion Co., Ga. 20 May 1868. * (772)

(770) Marion- married but died young

(31) Melissa- married a Mr. Hoopough (773)

(32) Martha- md. a Mr. Davis. She did much welfare work in Columbus and was a prominent and well beloved woman there.

(774) He stated he had not known Uncle Lafayette's family since 1876 - which probably means they left for Texas that year.

Isabel- md. Hiram Goodlet. No children of own.

Charlotte- md. George Cooper. They lived in Columbus and reared a family of several children. Their daughter, Gertrude, was prominent in business affairs in Columbus for many years. I have met her son, Ed Cooper, who is very nice indeed and who gave me the article about Annis Barnhill's death.

Mattha, Charlotte and Isabel are all buried in Columbus.

The following notes are from Aunt Ada:

James Lafayette Bruce, my father, must have been a very interesting young man. He danced, sang the popular songs and could play a tune on any musical instrument. He was intensely interested in nature and knew a great deal about plants, trees, birds and animals. He not only knew the common names but also the botanical ones and the medicinal properties of the plants. He had an old Cherokee Indian friend whom he called "Old Indian John" with whom he hunted and fished and who taught him much woods lore. Evidently he had access to a good library for he knew a great deal of history, people and events and was well read in the classics. He was a kind man, although severe at times.

He fought all during the War between the States and was with Lee in Virginia. He was wounded in the heel but was not crippled.

He was born 10 August 1834 in Talbot Co., Ga. and died 5 June 1915 in Rochelle, Ga. On 15 October 1868 he married Nancy Ann Rodney (Rodney) Godfrey, widow of John Godfrey. She was born 21 August 1844 and died 28 Jan. 1903.

Children:

Perry Lafayette- named for maternal grandfather (Perry Rodney) and his father. Md. Sarah Elder. He died in 1955. He was born 2 March 1871 in Jamestown, Stewart Co., Ga. Two children: Perry and Hugh.

John William- named for John Godfrey and for his father's brother, John William. Married Bertha Roberts. He was born 31 Jan. 1873 in Cusseta, Ga. They had two children: Dorothy and John.

McDuffie Blanchard- b. 11 April 1875 in Jamestown, Ga., named for Dr. McDuffie Blanchard of Columbus, a very good friend of my mother and father. He md. O'Della Douglas Simmons. He died 15 Nov. 1938. She has also died and both are buried at Bradentown, Fla. Four children; two living: Hester and John.

Minnie Ann, b. Jamestown, died at 13 yrs. She was eldest child.

Edward Cecil- b. 9 May 1877 at Shuqulak, Miss., named for character in book that his mother was reading. He married Lucy Dixon and died 23 July 1923. Six children. Living: Lucile, Ed, Charles, Robert.

Nancy Ada and Ida Elizabeth- twins, b. 18 July 1879 in Scooba, Kemper Co., Miss. Named for their mother and her sister Huldah Elizabeth. Ada married William Guy Raines and had one son, Guy. Mr. Raines is dead but Ada and her son live in Tallahassee. Ida md. Orley Roscoe DeLoach. They are both dead. Two children:

Laura Edna- b. 28 Aug. 1881 at Chauncey, Ga. and died 14 Nov. 1918 at Rochelle, Ga.. Named for her mother's sister Laura and Edna, fiancée of Walter Rodney. Never married.

Bessie- b. Sept. 11, 1883, named by her aunts, Emma and Laura Rodney for a character in a book they were reading: "Queen Bess." She was born in Chauncey. She is now living at Lakeland, Fla.

You will have noticed that the various children were born at widely scattered places. About 1876 many people were leaving Georgia and going west for after the loss of the slaves conditions were so difficult and Georgia for several years was run by carpet-baggers and negroes. James Lafayette Bruce and his family and the Perry Rodneys and their family and probably William Bruce started out for Texas as noted in material under the Rodney family. James Bruce came back to Georgia when he found that Edward Cecil was having fevers. The other families went on to Texas. Apparently James Lafayette Bruce went to Chauncey (Dodge Co.) Ga. where his brother John Silas was living. I guess that would have been about 1880. I don't know how long he lived there, but according to article in Constitution, he was living in Lafayette (Walker Co.) Ga., in extreme northeast of State in 1901. Soon after that he must have moved to Rochelle, Ga. where both he and his wife were buried. He was engaged most of his life in the lumber business and farming after he found teaching not too profitable.

West

Referring back to James Bruce's brother Spencer Jackson Bruce who came from N. C. with James and the two aunts Cecilia and Martha, I located him in the 1850 census of Marion Co., Ga. The record, p. 451, shows the following:

- Spencer Bruce, b. N. C., 37 (B. 1813)
- Margaret 53 b. S. C.
- Elizabeth 10
- Spency, Jr. 9
- Martha 8
- Susan 6
- Addison 5
- Mary 2
- Nancy 1 mo.

He was said to have died in 1883 and I suppose that was in Marion Co. Records from Talbot Co. show that Spencer Jackson Bruce md. Margaret A. Patterson there on 24 Dec. 1839 and that Monroe Bruce (his son) md. Sarah Jemina Palmer, dau. of Wm. Palmer of Talbot Co. 18 Jan. 1864. Monroe Bruce must have died in the War between the States because his wife is back living with her father in Talbot Co. in 1880.

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I suppose from this marriage date of ¹⁸³⁹1837 that the Bruces were definitely in the Columbus area by that date and probably a little earlier.

Children of James Bruce and Annis Barnhill.

James Bruce gives his age as 42 in 1850 census, therefore born about 1808 in North Carolina. I do not know just when he died. Annis Barnhill gives her age as 38, born South Carolina in 1850 census, therefore born 1812. However, an article in the Columbus Ledger of 1901 when she died, says that she was born in 1807, that she moved to Columbus in 1837. I don't know just when she moved to Columbus but I know they were in Talbotton for a good many years and she probably moved to Columbus after her husband, James Bruce died. Their children were:

- George Bruce, b. 1829, moved to Mountainboro, Alabama.
- Melissa, b. 1833, md. a Mr. Hoopough
- Martha, b. 1837, md. a Mr. Davis
- Isabella, mdm Hiram Goodlett and lived in Columbus
- Silas, b. 1841, lived at Chauncey
- John William, b. 1846, moved to Utopia Texas after War
- Charlotte, md. George Cooper and lived in Columbus (I have met her descendants and they are very nice)
- James Lafayette, b. Aug. 10, 1834, d. 5 June 1915.

James Lafayette Bruce was my grandfather. I gather that he lived in Columbus and taught school when first married, but finding that very unremunerative, he and some other relatives started west. They stopped in Shuquok Miss. for awhile and my father had some sort of fever. His family decided to return to Georgia and the other Bruces and Rodneys went on to Texas. He married Nancy Ann Rodney and their children were:

- Perry Lafayette, b. 2 March 1871, Jamestown, Stewart Co., Ga.
- John William, b. 31 Jan. 1873, Cusseta, Ga.
- McDuffie Blanchard, b. 11 April 1875, Jamestown, Ga.
- Minnie Ann, b. 18 Aug. 1869, Jamestown, Ga.
- Edward Cecil, b. 29 May 1877, Shuquok, Miss.
- Nancy Ada and Ida Elizabeth, twins, b. 18 July 1879, Scooba, Miss.
- Laura Edna, b. 28 Aug. 1881, Chauncey, Ga.
- Bessie, b. 11 Sept. 1883, Chauncey, Ga.

Betty, I have tried to read over all my papers and sift where the family lived down as close as possible. I would gather that my own grandfather, James Lafayette Bruce, was possibly in Chauncey, Ga., Dodge County in 1880. However, I can't be sure. I suggest that you look up Muscogee Co., where Columbus is and look for some of the others in the family--that is, the children named in 1st group as some of them were surely there and probably the mother Annis Barnhill Bruce was living there with one of them. Please note any Barnhills you might find there also. I hate to ask you to do Muscogee because it was a populous county even then, but if you find considerable about the Bruces and Barnhills, it will be worth it. If you prefer, you could look at Chauncey first--that is, Dodge Co. as I suppose the Silas Bruce was probably already living there when James Lafayette moved there.

*James
Lafayette
Stewart
Chauncey
Barnhill*

Extracts from letter from Aunt Bessie Bruce dated October 22, 1956

Copy of Family Record Pages in J. L. Bruce Family Bible

BIRTHS:

James Lafayette Bruce
Nancy Ann Bruce, nee Rodney
Minnie Ann Bruce
Perry Lafayette Bruce
John William Bruce
McDuffie Blanchard Bruce
Edward Cecil Bruce
Nancy Ada Bruce
Ida Elizabeth Bruce
Laura Etna Bruce
Bessie Bruce

Aug. 10, 1834
Aug. 21, 1844
Aug. 18, 1869
March 12, 1871
Jan. 31, 1873
April 11, 1875
May 9, 1877
July 18, 1879
July 18, 1879
Aug. 28, 1881
Sept. 11, 1883

DEATHS:

June 5, 1915
Jan. 28, 1903
Dec. 14, 1882
Nov. 4, 1955
May 27, 1951
Nov. 15, 1936
July 22, 1923
Nov. 30, 1944
Nov. 14, 1918

INTERRED:

Rochelle, Ga.
Rochelle, Ga.
Chauncey, Ga.
Jacksonville, Fla.
Atlanta, Ga.
Manatee, Fla.
Brunswick, Ga.
Claxton, Ga.
Rochelle, Ga.

I notice on the last page of your notes send me you say: "according to article in Constitution he was living in Lafayette (Walker Co.), Ga." The Atlanta Constitution article was in error when it said: "Another son, James Lafayette Bruce, lives at Lafayette, Ga." To my certain knowledge we were living at Rochelle, out at our farm home where mamma and papa lived when they died. He had never lived at Lafayette, Ga. When he came back from Miss. he lived at Chauncey, Dodge County, from 1880 to about 1889 when we moved to Wilcox County. I was 18 years old and remember very well when Grandma Bruce died, and the article was written for the Atlanta Constitution. None of us were in Columbus at the time she died, and the person turning in the data just had not kept in touch with our family enough to know the facts.

I notice also that you refer to Silas Bruce as: "John Silas". His name was "Silas Jordan Bruce". His fourteen children were: Clarence, Cora, Arthur, Emmett, Maude, Irene, Eugene, Frederick, Essie, Cleveland, Loster, Grady, Vivian, and LaVergne, coming in the order named.

I think Monroe Bruce instead of dying in the War between the States separated from his wife, when she moved back with her folks. He married again and came to Rochelle to live for a few years about 1891.- I am not sure of the exact year - and visited at our home. He was nothing to be proud of, and as well as I remember his wife did not approve him and his ways the reason of the divorce.