

OCCGS REFERENCE ONE

THE PIONEER DRAKE FAMILY

by Vera Drake Wade

James Drake Sr. was probably born on the Island of Jersey. He emigrated to America, settling in Virginia where the young James was born May 6, 1795. After young James' mother died and his father re-married, he was given a colt and told he could do for himself, since he had trouble getting along with his stepmother. James was a boy of about 15 at the time. He apparently spent some time in lower Kentucky and then on to Shawneetown, Illinois.

On Sept. 5, 1812, our second James enlisted as a private in Captain Thomas Craig's Company, Illinois Militia, commanded by Col. Whitewide. He was discharged Dec. 2, 1812. (This service of 89 days was the period for which he enlisted and he was mustered out with an honorable discharge.) Along with the above information in the National Archives is given this description of James Drake: "Dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, about 5 2/3 feet high." This description would fit his grandson, Noah Fields Drake.

In Shawneetown, Ill., James lived with and worked for a Rev. Jacob Sexton until he married Jan. 4, 1816. His wife was Margaret Fields, probably born in North Carolina in 1799. Her mother married first a Mr. Fields, by whom she had Margaret, and after his death married a Mr. McClotchy (question as to this name). We know nothing else of what they did or where they lived nor where they died.

James Drake and Margaret Fields Drake had three children, all born in Shawneetown, Ill.: Elizabeth, Wesley, and Susannah. With the Rev. Jacob Sexton they moved to Arkansas in 1822. James settled on the south side of the Arkansas River near McClains Bottom. Then they moved to Lovely's Purchase but had to move when that part was given to the Cherokee Indians. The next move was to Big Frog Bayou, then to Washington County in 1829. This time they settled about 4 1/2 miles south of Lincoln on the Morrow Road. Sexton also moved to this vicinity where he was a preacher.

James Drake settled a place in wild forest with not a mark of improvement. He fenced in some 20 or 30 acres for cultivation and built a small log house with split puncheons for a floor. Of the ten children born to James and Margaret eight grew to maturity. Stephen died at the age of three and James at the age of fifteen. They are buried side by side in the Drake cemetery, with one marker for the two graves. Melissa never married. Elizabeth was married twice, the first time to a Mr. Graham. They had two children, Margaret and Sarah. Elizabeth's second husband was a Mr. Billingsley.

Wesley Drake, the second child and oldest son, married Martha Kellam April 26, 1849 at James Drake's home. Rev. John Oliver performed the ceremony. Their children were Paulina Jane, John Wesley, James Calhoun, Francis Macklin, Martha, Noah Fields, Charles Homer, and Preston Hickerson. They lived on a farm west of Summers, Ark.

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Wesley Drake was a farmer, a staunch supporter of public schools, and a worker in his church (New Church) for which he was a trustee. Several terms of subscription-school were taught in his home, where one large room of his five-room house was set aside for a school room. Mr. W. E. Rosser, father of the late Judge Malcomb Rosser of Muskogee, was his first school teacher.

Wesley Drake was very kind and always willing to help his neighbors, especially new comers. He would never start to the mill with his corn without going by to see if Mr. Rosser, a neighbor, wanted his corn taken also. He was always ready and on hand to go for the doctor when anyone was sick. It is said he had at one time sold his entire wheat crop for 20 dollars, and loaned it to Mr. Rosser to pay the hospital and doctor bill for his wife.

Susannah Drake, third child and second daughter of James and Margaret Drake, married William Nunley. To them were born James, Margaret, Wesley, Lizzie, Frank, Eva, John and Mattie. They lived near Cane Hill, Ark. James Nunley was killed at the battle of Pea Ridge, Ark., while fighting in the Confederate army.

Malinda Drake married William Rineheart April 26, 1849. Their children were Margaret, Jane, Ann, Sarah, and William. They lived near Lincoln, Ark. Malinda Drake Rineheart is buried in the Drake cemetery beside her sister, Martha Jane Drake Pyeatt.

Martha Jane Drake married James Pyeatt. They lived near Cane Hill, Ark. Their children were Mary, Samantha, and Finis.

Jackson Walker Drake was married to Mary Clark, a mixed blood Cherokee. They lived in the Cherokee Nation near where is now Choteau, Okla. He was married the second time to a Miss Vann, also a mixed blood Cherokee. In 1856 Jackson Walker Drake graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Cane Hill College.

Sarah Evaline Drake was married to Capt. William Shannon on Sept. 15, 1859. To them the following children were born: Samuel, Ella, Thomas and Lilly.

Paulina Jane Drake, first daughter and oldest child of Wesley and Martha Drake, was born Nov. 29, 1851. She married John Augustus Wilson, a cousin of Claude Wilson of Chelsea, Okla. They lived near Cincinnati, Ark. She died in 1896, leaving no children.

John Wesley Drake was the eldest son of Wesley and Martha. He was doing a man's work on the farm at the age of twelve. He left home when about nineteen and went to California in 1874, where he met and married Meta Marie Tholcke. Their children were Mae Henrietta, born Nov. 19, 1904, who married Charles Harold Sexsmith Aug. 30, 1936. They live at 851 Volante Drive, Arcadia, Calif. John and Meta's second child was named Noah Fields after John's brother. He died a few weeks after birth. Their third child was Charles Wesley, born Mar. 22, 1908. He is married to Kathryn Thorp and lives on the ranch near Gonzales, Calif., that his father and uncle owned.



MARTHA KELLAM DRAKE
1829—1906



WESLEY DRAKE
October 1818—May 1907
(Father of Noah F. Drake)

At right:
NOAH FIELDS DRAKE

See accompanying article,
"The Pioneer Drake Family"
by Vera Drake Wade.



James Calhoun Drake was the third child born to Wesley and Martha. He was born July 26, 1858. Although schooling facilities were meager, he obtained by unusual perseverance and no small amount of self education, a primary education that later enabled him to successfully compete in the entrance examinations for the Naval Academy at Annapolis. He had to borrow money to get there. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1880. He saw service on five different seas, thus gaining a vast fund of first-hand information regarding harbors, commerce and shipping, and which, during his later business years, proved invaluable to him.

In 1893 he married Fanny Wilcox, daughter of Capt. Alfred H. Wilcox and Maria Antonia Arquello, descendant of Jose Dario Arquello, an early Spanish Governor of California. They lived at Los Angeles where his first position was auditor and director of the Los Angeles Water Company. He afterwards became vice-president of the First National Bank and for over 20 years and up to the time of his death served as one of the Bank's officers. He was president of the Los Angeles Trust and Savings Bank for a time; director of Southern California Edison Company, Southern California Telephone Company, Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company, the Mortgage Guaranty Company, California Delta Farms Company, and the Pacific Finance Company. He rose from a Washington County (Arkansas) country lad to become one of the West's most successful financiers.

James and Fanny Drake had two children, Daphene who married Sayre Macneil, and James Wilcox Drake.

Francis Macklin Drake, third son of Wesley and Martha, married Flora Evelyn Jobe who was born at Dutch Mills, Ark. They lived on a farm adjoining his father's farm near Summers, Ark. Their children were: Clarence, Fannie, Beulah, Martha Beth, Dorothy, and John. Mack, as Francis Macklin was called, went to Cane Hill College for a time and later received a teacher's certificate from the college at Tahlequah, Okla. He moved from the farm near Summers to Westville, Okla. and then to Vinita, Okla. He died in November of 1941 and was laid to rest beside his wife in the cemetery at Westville, Okla. Their children have all married and moved away from Arkansas.

Martha Drake died at the age of three years, six months and six days on March 19, 1865. Noah Fields Drake said there were no doctors to be had at that time because they had all gone to war.

Noah Fields Drake, the one son who returned to Washington County and remained until his death, was born Jan. 30, 1864, near Summers, Ark. When a young boy he helped with the plowing and raising of the crops. He helped market the produce at Van Buren, Ark. and Tahlequah, Okla, the two places where the people in that area did their trading. Since it was impossible to make the trip to either place in one day, he had to camp out along the way. The trip to Tahlequah was dangerous because the Indians often stole their goods at night while they camped.

Noah Fields' early education was in his father's home and at Cane Hill. He was graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1888 with a degree in Civil Engineering. He worked for the Arkansas Geological Survey where he came under the influence of Dr. J.C. Branner whose in-

spiration encouraged him to devote his life to geology. From 1888 to 1893 he pioneered in the geology of Texas, on the State Geological Survey of that state, and also did geological work in the Indian Territory.

During his four years at the University of Arkansas he walked home from his boarding house in Fayetteville, the old Gunter home at the corner of Mission and Maple streets, to his home west of Summers. When he had to spend the night along the way, he usually spent it at some school ground. All this walking prepared him for his geological work in Texas, Oklahoma, California, Mexico, Idaho and China in later years for he almost always walked, seldom using a horse or buggy.

In 1893 he entered Stanford University as a geology major. From that institution he received the degree of A.B. in 1894, A.M. in 1895, and Ph.D. in 1897. Dr. J.C. Branner, professor of geology at Stanford University, writes of Noah Fields Drake's thesis for his Ph.D.: "It is the best doctor's dissertation I have ever seen. It represents a geological study, including economic geology, structure, mineralogy, and paleontology of 2,000 square miles in the coal fields of Indian Territory".

Noah Fields Drake was professor of geology and mining at the Imperial Pei Yang University, Tientsin, China, from 1898 to 1900 and from 1905 to 1911.

In China, Noah Fields Drake met Mary Eleanor Shockley, a Methodist missionary from Lancaster, Ohio. They were married in Pei Tai Ho, China, on Aug. 30, 1904. Their children are: Doris, born at Pei Tai Ho, China, and Vera Marie, born at Tientsin, China.

In 1911 Noah Fields and his family moved to Palo Alto, Calif., where he taught geology one year. He then took the position of professor of geology at the University of Arkansas. His love for Arkansas and its people finally brought him back to his native Washington County.

In Fayetteville, Noah Fields was active in civic affairs. He was an officer of the Ozarks Playgrounds Association, member of the Country Club Board, director of the Fayetteville Building & Loan Association, one of the three original trustees of Fair View Memorial Park Association, member of the board of governors of the Chamber of Commerce for about ten years. He was a member of the City Council from Apr. 7, 1924 to Apr. 7, 1930. In 1926 he helped organize the City Park Company, which he operated for several years. He even mortgaged his own home in order to keep the City Park running during the depression years. In 1945 he sold the Park to the city of Fayetteville for a nominal sum.

Noah Fields Drake was a builder. Eleven residences were built by him in the north part of Fayetteville. In 1928 he built the building now leased to Montgomery Ward & Co. He also built the building leased by Sears Roebuck & Co. An achievement of which he was proud and which attracted wide attention was his black walnut orchard which he planted on his farm north of Fayetteville and where he propagated black walnuts.

Fayetteville's present airport, Drake Field, is named in his honor. He had the foresight to recognize the importance of aviation to north-west Arkansas and he gave to the city the tract of land for the original airport.



Preston Dickerson Drake



John Wesley Drake and Wife



Charles Homer Drake



James Calhoun Drake



Francis Macklin Drake and Family

These are brothers of
Noah Fields Drake

See accompanying article on the pioneer Drake family.

His first wife, Mary Eleanor Shockley Drake, was a worker in the Methodist Church, serving as president of the Women's Missionary Society at one time. She passed away Dec. 25, 1925. Seven years later, he married Lota West Fairchild who now resides in Daytona Beach, Florida. On May 4, 1945 Dr. Noah Fields Drake died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Fayetteville, Ark.

Charles Homer Drake was the bachelor of the family of Wesley and Martha. He graduated from the University of Arkansas with the class of 1891 as a civil engineer. He was retained by several railways and also by the federal government in levee work on the Mississippi River. Due to the unhealthy conditions in the area at that time he contracted malaria. It was for the sake of his health that he went to California in 1910. He engaged in farming with his brother John, who had preceded him to California. Four years later he moved to the 700-acre ranch north of Gonzales that he farmed until his death March 22, 1951. It was there that he helped to rear his niece Mae and nephew Charles Wesley.

Preston Hickerson Drake, being the youngest son, helped his father with the farming in his father's later years. He married Mary Floretta Kirk in April 1901. They lived in Fayetteville for a while where he helped his brother, Noah Fields, in the building of some houses. He was also associated with Peal's Grocery on Center street for a while. His children were: Fred, Charles Fields, Ruth, and Connie. They all moved to Santa Ana, Calif., in 1917. In 1922 Preston Drake died of a heart attack. His oldest son Fred also died but the other three children are still living in California. Charles Fields Drake is married and lives on the Irvine Ranch at Santa Ana. Ruth is now Mrs. George Mehm of Montrose, Calif. and Connie is Mrs. Harry Zarp of Long Beach, Calif. Ruth has no children. Connie and Harry have two girls, both married.

This brings us back to the children of Noah Fields and Mary Eleanor Drake. Their daughter Doris first married Robert A. Leflar in 1927. They were later divorced. There were no children of this union. On April 5, 1949 Doris married Belden Wigglesworth in the American Church in Paris, France. Doris had gone to France to study art. She had received a B.A. and Master's degree from the University of Arkansas. Doris and Belden now live in Washington, D.C.

Vera Marie, second daughter of Noah Fields and Mary Eleanor Drake, graduated from the University of Arkansas with a B.S. degree in Home Economics in 1930. During the school year of 1930-31 she taught home economics in the high school at Prairie Grove, Ark. Vera Marie married George Clifton Wade on Dec. 28, 1928. They are the parents of two children. Their daughter, Mary Sue, is married to Philip Colwell. Both are graduates of the University of Arkansas. They have two children, Linda Marie and Wade Clark, making the sixth generation of the Drake family living in Washington County, Ark.

Vera Marie and George Clifton Wade also have a son, Lynn Fields Wade, who has just recently (1961) graduated from the Law School of the University of Arkansas and has been admitted to the Arkansas bar. He is practicing law with his father in his firm, Wade & McAllister of Fayetteville. Lynn Fields Wade married Marcia Louise Roberts of Baton Rouge, La. on June 27, 1959.

Mrs. Barr Contributes a Billingsley Item.

I have much more on the Billingsley family than I thought. Since checking the names of the children of John and Martha Blair Billingsley, I find that the James Billingsley who was a member of the Cane Hill church was not James, the son of John, so it must have been my ancestor, Maj. James Billingsley. I found another letter of John Billingsley, the one who wrote the letter about life on the Cadron. I copied it and am enclosing it. It speaks for itself.

A Letter written to Mrs. John M. Dearing
by her father, Maj. John M. Billingsley

This letter was written after the death of his daughter Frances, who was a twin of Narcissa Billingsley. Frances died of measles. I found this letter in some papers that belonged to my mother, Dean Wallace Dearing. It is pasted on a piece of cardboard with some Confederate notes and bills. The letter reads thus:

Feb - 5 - 53

Dear childe after my love.

I want you to Be Satisfied a Bout Francis. She is better off than us I doant want you to think that we attach any Blame on you a bout the measles Comming in my family. Iff thare is any Boddy to Blame it is Dr. K--- but I have no idey that he did it A purpose you have a helpis famaly and if you was to cetch the measles it might turminate for the worse it Wont be long if we are faithful that We will have nothing to do but Live together thruh vast Eternity

Francis Sed she wanted you to Be satisfied about not Being with her She Said she wanted you to Be reddy to Meet her in heven I want you not to fret no more than you can help I rec a letter from W Shannon Thare all better.

Yours in haste

John Billingsley

Note: Shannon was his son-in-law. The Confederate notes are: a two collar note, Fort Smith Feb (torn off), published by Flynn and Clayton; a one-dollar note No. 384, 1861, printed at Yellville by J.D. Butler; and a one-dollar note published at Bentonville, Aug. 12, 1862, printed by Woolsey and Prewitt, Jas. Wesley cashier; the others are 20-dollar bills printed at Richmond.

Here is a query which might prove interesting. Wanted: the name of the Dearing from White County, Tenn. who settled in Madison County, Ark. about 1852 and who joined the Caravan that was massacred at Mountain Meadows, Utah.

The Mr. Billingsley of Blossburg, Ala., who wrote to you, is probably descended from Samuel, the brother of John and Maj. James S. Billingsley. Samuel died in Davidson County, Tenn., but most of his descendants went to Mississippi. But he might be descended from Samuel B., the uncle of James and John, who settled in the Sequatchie Valley in Tennessee. Many of his descendants went to Mississippi and Alabama.

— Faye D. Barr,
Baton Rouge, La.