

Unravel the Past LLC
Genealogical & Historical Research
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DATE: 25 February 2016

REPORT TO: [name withheld for privacy]

SUBJECT: William McMechen & Jennet Claypoole

BACKGROUND: Client has supplied the following:

William McMechen, born in 1678 in Karmoney, Antrim, Ireland (not confirmed). He supposedly married in Wales, Jennet Claypoole c 1704. They immigrated to Delaware c 1726.

Jennet was born c 1676 in Wales.

William died 8 OCT 1738 • Mill Creek, New Castle, Delaware. Jennet died 21 AUG 1734 • Mill Creek, New Castle, Delaware.

William's father may have been named James, born c 1660 in Ireland.

Their son was William McMechen.

BIRTH 1715 • New Castle, New Castle, Delaware, United States or Pennsylvania

DEATH 1775 • Spartanburg, Spartanburg, South Carolina, United States

OBJECTIVE: Search for parents (to confirm their identities) of William McMechen (1715-1775) born in New Castle, New Castle County, Delaware or in Pennsylvania, and died in Spartanburg, Spartanburg County, South Carolina

Search for parents of William McMechen (died 8 October 1738) & Jennet Claypoole, the apparent parents of William (above). William (died 1738)'s father may have been James.

Report findings or lack thereof.

ASSIGNMENT: Search Ancestry.com, FindAGrave.com, Delaware Public Archives Collection Gateway & public finding aids.

REPOSITORY: See above, plus University of Delaware Morris Library (open stacks & Special Collections), FamilySearch.org, & Website of Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

CALENDAR OF RECORDS SEARCHED

Ancestry.com

FindAGrave.com

Delaware Public Archives, Collection Gateway & public finding aids (Online Guide to Collections)

FamilySearch.org microfilm catalog subject search

FamilySearch.org microfilm catalog place search

Website of Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) (<http://www.proni.gov.uk>)

Church records held at University of Delaware Morris Library:

- Transcripts of Early Newark, Delaware, Church Records 1739-1906 **Manuscript 347**, 1997, pp.293-589 [viewed the page preceding 293, p.293, p. 294]. Checked for White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church records.
- F. Edward Wright, *Early Church Records of New Castle County Delaware*, 2 vols. (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), vol. 1 & 2, F172.N5 E17x 2007, Normal Loan. Checked for White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church records.
- William D. MacKey, *White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church, Presbytery of New Castle* (Wilmington, Delaware: James & Webb, 1876) Folio F174.W5 M2 & the same call number, Xerox copy, in Special Collections department

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. According to FindAGrave via Ancestry's index which linked to FindAGrave entries, William McMechen (the son) was born in 1715 in Ireland and died in January 1778 in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. This birthplace aligns with the client's immigration date of circa 1726. William (the father) died 8 October 1738, aged 50 years 9 months, so his birth would have been approximately 1678.
2. William (the son) did not have a probate record in Spartanburg County, South Carolina according to an Ancestry search for him on Ancestry's probate collection. However, a William McMeecken (a slightly different spelling, but spelling was not standardized at that time) did have a probate record dated 2 August 1776 in Charleston County, South Carolina. Either this is the same individual and the 1778 death date is incorrect or this is not William McMechen (the son).
3. William (the father) was buried at White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church according to FindAGrave. William McMechen's (the father) 1738-1739 probate record from the Delaware Public Archives (Record Group 2545 Series 001) indicates that Rebecca McMechen and James McMechen were the administrators of his estate. (Having had administrators means that William [the father] died without leaving a will. If he had left a will, his estate would have had executors in charge of it rather than administrators). FindAGrave listed both a James and a William as William (the father)'s children.

If William's (the father) father was in fact named James, this would follow logically because a James (possibly William's son) was an administrator of his estate and listed as a child on William's (the father) FindAGrave entry and may have been named after his (James') grandfather.

4. The PRONI & FamilySearch.org place searches yielded no Karmoney, County Antrim results (church records & Census substitutes) or circa 1715 Presbyterian church records

Manuscript 347 (in the church records noted above) yielded no positive results, nor did the Early Church Records yield any. Manuscript 347 did not contain early enough death records (but was checked in case it did as 1738 was close to 1739). *Early Church Records* did not contain any records from White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church. However, MacKey's 1876 publication on the church yielded results which may be used as clues. A William McMechen was a trustee of White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church in 1827[sic, probably a typographical error, the date meaning 1727]. In 1713, the pastor of "the people at White Clay Creek" changed. This new pastor (George Gillespie) could have logically been their pastor in 1715, when William the son was apparently born, and Gillespie may have baptized him and kept private baptismal records. However, MacKey believed that Gillespie was pastor of what later became Head of Christiana Church, not White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church (where William the father was buried). Further, White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church was not established until 1721 (see research notes). This was too late for a record of William (1715)'s baptism as a child under the age of seven years (assuming both dates are correct and he was born in America rather than Ireland). Thus, William (the son) was likely born in Ireland as FindAGrave indicates.

The second pastorate was under Rev. Charles Tennent, from 1737 to 1763. It is during this pastorate that William (the father, probate 1738-9) died. Private pastoral records of William's death and/or burial may exist.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Search New Castle County deeds in person in Dover for a possible land grant or sale between the two William McMechens. William's 1738-1739 probate record was the only online result for William McMechen in the Delaware Public Archives Collection Gateway.

RESEARCH NOTES

Please note that copies of some pages of records searched are provided, but they may not be published, without authorization from the University of Delaware's Special Collections department. Other organizations have similar restrictions, so please check with the genealogist if you intend to publish any of the documents.

MacKey's 1876 church history indicated that:

In 1708, according to the records of the Philadelphia Presbytery, a part of the New Castle [Delaware] congregation (those residing near White Clay Creek), requested preaching at a location closer to their places of residence. However, other members of the New Castle congregation opposed the idea. The Philadelphia Presbytery ordered that the pastor, Rev. Mr. Wilson, preach on alternating Sabbaths in New Castle and "the country". Wilson died in 1713, and in the same year Mr. George Gillespie was ordained 'on a call from the people of White Clay Creek'. According to MacKey, this situation involving the people of White Clay Creek referred to those at Head of Christiana Church, not White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church (p.4).

MacKey's logic is as follows:

- a) Mr. Gillespie's tombstone at Head of Christiana Church states "Ordained Pastor of this Church in 1713."
- b) "[T]here is no hint in the records of the original Presbytery of Philadelphia that" Gillespie ever transferred "pastoral relation."
- c) In the opening statement in the record of the organization of the Presbytery of New Castle in 1717 [too late for William's birth if 1715 is correct], Gillespie is the minister and John Steel is the elder from Christiana Creek. MacKey states that Christiana Creek is later named Head of Christiana Creek and then subsequently Head of Christiana. "White Clay Creek [was] not mentioned," nor does the name occur in the [Philadelphia] Presbytery or Synod records from Gillespie's call as pastor in 1713 "until the year 1721." A Synod was a higher-level governing body than a Presbytery.¹
- d) Head of Christiana Church is in White Clay Creek Hundred and is "very little more than a mile" from the creek, therefore designating the congregants as " 'of and about White Clay Creek' was not" out of the ordinary.
- e) "Three Elders who frequently represented Head of Christiana in the Presbytery of New Castle from 1717 to 1731, had also frequently been members of the Presbytery of Philadelphia up until the formation of the Synod in 1717." Thus, one may infer that those elders represented the same church.
- f) The father of one of the elders leased the Head of Christiana property to six elders in 1732, at which time there was already a church building and graveyard with a wall around it, and a new church was being planned.

This theory was the only account for the origin of Head of Christiana Church.

The origin of White Clay Creek Church is accounted for later, and no names later linked to White Clay Creek Church had ever appeared in the Presbytery records.

The first pastorate at White Clay Creek began in 1724 (p.10).

William McMechen sold land with John Montgomery, William Steel, William Nevin, Hugh Clark, and Ramage [all trustees] to Rev. Thomas Craighead (p.14) on April 10, 1827 [likely a typographical error, meaning 1727].

Charles Tennent, White Clay Creek Presbyterian Church, & Gillespie (for George) (each searched separately) yielded only Gillespie, Texas results at FamilySearch.org (catalog subject searches).

¹ *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary> : accessed 25 February 2016), "synod" full definition.