

A Step Back in Time

By Bobbie Sue Shelton-Lonas

Civil Order - An Independent Community

The plantation of James and Sarah Williams, "Civil Order", is part of the local history of this area that is relatively forgotten or unknown to most people, other than Williams family and descendants. James Williams had the initiative and ambition, unheard of, in his day. To be able to establish a successful independent community was quite an accomplishment, in the early 1800's. Today, this previous community, on highway 31A (Horton Highway), in Marshall County near Chapel Hill, is marked only with a cemetery and a restored smokehouse located nearby.

On October 8, 1808, James A. Williams, son of William and Nancy Haislip Williams, married Sarah Allison, daughter of Robert and Sarah (Ogilvie) Allison. James was born December 16, 1785 in Granville County N. C. His family was originally from Wales. His bride, Sarah, was born June 13, 1789 in North Carolina.

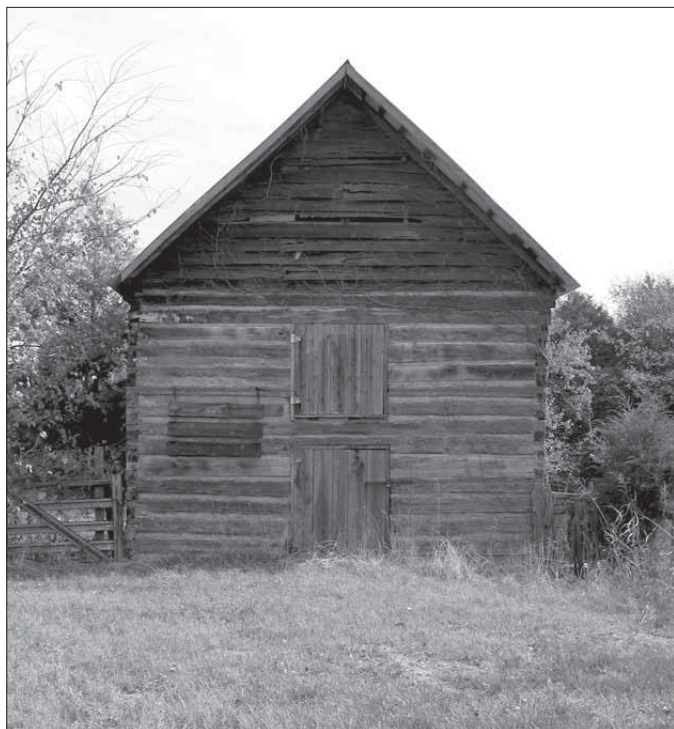
The newlyweds, James and Sarah made their first Tennessee home, about 3 miles north of the present community of Eagleville and east of College Grove.

At this time, Eagleville must have been a little on the wild side. James Williams, who was a Methodist minister, did not like the free and easy ways of some of his neighbors and felt there was too much disorder in Eagleville for his family. In about 1812, he relocated his family to an area 2 1/2 miles south of the present Holts Corner area on Henry Horton Highway (31A). Williams selected the name "Civil Order" for his plantation because he had said, "Here I will have law and order."

Their new home site was on Spring Creek, which furnished plenty of water for the farm and a freshwater spring supplied the family's new two-story log house, until a well could be dug. Slave cabins, a gristmill, tannery, saw mill, barns and other outbuildings were soon added as the Williams plantation continued to grow. A blacksmith shop, woodwork shop and store made the farm almost self-supporting. The mercantile contained a general store, wine cellar and tailor shop. James Williams was a gifted tailor, cutting and fitting men's suits from the finest materials available. A post office was also established and given the name "Civil Order".

Reverend James Williams built a church south of the family home and established a cemetery just west of the structure. He also traveled the region to preach the gospel and hosted Methodist conferences at his home, which drew large crowds.

Merchandise for his store was purchased in Cincinnati, traveling there by horseback. His supplies were shipped via boats back to Nashville, where wagons awaited to transfer the goods on southward to Civil Order. Crowds, in a festive mood, would gather to watch the workers restock the shelves of the store, with new merchandise.



Civil Order Smokehouse (restored)
Only building left of the Civil Order Plantation

After living in the log house for several years, James and Sarah built a larger brick house...the first in the region. Every room had a fireplace and handmade blinds enclosed a wide porch at the front, similar to Venetian blinds of today, except heavier. The kitchen and cooks' quarters continued to occupy buildings at the rear of the new brick home, as they had at the old house.

Cherry and mahogany furnishings graced each room and a stately grandfather's clock was a centerpiece of the home. Gardens and bordered walkways added to the charm of the place.

Rev. Williams proved many times that his wishes could be carried out. He even established a silkworm colony in his carriage house and had dresses for his daughters made from the raw silk.

In addition to his busy life at Civil Order, Reverend Williams also established a water mill on the Duck River, five miles away and had extensive land holdings in Mississippi. Private teachers who resided with the family taught his children at home.

Sarah Allison Williams died October 6, 1843 and was buried in the churchyard cemetery at Civil Order. After Sarah's death, Reverend Williams married Mrs. Ann Pollard, a widow. They had no children and she survived him by about 30 years. Rev. Williams died October 22, 1850 and is buried between his two wives.

There are many descendants of James and Sarah Williams still living in Eagleville and surrounding areas. The eldest son, Chesley, (1809-1892) has often been given credit for the establishment of the Eagleville Community. In 1830 he married Elizabeth Jordan, daughter of Thomas and Sophia Hyde Jordan. In 1832, Chesley moved to this area from Triune and established a store, the first of several businesses that helped put our community, later known as Eagleville, on the map. Other children of James and Sarah are:

Mary J. Williams (1811-1863) married 1st Joseph H. Brittain and 2nd _____ Ferguson

Robert Norwood Williams (1811-1844) married Parilee Ensley

Jane Williams (1812-1879) married Hiram Murdock

William Allison Williams (1813-1902) married 1st Mary Wilhoit Murdock and 2nd Martha Hardison.

James Williams (1823 -?) married Anne Eliza Hughes.

Sarah Ann Williams (1826-1863) married Cowden McCord.

Elizabeth Angeline Williams (1828-1906) married Thomas Henry Petway Morton

Elgin T. Williams (1830-1900) married Rebecca Frances Boyd

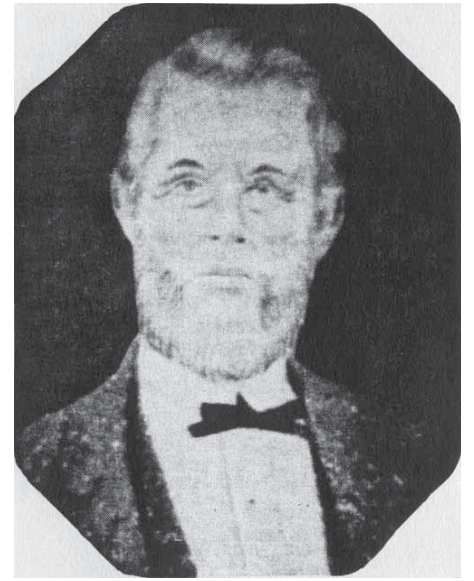
Martha Matilda Williams (1831-1864) married Alfred O. Williams

In 1850, Sarah, daughter of James and Sarah Williams, had been married about six years to Cowden McCord and were making their home in near-by Allisona. Soon as her father's death, they purchased the home place and at the age of 24, Sarah became mistress of her childhood home.

Cowden McCord probably carried on some, if not most, of James Williams's industries and he apparently continued to prosper. Early in the decade, as their family grew, the McCord's built the attractive two-story front addition to provide more living space in the old home. The addition faced the new road to Nashville and contained



Sarah "Williams" McCord



Cowden McCord



Civil Order the stately ancestral home of the Williams/McCord families of Marshall County, Tennessee, was originally built by Rev. James and Sarah Williams. Their first home was a log structure, the second was brick, which was later fronted by the handsome addition as pictured in this photo from the 1950's.

four large rooms and central halls.

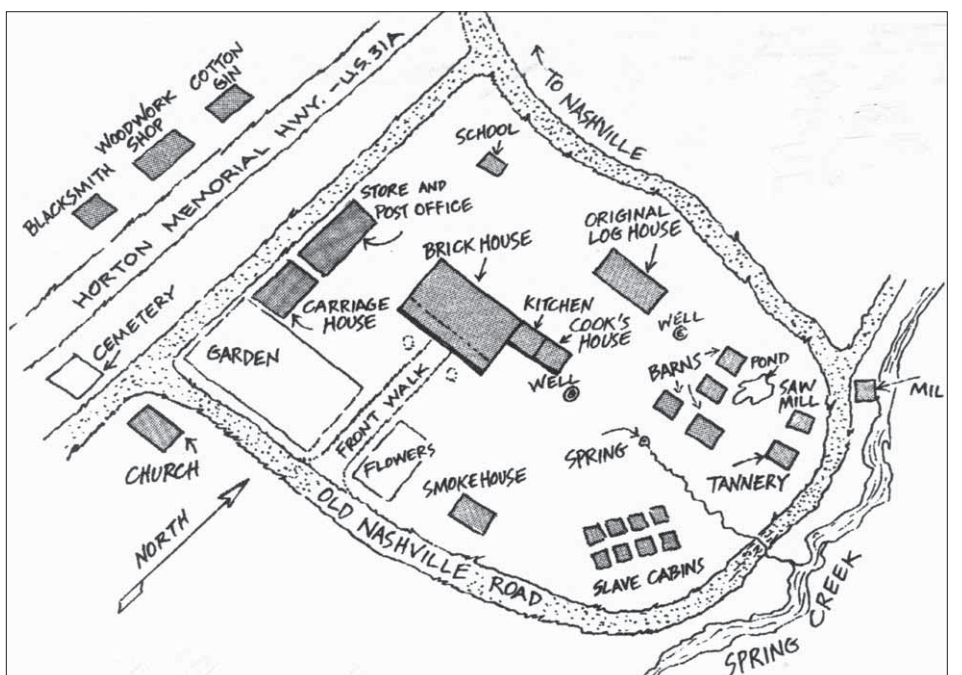
It is believed that about this time, the Civil Order post office, was discontinued and the site became known as the McCord place.

The Civil War came to Tennessee in 1862 and federal troops occupied the area much of the time, for the next three years. There were many nearby battles and Union troops were at the McCord place numerous times, taking provisions and wreaking havoc generally. On one visit they carried away the entire contents of the smoke house and another time they took all the meal that they could carry from the gristmill. The remaining meal that could not be taken away was poured into the mill's raceway through a hole in the floor. The soldiers then set the mill to grinding, with no corn so that the burrstones would be worn slick.

But the great tragic misfortune for the McCord's was that Sarah contracted a severe

form of measles, brought in by the northern soldiers and died in June 1863, leaving her husband with seven children, ranging in age from two to sixteen. According to family stories, Henry Granville McCord, the oldest son, had already ran away at age 15 to join the Confederate forces as a carrier for General Nathan Bedford Forrest. The two older daughters, Martha Adella and Sarah Elizabeth, plus a black nanny, cared for the younger children, Nannie and Cora. A while later, Cowden married his second wife, Sarah Wilson.

Cowden survived the war with his holdings reasonably intact and continued to farm his place until his death in 1879. During this period, most of the old Williams' industries were probably discontinued and Cowden concentrated on managing his land, raising crops, cattle and hogs. He was a Justice of the Peace, a Democrat and a Cumberland Presbyterian.



'CIVIL ORDER' Plantation as it existed prior to 1850 - The plan of Civil Order is from a drawing appearing in Beulah Williams Howland's "History of Rev. James Williams & Family" - Art by Craig Ogilvie

Cowden's son, Henry G. McCord graduated from Cumberland University in 1873 and, in 1877, married Cynthia Virginia Ogilvie and they became owners of the McCord place after his father's death. The raised their family of seven children and continued to farm the land. When Henry died in 1910, his second daughter, Camilla Sue, dropped out of Cumberland University and returned home to help her mother, Lillie, run the farm.

In about 1914 or 1915, Camilla and Lillie remodeled the old home. They had the back section, which had been built by James Williams torn away and replaced. The remodeled house had a bathroom, featuring running water. It was drawn up from the well by a massive (by today's standards) gasoline-powered pump to a reservoir above the bathroom. Gravity then provided the power to the taps.

Camilla married Clarence N. Giles in

1920 and they continued to live at the McCord place with Lillie. Soon the first members of the fifth generation to live on the farm were born. The couple continued to farm, but on a greatly reduced scale, and Clarence managed the Wilhoit Mill on Duck River.

Lillie died in 1935 and, a little later, the Giles family moved to Lewisburg. The house was occupied for a while by several of the children of Marks Wright McCord, who was the eldest son of Henry and Lillie. In 1940, the place was sold to Powell Maxwell.

In 1975, the old house burned to the ground. The only original building left is the old log smokehouse, near the location where the home stood.

The well-kept Williams-McCord Cemetery is located south of the home site, near the present Horton Highway. Tall impressive monuments marks the graves of James

Williams (Sacred to the Memory of Rev'd James Williams who was born 26th Dec 1785. Departed this life 22nd Oct. 1850 in peace with God) and Cowden McCord (Jan 14, 1809 Departed this life Aug. 4, 1979). Other marked graves are:

Lucy Peace, who was a sister to James Williams

Daniel Williams, brother to James Williams and Lucy Peace Williams

H. G. McCord, Son of Sarah & Cowden McCord

Lillie V. McCord, H. G. McCord's wife

Fletcher Williams, Infant son of James & Sarah Williams

Nancy Williams, Infant daughter of James & Sarah Williams

James Elgin McCord, Son of Sarah & Cowden McCord

Maude Ogilvie, Sister of Lillie (Ogilvie) McCord

Elizabeth Sophronia Murdock, Daughter of Jane (Williams) & Hiram Murdock

Sarah Williams, 1st wife of James Williams

Ann Williams, 2nd wife of James Williams

Sarah A. McCord, Wife of Cowden McCord

Sallie E., Daughter of Cowden & Sarah McCord

Nancy McCord, Daughter of Henry & Lillie McCord

The above information on "Civil Order" was from a publication, Ogilvie Kith and Kin and History of Eagleville and other publications. My thanks to those who have kept records of our history, especially local history, so they can be shared and passed down to future generations.