

## SUBSTITUTES FOR GEORGIA CENSUS RECORDS, 1781-1820

by Robert Scott Davis  
Family & Regional History Program  
Wallace State College  
PO Box 2000  
Hanceville, AL 35077-2000

*All sources listed below with an asterisk (\*) are available at Wallace State College.*

The largest single period of Georgia's population growth, in percentages, came in the years 1783 to 1810, when thousands of families seeking new lands and new beginnings settled in the vast, largely unpopulated, young state. This migration, chiefly from Virginia and North Carolina, was on such a scale as to have national consequences. However, while this movement initiated the final settlement of what would be today's state boundaries of Georgia, these same families also continued moving, settling Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, and beyond. A typical family of the period might have moved to Wilkes County (Georgia) from Virginia in the 1780s, moved on to the lands opened by the 1805 Georgia land lottery by 1808, be living in northern Florida by 1818, and residing in Alabama prior to 1830.

Such movements were so rapid that only accidental discovery or place of birth given in post-1840 federal census records may be the only means by which a genealogist discovers that a particular family ever lived in Georgia or that a missing ancestor/generation rests today somewhere on the waters of Georgia's Oconee River. The loss of the federal census records for Georgia for 1790-1810 and the many problems with the 1820 census of Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee do not make tracking an early Georgia ancestor easier.

Fortunately, Georgia's reputation for having a wealth of records serves it well for this complex period, although those records are often unique to Georgia and confusing to the uninitiated. Given below are the general and state-wide sources:

Barefield, Marilyn Davis Hahn. *Old Cahaba Land Office Records & Military Warrants 1817-1858*. Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1986.\* This Alabama federal land office was actually in Milledgeville, GA from 1817 to 1818. The land office records often indicate the county in Georgia in which the applicant lived. Ms. Barefield has published similar volumes on the other Alabama land offices.\* Also see Philip W. McMullin, *Grassroots of America* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gendex Corp., 1972), an index to the land claims volumes of the *American State Papers*.\*

Davidson, Grace G. *Early Records of Georgia Wilkes County*. (2 vols. Macon, GA: Burke, 1932).\* In 1790 more than forty percent of Georgia's population lived in Wilkes County, making Wilkes' almost complete, surviving records, exceptionally valuable for locating information on a person within Georgia during the late 1700s. Also see Robert S. Davis, Jr., *The Wilkes County Papers* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1980);\* Frank Parker Hudson, *A 1790 Census For Wilkes County, Georgia Prepared From Tax Returns*

(Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1987); idem., *Wilkes County, Georgia Tax Records, 1785-1805* (Atlanta: The Author, 1996); and the R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation (below).\*

Idem., *Historical Collections of the Georgia Chapters Daughters of the American Revolution*. (4 vols., Various printers, 1929- ). \* Volume two contains abstracts of the early records of Richmond County and volume three is the records of Elbert County. For Burke County see William H. Dumont's articles in *Georgia Genealogical Gems* (Washington, DC: National Genealogical Society, 1981). Many other books on records of this period have been published on individual counties such as the works on Chatham County and Savannah by the Genealogical Committee of the Georgia Historical Society.

Davis, Robert S. *The Georgia Black Book* (2 vols., Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1986-1988).\* Among the records included in these volumes are proclamations by Georgia governors for fleeing felons, early prison records, and 1790s federal tax defaulters (published in 1812). Also see idem., *A Researcher's Library of Georgia* (2 vols., Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1986-1988).

Geiger, Linda Woodward and Frankel, Meyer. *Index to Georgia's Federal Naturalization Records to 1950 (Excluding Military Petitions)* (Atlanta: Georgia Genealogical Society, 1996).\* Also see Kenneth Scott, *British Aliens in the United States During the War of 1812* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979)\*.

*Index to Headright and Bounty Grants of Georgia, 1755-1906*. (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1969).\* The Georgia headright grants serve as a census substitute for 1784-1790s. Loose records relating to these grants and plats that name neighbors and chain carriers who may be relatives are in the Georgia Department Archives. We have a special index to the indexes of the plats on CD Rom disk; a published index to the loose headright and bounty land grant files is Robert S. Davis, *The Early Settlers of Georgia*\* (1999), and microfilm of the early plats. Also see Nathan and Kaydee Mathews, *Abstracts of Georgia Land Plat Books A & B 1779-1785* (Fayetteville, GA: The Authors, 1995).\*

Kratovil, Judy. *An Index to War of 1812 Service Records for Volunteer Soldiers of Georgia*. (Atlanta: The Author, 1986).\* At least one fifth of Georgia's white adult males are named in this book, making it a census substitute and people finder for 1812-1815. Genealogically valuable bounty and pension records for many of these soldiers can be found in the Military Service Records of the National Archives. Also see the unpublished military records typescripts at the Georgia Department of Archives and History known as "Georgia Military Affairs" and "Georgia Indian Depredations Claims"; Murtie June Clark, *American Militia in the Frontier Wars, 1790-1796* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1990);\* Virgil White, *Index to Volunteer Soldiers 1784-1811* (Waynesboro, TN: National Historical Publishing Company, 1987);\* idem., *Index to Volunteer Soldiers in Indian Wars and Disturbances* (same publisher, 1994); \*and National Archives micropublication M233, Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914. The later has records of soldiers for 1798-1815 that give county and state of birth.\*

Potter, Dorothy Williams. *Passports of Southeastern Pioneers 1770-1823*. (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1982).\* This book is the best set of abstracts of the permits issued by Georgia governors to allow families to pass through Indian lands to the south and west.

Names of persons found in some petitions in the Cuyler Collection appear in John D. Stemmons, *Georgia Petitions, 1778-1782* and *Georgia Petitions, 1785-1794*, both published in Sandy, Vermont in 2004.

R. J. Taylor Jr. Foundation. *An Index to Early Georgia Tax Digests*. (5 vols. Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, 1987)\*. These volumes index certain selected Georgia tax digests for 1789-1817. Many other early Georgia tax digests have survived. Also see Ruth Blair, *Some Early Tax Digests of Georgia* (1926; reprint edition with index, Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1971); and Martha W. Acker, *Franklin County Tax Digests* (4 vols., Birmingham, AL: The Author, 1980-1987).\* Ms. Acker has also published a number of other books on Franklin County.\* The Georgia Archives has an almost complete set of tax digests for 1872 to present. Most of these volumes are indexed and available online at least past 1890, along with some early federal records, in ancestry.com.

Wood, Virginia Steele. *1805 Land Lottery of Georgia*. (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1964).\* The 1805 land lottery was participated in by almost every head of a household in Georgia and serves as a substitute for Georgia's lost 1800 and 1820 federal censuses. Persons registered in this lottery with two chances (BB, PB, or PB) were married or had children. Lists of the winners of Georgia's later land lotteries of 1807, 1820, 1821, 1827, 1832, and 1833 have been published as a series of books by the Southern Historical Press.\* These land lottery books are being redone in new and more complete editions. The 1805 lottery books by Paul Graham is already available.\*

## NEWSPAPER SOURCES

Georgia is exceptionally blessed in access to its early newspapers. An unpublished, typescript, every name index to the Savannah newspapers is available at the Georgia Department of Archives and History, the Georgia Historical Society Library, and the University of Georgia Libraries.\* For the *Augusta [Georgia] Chronicle* see Alice O. Walker, *Personal Name Index to the Augusta Chronicle* (4 vols., Augusta: Augusta-Richmond County Public Library, 1987-1996).\* (We also have this newspaper on microfilm.) For Milledgeville, an early Georgia capital, there is Fred R. and Emilie K. Hartz, *Genealogical Abstracts From the Georgia Journal (Milledgeville) Newspaper* (Vidalia: The Authors, 1990).\* Tad Evans and Elizabeth Kilbourne have abstracted many early Georgia newspapers.\* Marriage and death notices from several newspapers are included in Mary B. Warren, *Marriages and Deaths from Extant Georgia Newspapers* (2 vols., Danielsville, GA: Heritage Papers, 1968-1972).\*

## MISCELLANEOUS

A number of unpublished sources for early Georgia research are at the Georgia Department of Archives and History. The File II Names and File II Counties is a collection of files of loose original records. The original government records to 1800 have been microfilmed as File II Names Pre-1800. The Georgia Archives also has a series of unpublished but indexed

typescripts of pre-1800 government journals. An index to these files is published in a book *Georgians Past*.\* The Telamon Cuyler Collection in the Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Georgia Libraries, has thousands of letters, petitions, military rolls, etc. from early Georgia. The index to 1785 for these papers has been published in volume one of *A Researcher's Library of Georgia*.\*

Records of migrations to Georgia are regularly published in such journals as *Georgia Genealogical Magazine*, *Georgia Genealogical Society Quarterly*, *Southside Virginian*, *Virginia Genealogist*, and *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*. The latter two journals include abstracts of British merchants claims in the British Public Record Office that often indicate migration to Georgia.