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The Tradition of Irish Heritage in the William and Prudence Barron family

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For more than a century, descendants of William and Prudence Barron have embraced the belief that this couple immigrated to the American colonies from Ireland a few years before the Revolutionary War. Where did this tradition arise and can it be corroborated?

The earliest known written statements regarding our Barron line's Irish heritage appeared in documents penned by John Davis Garrard to two cousins: Peter Roquemore Garrard (dated December 1891) and Joseph Day Barron (dated August 1892).¹ (View transcriptions of all known John Davis Garrard documents in the article, "Early Barron family research – the writings of John Davis Garrard," at Barron Genealogy blog: <https://barrongenealogy.blogspot.com/>).

Where did John Davis Garrard obtain this story of Irish origin? As Garrard explained to Barron in his letter dated August 18, 1892:

"When, in my youth, I commenced to keep a record of my foreparents, I designed keeping but little more than an account of my ancestors in a direct line down to myself. My father told me a good deal about his kin folks, and proposed at the time I was writing down many things, to give me the names of his Garrard and Barron relatives. I only wrote down a few of their names then, but after his death in 1871, I commenced keeping a record of names and facts that I could recollect and gather from others." [italics for emphasis by VBK]

It is likely that John D. Garrard's father, Hiram, informed him that the Barrons came from Ireland. It is also possible that the younger Garrard may have discussed the family history with William Barron (Jr.) (1769-1848), his great-uncle [brother to Elizabeth Garrard and a son of William and Prudence Barron]. John Davis Garrard wrote: "I saw him [William Barron (Jr.)] frequently until I was near 21 years of age. Was present at his death and burial."

If one or both of these men were Garrard's source(s) of the Irish tradition, the proximity of their lifetimes to the purported immigration lends more credence to the story. William Barron (Jr.) would have heard a first-hand account from his parents and possibly from older siblings. Hiram Garrard had access to first- or second-hand

¹ *J. D. Garrard (1827-1903) was a son of Hiram Garrard (1800-1871) and grandson of Elizabeth Barron Garrard (1765-1827), daughter of William and Prudence Barron.*

P. R. Garrard (1859-1933) was a great-grandson of Elizabeth Barron Garrard.

J. D. Barron (1833-1910) was a son of Hiram Barron (1801-1872) and grandson of John Barron (1763-1823), son of William and Prudence Barron. The fathers of these correspondents, Hiram Garrard and Hiram Barron, were double first cousins: Elizabeth and John Barron (sister and brother) married Jacob and Frankie Garrard (brother and sister).

Note that other Barron branches had traditions of an Irish heritage, but all appear to have been recorded later than Garrard's writings. See Appendix I for these stories.

reminiscences of his mother and her siblings. One intriguing comment related by John Davis Garrard was that his grandmother “always spoke with a little Irish brogue as long as she lived.” Garrard would not have known this particular personally, as Elizabeth Barron Garrard died before he was born, but it may have been passed to him by his elders as part of the Irish tradition.

This paper examines in depth the available history of Garrard’s writings and the evolution of his claims of Irish heritage – and then compares them to stories from other family lines and to findings from DNA testing.

Before delving into Garrard’s writings, it is important to accept that he made mistakes. Names, places and dates have been found in error, particularly regarding collateral lines, which he admitted were added later to his family record.² But, it should also be conceded that documentary evidence confirms that Garrard got many things right. Those details that we have not yet confirmed should be investigated closely and evaluated carefully before concluding their validity (or lack thereof) – for example, that Prudence Barron’s husband was named William and that her maiden name was Davis ... and more importantly for the topic of this document... that the Barrons were of Irish extraction.

In John Davis Garrard’s writings of December 16, 1891 to P. R. Garrard of Putnam County, GA, and of August 18, 1892 to J. D. Barron of Montgomery County, AL, he explained the Barron’s Irish origin. From his letter to Barron:

“I will commence back with *two brothers, John Barron, Sr., and William Barron, Sr., of Ireland*; which is as far back as I can trace the history of the Barrons on my ancestors side.

John Barron, Sr. was an old bachelor, and came to America some years before his brother, William, for he had returned to Ireland several times on visits before he persuaded William to come with him. My father told me that he did not know what became of him....

William Barron, Sr. of Ireland and his children, are Capt. William Barron of Warren County, Georgia, and his children. About 1762 [or 1760] as near as I can ascertain William Barron, Sr., and Prudence Davis were married in Ireland. Two or three of their children were born in Ireland. *About 1766, I estimate they came to America* and settled in Warren County, Georgia....

Now, *I would like very much to know something about the history and pedigree of that Barron family in Ireland and America that you mentioned having. If possible, I would like to have a copy.* Is it printed? And can another copy be secured.” [italics for emphasis by VBK]

Garrard identified the first two immigrants, brothers John and William Barron (Sr.), and the time of their immigration: “About 1766, *I estimate* they came to America....” Garrard’s verbiage indicates that he was conjecturing about the immigration date and perhaps the county where they located in Georgia. [Documentary evidence shows that the Barrons never lived in Warren County, though they did settle in adjacent Wilkes County, GA, by the mid-1780s and possibly earlier]. But Garrard seemed quite confident in identifying Ireland as their native soil.

It is significant that in Garrard’s documents of December 1891 and August 1892, he did not specify from which county in Ireland the Barrons originated. The appropriation of the idea of County Waterford, Ireland, as the Barron homeplace came in a follow-up letter to J. D. Barron dated September 17, 1892 – after Garrard had received and

² Garrard erred in identifying Samuel Barron of Jones County, GA, as a son of William and Prudence Barron – though Y-DNA has identified that Samuel was closely related. See Appendix II below for a discussion of this family’s heritage.

read the book that J. D. Barron sent him about “the history and pedigree of that Barron family in Ireland and America....”

After considerable searching for what this book might be that so affected Garrard and Barron, I located *American family antiquity, being an account of the origin and progress of American families, traced from their progenitors in this country, connected with their history abroad*, by Albert Welles, published in 1880, just twelve years prior to the correspondence of the two Barron descendants. A copy of this book is available online, with the Barron section beginning on page 21: <https://archive.org/stream/americanfamilyan01well#page/n37/mode/2up>.

John Davis Garrard’s description of the book as containing “the history and pedigree of that Barron family in Ireland and America” perfectly describes the content of the Barron chapter in *American family antiquity* (1880): the first section relating the history and pedigree of the Waterford line in Ireland from *Burke’s Peerage* of 1878, and then a section on a prominent Barron family in America (Ellis Barron arrived in Massachusetts in 1640). For good measure, tacked on to the end of the chapter is a section on the Commodore Barrons.

Interestingly, in a document that John Davis Garrard sent to Peter R. Garrard dated February 1896, he makes the claim that the Commodore Barrons were related to the William Barron (Sr.) line. In this document, Garrard also goes into minute detail about the history of the Burnchurch Barrons (see a transcription of Garrard’s writing in the document, “Petrona Garrard Humber Hean’s 1928 transcription of John Davis Garrard’s 1896 document,” at Barron Genealogy blog: <https://barrongenealogy.blogspot.com/>), with much of the wording taken from *American family antiquity* or *Burke’s Peerage*.

And why wouldn’t both John Davis Garrard and J. D. Barron be impressed that *American family antiquity* provided an answer to their ancestry? The author, Albert Welles, was the president of the American College for Genealogical Registry and Heraldry. And Welles promised that “This work will illustrate the honors and personal merit of our most eminent men, and deduce their pedigree from the remotest times ascertainable from our ancient histories.” How were they to know that Welles combined histories of possibly three different Barron families (currently, it has not been proven that the Ellis Barron family is related to the Waterford Barrons, and the Commodore Barron line was from England, not Ireland).

In the September 1892 letter, Garrard thanked Barron for loaning the book, saying, “It affords me much pleasure to trace the history of the Barron family back to the origin of the name. I knew that they were Barons in Ireland and that the title had been changed to a family name and an additional letter “r” added, but I did not know how it came about. What is the meaning of Fitz as prefixed to Gerald?” These statements confirm Garrard’s unfamiliarity with details of our Barron line’s origins. But he quickly accepted the County Waterford connection from the book, stating later in the letter:

“Capt. William Barron ... married in Ireland, perhaps in Waterford or Kilkenny County, Lucy (Prudence) Davis, who was of the Royal Family of Davises of England and of Ireland....” [Note from VBK: should be ‘Prudy’, not ‘Lucy.’ The transcriber of the letter may have misread the original handwriting].

Why did these two Barron descendants so confidently seize upon the Waterford Barrons as their ancestral line? Based on John Davis Garrard’s first letter, it appears that the men had no clue where in Ireland the William Barron family originated. The Waterford Barrons were from a distinguished line listed in *Burke’s Peerage* that could trace its history back a thousand years. At the time, perhaps the Waterford branch was the only Barron family with a genealogy that was readily available to Garrard and Barron, so they may have assumed that all Barrons were descended from that group. Other Barron groups now identified (several with ties to Ireland, Scotland or England) have less illustrious histories that may not have been known to John Davis Garrard and J. D. Barron.

Garrard did agree with J. D. Barron’s suggestion that they do some research to try to connect the Barron family in America to Ireland: “You suggest tracing the Barron family pedigree back from Capt. Wm. Barron, our great-

grandfather, to the Barron's in Ireland, I suppose. This I think a good idea....” But apparently this research was never accomplished [though a biography of J. D. Barron published a few years after his death proudly declared that his great-grandfather William came from County Waterford, Ireland: *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, 1921]. Garrard mentioned that he should publish his “little history” of the Barrons and allied families, as so many were requesting it, saying that the document was over one hundred fifty pages, not including the information “that I copied from your book....”

Garrard’s Barron history may not have survived intact. But because of his apparently extensive genealogy correspondence, at least a portion of his work is preserved – and indicates that he, like J. D. Barron, continued to assert a connection to the Waterford Barrons. The most expansive version of his history still extant is the one included in a document dated February 1896 to P. R. Garrard. In a section headed “The Barron Family of Warren County, Georgia, and Descendants” Garrard began on page ten:

“Captain William Barron may have been born about 1740, in little doubt in Waterford Co. or Shire or less likely in the adjoining county of Kilkenny and his wife Prudy Barron nee Davis about 1742. They were married in 1760; and two or three of their children were born in Ireland. They came from Ireland about 1766 to Warren Co., Ga.”

This excerpt of the family history was typed from the document and submitted (with minor changes and additions) to the Georgia Archives by Petrona Garrard Humber (Mrs. Frank) Hean in 1928. Petrona was the niece of bachelor Peter Roquemore Garrard. During her childhood the Humber family resided with Uncle Pete for a number of years. Petrona’s slightly revised transcription of the document’s contents has been copied and re-copied by Barron researchers for almost eighty years. The original 1896 document is still in the hands of her daughter, Elizabeth Hean Stone of Pennsylvania.

We are aware of at least one other Barron relative who must have corresponded with John Davis Garrard: Sanford P. Barron (1844-1921), an Alabama minister, son of Marcus Newton Barron (1819-1882), grandson of James Barron (1791-1856), great-grandson of William Barron (Jr.) (1769-1848). After Sanford Barron’s death, a brief account of the early Barron history was found in his papers. Though the information is not attributed to Garrard, the descendants named were clearly from Garrard’s line, not Sanford Barron’s. Because there is no mention of County Waterford, Ireland, in this version, Garrard’s contact with Barron likely occurred before September 1892. The notes begin:

“Captain William Barron was married to Prudy Davis in Ireland prior to 1765, as his oldest son, William, was born about that year, and perhaps he was the oldest child [error—William was not eldest son, nor was he born 1765].... Some years after his marriage, he emigrated to America and finally settled in Warren County, Georgia. Cpt. William Barron had one brother by the name of John, who came to the United States several times, and perhaps settled somewhere in this country....”

The circulation of Garrard’s writings (particularly by Petrona Hean and by J. D. Barron’s daughter, Theodora) was profoundly influential in forming the Barron tradition of an Irish heritage. Numerous central Georgia county histories published in the twentieth century contained sections using Garrard’s information (usually without attribution) and several elaborated a glorious Irish history of the Barron family in Waterford and Kilkenny Counties. Some of these books were *History of Baldwin County, Georgia*³ by Mrs. Anna Maria Green Cook, 1925;

³ Though no source was given for the Barron history printed in Cook’s 1925 *History of Baldwin County, Georgia*, a careful reading shows that the paragraphs on Captain William Barron were almost a verbatim reprise of the first portion of “The

History of Upson County, GA, by Carolyn Walker Nottingham and Evelyn Hannah, 1930; *History of Jones County, Georgia, 1807-1907*, by Carolyn White Williams, 1957; and *History of Butts County, Georgia, 1825-1976*, by Lois McMichael. This last book identified the author of the Barron section as Mrs. Margaret Etheredge (Mrs. G. N.), who is known to have had a copy of Garrard's first letter to J. D. Barron from 1892.

Dozens, if not hundreds, of Barrons interested in finding their roots read these and similar county histories with uncritical eyes, claiming Garrard's stories as their legacy. Garrard's statements became accepted tradition with Barron historians, snowballing into what was accepted as "the truth," making any doubts, corrections or revisions more and more difficult. I sometimes wonder if Garrard would be aghast at the veneration with which his writings have been held. Like most researchers, he often hedged his conclusions with terms such as "It is possible" or "I think" or "as near as I can ascertain" or "I estimate." But those expressions of caution generally went unheeded by many Barron descendants enthralled by the colorful Irish heritage he painted for them.

A small group of serious Barron researchers were not content to accept the Irish stories without substantiation, but searched in vain over the years for a connection to the Waterford Barron line.⁴ After more than a century, the new scientific tool of Y-DNA testing finally offered a real and conclusive answer to the question of whether the William Barron family descended from the Waterford group.

Since 2003, several male Barron descendants of William and Prudence Barron's sons, John, Samuel and William Jr. have participated in DNA testing. These participants helped to create a 'baseline' of what the William Barron family Y-DNA looks like (the Y chromosome being passed from father to son over generations virtually unchanged). In 2007, David Charles Netterville Barron, a descendant of James Fitzgerald, the first of the County Waterford, Ireland, line to take on the Barron surname was contacted to join the Barron DNA Project and compare his Y-DNA against that of William Barron's descendants.

David Barron, who resides in England, is custodian of the Waterford Barron history. Family records indicate that none of his family immigrated to America in the 1700s. Further, his Barron ancestors were Catholic at that time – while William Barron's family was Protestant by tradition and Baptist as recorded as early as the 1790s. Though David doubted a connection to William Barron, he graciously agreed to participate in Y-DNA testing. The results confirmed that there was absolutely no connection between the Waterford Barrons and William Barron. Not only was there no Y-DNA correlation, but the Waterford group was shown to descend from a different early people group (Haplogroup I1a, usually associated with Vikings/Scandinavians) than the descendants of William Barron (Haplogroup R1b, the most common early ancestry in European populations).

In 2010, Michael Barron-Wike, whose Barron family has lived in County Waterford, Ireland, since at least the late 1700s, also took the Y-DNA test. Michael assumed that his branch connected to the well-known Waterford line, but the test results showed that his line was neither related to that of David Barron of the Waterford Fitzgerald Barrons nor to our William Barron. Y-DNA testing was able to quickly and effectively prove that William Barron did not emigrate from County Waterford, Ireland, disproving the old assumption made by so many Barron historians.

Equally important are Y-DNA results from other participants in the Barron DNA Project – which appear to confirm John Davis Garrard's original assertion that William Barron did indeed hail from Ireland! Garrard just tried to connect to the wrong Irish Barron family. These DNA tests show that the William Barron line has close connections with other Barron branches, apparently of Scots-Irish heritage from Northern Ireland, one of which settled in the adjacent counties of York and Union, SC. What is particularly intriguing is that several of the

Barron Family of Warren County, Georgia, and Descendants" and so most certainly must have been submitted by Petrona Hean, who is identified as the author of the book's Garrard and Humber family histories.

⁴ In addition, researchers delved into records in Craven County, NC, to determine if our William Barron's heritage lay there. See Appendix III below.

members of this South Carolina group were said to have immigrated to America in the mid-eighteenth century – about the same period that John Davis Garrard estimated that our William Barron arrived.

A grandson of James Barron of York and later Union, SC (d. abt. 1800 in Union County) stated that James was born in Ireland and came to America as a young man, marrying after his arrival. [Source: *The Biographical Souvenir of the State of Texas*, published 1889, p. 52]. Another article identified James Barron as being “of Scotch descent, and like all of his ancestors was a staunch Presbyterian.” [Source: *Texans Who Wore the Gray*, published 1907, p. 181].

The line of Archibald Barron (1734-1817) of York County also has an early, and more detailed, tradition of Scots-Irish heritage. The 1887 obituary of Archibald Ingram Barron (grandson of Archibald Barron) described him as a:

“descendant of James Barron who together with Edward Houp, accompanied John Knox as lay commissioners for the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which met in the city of Edinburgh on the 20th of December, 1560. From Scotland [his family] emigrated to Ireland, settling in the neighborhood of Carrickfergus about the year 1665. From Ireland, they emigrated to America, settling first in Pennsylvania and afterward, about 1750 or a few years earlier, they came south and settled in York County, S. C.”

Archibald Barron’s descendants in South Carolina named sons Archibald for a number of generations, a propensity that provided a key to tracking the family’s Irish heritage. This unusual given name that was passed down for many years was not found in other Barron lines until the rather astonishing discovery of the line of another Archibald Barron, who resided in Lisnaward, County Down, Ireland, as early as 1713. For generations in Ireland his offspring also named sons Archibald. After some investigation, a descendant of this Lisnaward Barron family was located and his Y-DNA tested. Robert Charlton ‘Bob’ Barron’s great grandfather, William John Barron, was named as an heir to a lease for life granted Archibald Barron in Lisnaward.

The close match of Bob Barron’s DNA to the Y-DNA of the descendants of our William Barron and of the York and Union Barron lines was amazing. On 111 markers, the most extensive test now offered, Bob showed only four mutations from Y-DNA baseline of this Barron group. And one of the mutations was for a DNA marker on which a number of William Barron’s descendants also show a mutation. The results strongly indicate a close connection between the Lisnaward Barrons and our William Barron and the York and Union, SC, Barrons. According to expert assessment, most persons who match on 107 of 111 markers are 10th – or more recent – cousins. We’re hoping for about 8th cousins, but we need documentation to provide evidence. Irish documentary records are fragmentary, but research is ongoing. We may never be able to prove that our William Barron resided in Lisnaward, County Down, Ireland, but we can say with confidence that he was very closely related to the County Down Barrons. This connection virtually proves Irish heritage for our William Barron!

An analysis of the findings regarding this Barron clan, of which William Barron’s descendants are a part, can be viewed at Barron Genealogy blog: <https://barrongenealogy.blogspot.com/> in the article, “Analysis of Barron Clan 2 Y-DNA Evidence.”

John Davis Garrard made a wrong and badly misleading conclusion about the locale in Ireland from which the Barrons emigrated. Unfortunately, this error dominated and distorted the Barron view of its history for too many years. However, read critically, Garrard’s writings provide an insight into our heritage from early credible sources. By recording his older relatives’ Barron stories Garrard enriched our family saga. But, more importantly, he shared significant clues about the family origin that can be carefully compared with (and confirmed by) documentary evidence and DNA test results as well as other family stories.

Appendix I

The determination that the William Barron line is almost certainly of Irish extraction is heartening because there are other, less famous, but no less interesting family claims that William Barron's roots were in Ireland. Below are several other Irish traditions, some not quite so early as Garrard's first known letter of August 1892, but all worth mentioning.

In his search for family information, John Davis Garrard's cousin and correspondent, Joseph Day Barron, contacted another relative. Soon after receiving Garrard's two letters, J. D. Barron wrote on October 12, 1892 to his first cousin, Morgan Milton Barron.⁵ It appears that one of the questions that J. D. Barron asked was if anyone in Morgan's family had mentioned an Irish origin for the Barrons. Morgan Barron responded on October 21, 1892, "My oldest sister [probably Mary Frances Barron Yates (1840-1900)] says she heard my father say his father came from Ireland."

Other stories of Irish origin come from Texas descendants of William and Prudence Barron's grandson, Smith Barron (1805-c.1868), a son of William Barron (Jr.) (1769-1848). It is of some concern that these accounts were recorded in the mid-twentieth century and could have been "tainted" by the availability of Garrard's account of the Barron immigration. So, it is relevant to insert here that most of these stories were gathered from family members who were not active in researching the family history and likely had not heard the version originating with John Davis Garrard. In addition, after viewing these stories, the reader should notice sufficient difference to accept these as independent accounts.

(1) The earliest of these tales comes from "Recollections of John R. Barron (about 1940)"⁶:

"My father's father was Smith Barron.... His great grandfather came from Ireland to Charleston, S.C. His grandfather moved from there to Georgia...."

According to this tradition, William Barron (Sr.)'s father came from Ireland to South Carolina and then William (Sr.) moved to Georgia. Compared to John Davis Garrard's story, John R. Barron identifies the immigration as a generation earlier. As will be seen with other versions from this Barron line, the generation that supposedly emigrated from Ireland varies. Some stories compress the time line; others lengthen it.

(2) Sometime after 1946, Edwin Arcus Reddoch⁷ wrote his reminiscences in "When the West was the West":

"My mother's people were ... from Ireland, and came over about the turn of the century, or in the early 1800's. My grandfather on my mother's side was born in this country."

Reddoch placed the Irish emigration much later than John R. Barron – in fact, as we know, he placed it too late. The Barrons can be positively located in Georgia by 1784. Reddoch stated that his grandfather, who would have been Smith Barron, was born in America. Perhaps he confused generations and meant to say Smith Barron's father, William (Jr.) was born in this country. Unfortunately, we'll never know.

The remainder of the stories was collected by James Wilkins and Cecille Maxwell Reynolds when they were working on Barron histories.

⁵ Morgan Milton Barron (1863-1916) was the son of Milton Decatur Barron (1816-1862) and grandson of John Barron (1763-1823).

⁶ John Robinson Barron (1857-1941) was the son of William Jay Barron (1825-1914), grandson of Smith Barron.

⁷ Edwin Arcus Reddoch (1879-??) was the son of Sarah Barron Reddoch (1850-1923) and grandson of Smith Barron.

Both Wilkins and Reynolds spoke to descendants of Thomas Jefferson Barron (1834-1878) [son of Smith Barron]. This Barron line had a unique Barron immigration story, much of which rings true.

(3) Martha Elizabeth Barron Starnes Boaz (1856-1946), T. J. Barron's daughter, told Reynolds that:

"Our first Barron ancestor came from Ireland during the Revolutionary War. He was wounded and left for dead on the battlefield. He was found and taken to the plantation of a Patriot named Smith . . . nursed back to health and later married the patriot's daughter. This girl was all or part Jewish."

(4) Wilkins' interview in 1962 with Aloysia Ray Washburn⁸ produced a similar statement:

"When he arrived from Ireland and was walking across the Smith estate, he was shot by the Tories who mistook him for a member of the Smith family. The Smiths were patriots... they took him in and the daughter nursed him back to health."

This family line appears to have condensed generations in their story. William Barron (Jr.) did indeed marry a woman named (Martha) Smith and it is possible that her family may have been Jewish. But it is doubtful that he was the Irish emigrant. This story, of course, also disagrees with John Davis Garrard's identification of William (Sr.) as the first generation in America and specifies a time frame of about fifteen years later than Garrard's estimate.

James Wilkins interviewed two other Barron descendants in 1962, who shared Irish heritage stories. When phrasing his questions, Wilkins may have named William Barron as our first ancestor in America, because both stories refer to him as William. So we cannot gain insight about the perceived time frame of the immigration or identity of the immigrant. In other respects, however, the tales are very different from each other and from the previous stories:

(5) Vestena Barron⁹, as recorded by James Wilkins in 1962, related:

"William came to this country from Ireland for religious liberty. He had an older son and twin younger sons. The older son was in the Navy and killed an admiral in a duel."

Notable about this version, Vestena Barron seems to connect our Barron line with that of the Virginia naval Barrons, several of whom were commodores (not admirals). Unfortunately, this Virginia line has not been well-documented from the early 1700s, so it is not known whether there is any relationship – or whether her story may have somehow been influenced by the "romantic" and well-known duel between naval commodores James Barron and Stephen Decatur in 1820. It should be noted, however, that several researchers state that Samuel Barron, the earliest known member of this Virginia Barron line, was born in England and emigrated from Bristol in about 1735.

(6) Billie Ferrell Barron¹⁰, as recorded by James Wilkins, 1962, gave a less pious reason for the Barron immigration:

⁸ Aloysia Ray Washburn (1895-1971) was the daughter of Theodosia Barron (1864-1940), granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson Barron and great-granddaughter of Smith Barron.

⁹ Vestena Barron (1889-???) was the daughter of William Henry Barron (1850-1917), granddaughter of William Jay Barron and great-granddaughter of Smith Barron.

¹⁰ Billie Ferrell Barron (1917-1985) was the son of William Smith Barron (1866-1951), grandson of Joseph Smith Barron (1838-1923 and, great grandson of Smith Barron.

“William and his brother were caught smuggling from Ireland to France and were “run out” of Ireland . . . coming to America.”

These stories of Barron heritage vary in details, but – like John Davis Garrard – all declare that our Barron family originated in Ireland. Most echo Garrard’s tale of a Barron ancestor immigrating to America about the timeframe of the mid to late eighteenth century. That this Irish tradition was passed down through several Barron lines lends the claim additional weight. Doubtless, there are other Barron stories of Irish forebears that have not yet come to light. And paired with the DNA evidence of a Scots-Irish ancestry connected to a Barron line in County Down, Northern Ireland, the case of Irish heritage is even more compelling. The task to find additional documentary corroboration is ongoing.

Appendix II

The heritage of Samuel Barron of Jones County, GA

The traditions of the descendants of Samuel Barron (1768-1826) of Jones County, GA, were not discussed in this paper. Evidence indicates that one of the errors that John Davis Garrard made in his research was to identify Samuel Barron (1768-1826) of Jones County, GA, as a son of William (Sr.) and Prudence Barron. Unfortunately, this relationship was universally accepted until a few years ago, when documentary research uncovered important data that supported another Samuel Barron (1767-1801) as the true son of William and Prudence. [See “The Barrons of Greene, Hancock, Jackson, Jasper and Jones Counties, GA (1789-1820s” at Barron Genealogy blog: <https://barrongenealogy.blogspot.com/>]. However, recent Y-DNA testing (2022) does confirm that Samuel Barron of Jones County was definitely closely related to William Barron (Sr.) – perhaps even a nephew. Though apparently not a direct descendant of William (Sr.) and Prudence Barron, because of Samuel’s close relationship his family’s rich stories of Irish/Scottish heritage may potentially provide more insights into both the William Barron Sr. line and William’s possible siblings and cousins.

Several descendants of Samuel Barron of Jones County, GA, provided early documentation of their family origin: Robert B. Barron and James Finney Barron in 1895 and Benjamin Barron in 1908. Robert Barron’s story reads as follows:

“Dr. Robert B. Barron's great-grandfather, was Samuel Barron, who was born in Virginia in 1772, and came with his father to Hancock county, Ga, in 1783. He became an extensive planter, was one of the original settlers of Jones county, and owned several hundred slaves. He had eleven children and at his death left to each of them between thirty-five and forty slaves. His father, Dr. Barron's great-great-grandfather, James Barron, was a native of Scotland. The great Commodore Barron, who fought a duel with Commodore Decatur, was a first cousin of James Barron. The name James, has been given to the eldest son of the Barron family for six generations.” [Source: *Memoirs of Georgia*, volume I, Southern Historical Association, 1895].

Barron related the most complete genealogy of his line, including the name of Samuel Barron’s father: James (not William, as touted by John Davis Garrard). Though this identification may be correct, it has not been confirmed. Interestingly, he connects his line to that of the Commodore Barrons in Virginia – just as did Vestena Barron, a descendant of William Barron (Sr.). But Robert Barron gives the country of Barron origin as Scotland, not Ireland, perhaps because of the family’s early Scottish heritage.

Other sources of Samuel Barron’s origins are included in my online article, a portion of which is quoted here:

“According to an abstract of his obituary, Samuel Barron, who died in Jones County, GA, in 1826, was a Revolutionary soldier who fought at the Battle of Guilford Court House in North Carolina. [Source:

Marriages and Deaths 1820 to 1830 abstracted from Extant Georgia Newspapers, by Mary Bondurant Warren, with Sarah Fleming White, 1972, p. 7.] It is not known from what state he served.

However, a chronology given in a write-up about his grandson, James Finney Barron, indicates that Samuel Barron may have served in a militia unit from Virginia or North Carolina: "Dr. Barron's great-grandfather, Barron, (that would be Samuel Barron's father) was a native Irishman, who came to this country in colonial days, and settled in Maryland. From Maryland the family moved to Virginia, where the doctor's grandfather, Samuel Barron, married and went to North Carolina, where he lived until about 1792, when he migrated to Georgia, and settled in Hancock county. In 1809 his grandfather moved into Jones county, then just organized, and settled about six miles north of what is now Clinton, the county seat...." [Source: *Memoirs of Georgia*, volume II, Southern Historical Association, 1895, p. 444].

A brief biography of Samuel's son, Benjamin Barron, (written in 1908) made similar claims about Samuel Barron's origins, stating that "Major Barron's grandfather (Samuel's father) came from Maryland and settled in Hancock County, Ga., in the first settling of the new country. Here Major Barron was born on July 3, 1802 and came with his parents to Jones in 1810 when eight years old..." [Source: *History of Jones County*, by Carolyn White Williams, pp. 480-481].

From these accounts it appears that this Samuel Barron may not have arrived in Georgia until after the Revolutionary War. His grandson's version states that he migrated to Georgia in about 1792. That date coincides with the first public record found for this Samuel Barron in Greene County, GA. Barron was living in an area of Greene that became a part of Hancock County in December 1793. His name is found in the 1793 Greene County Tax Digest just prior to that of John Barnes (actually Barron), who had recently married Eleanor, widow of Alexander Miller.

It is noteworthy that in the biography of Benjamin Barron, it is claimed that not only Samuel Barron came to Georgia in the first settling of new country, but also that Samuel's father came to Hancock County, GA. It is known from family Bible records that Samuel Barron married Joannah Braswell on 22 March 1793.... Since Samuel Barron is found soon after his marriage next to John Barron in the Greene County Tax Digest, it is interesting to conjecture whether the older John Barron might have been Samuel Barron's father."

Two of the three accounts specify that Samuel Barron's father immigrated to America (his great-grandson specified a Scottish origin, grandson James an Irish one).

It should also be noted that both Samuel Barron's son, Benjamin, and grandson, James, claimed that Samuel first lived in Maryland and migrated to Georgia when he was a young man. This is of interest because of the family of Barrons (John, Alexander, James, Abraham and Archibald) of Scots-Irish descent who moved from Pennsylvania / Maryland to the York County, SC, vicinity in the mid-1700s. Surely there must be a connection here?

Appendix III

Another theory of Barron origin

In the 1980s, Michael Beck, a descendant of John Barron (son of William and Prudence), uncovered promising data that led him to theorize another possible heritage for William and Prudence Barron. He found evidence of a William Barron and a Prudence Davis [both seeming to be of the right age for "our" William and Prudence] living in Craven County, NC, in the mid-1700s – though he could not confirm that these persons knew each other, let

alone married. Some researchers, frustrated that the Barron Irish heritage could not be proven, discarded Garrard's assertion of Irish origin as baseless and adopted the Craven County theory.

In spring 2006, Vicki Kruschwitz undertook a project to review all published abstracts of Craven County records from the 1700s and also viewed microfilm of Craven deed indexes for the same time frame. The resulting document identified all mentions of William Barron and Prudence Davis and other relevant data. Even with this large body of resources, no connection could be made between the William Barron and Prudence Davis of Craven County, NC, and the William Barron, subject of this article, and wife, Prudence. Nor was any connection made between the William Barron of Craven County and the Prudence Davis, daughter of Thomas Davis, also of Craven. William Barron of Craven County, NC, disappeared from the records about 1770 and Prudence Davis was mentioned only a couple of times.

While Michael Beck's theory was neither proven nor disproven by this study, the findings did not further the theory. Perhaps additional indexed Craven County records may become available in future to allow more research on these individuals. And if we determine whether there is a living male Barron descendant of William Barron of Craven County, DNA testing would immediately prove whether or not this William Barron was related to the William Barron of this paper.

Notes on the 2006 Craven County study, "Craven County, NC, Barron and Davis families," can be viewed at Barron Genealogy blog: <https://barrongenealogy.blogspot.com/>.