

Tracing Our Roots

SILVY FULENWIDER ROBERTS

Silvy was our earliest known ancestor. According to family historians, she was born free in Guinea, West Africa, the daughter of an African tribal chief. Silvy was abducted by slave traders in the late 1700's and taken to the state of Virginia where she was sold to planters who brought her to North Carolina. She was purchased by a wealthy slave owner named John Fulenwider and brought to Lincoln County to work in his cotton fields and iron works. Fulenwider gave the African princess the name Silvy.

According to William Sherrill, *Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina*, John Fulenwider was born in Switzerland and came to America as a young man. He first settled in Rowan County, but after fighting in the Revolutionary War he moved to Lincoln County where he founded the High Shoals Iron Works. He owned a gold mine, more than 20,000 acres of land, and numerous slaves. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had eight children. His son, Jacob, married Mary Hoyle. After Jacob died, Mary, also a slave owner, married William "Billy" Roberts, son of Col. John Morris Roberts.

According to *Our Heritage*, 1983, two court records were located that mentioned Silvy. One was in the Probate Estate Records of William Magness, slave owner, probated in 1816; the other was in a Probate Court Record contesting her ownership after the death of William Magness. These records do not indicate how or when Magness obtained Silvy, who was living on his plantation when he died. William Magness' sister was Sarah Magness Roberts who was married to Col. John Morris Roberts. Before he died, William Magness gave Col. John Morris and Sarah Roberts ten slaves who were named Pheby, Silvy, Sylvia, Fanny, Betsy Caroline, Kittie Bird, Priscilla, Delilah, Walter and Willie, children of Sylvia.

It is not known when Silvy died, nor where she was buried, but it is believed to be near the William Roberts plantation located on Muddy Fork Creek, a branch of Buffalo Creek in Township #5 in Cleveland County. Silvy had eight children, one son named Josh who never reached manhood and seven daughters, known as "The Seven Sisters."

THE SEVEN SISTERS

(Daughters of Silvy Fulenwider Roberts)

SYLVIA

The only record found that lists Sylvia, who was probably the oldest of the sisters, was in the Estate Records of William Magness in 1816 in which she became the property of Colonel John M. Roberts. She had at least four children: Walter, Willie, Artes, and Wiley Roberts. Artes and his wife, Juliann, had a son, George, who married P. Neal in 1888. Some of their descendants were the Phifers and Greenlees who lived in Buncombe and Forsyth Counties. Wiley Roberts, a farmer, was also well-known for digging wells and graves. He and his wife, Rebecca, were the parents of Annice, Adolphus, Wiley, Jr., Laura, Delila, Lillian, Callie, and Mae. Wiley was also the father of Daisy Birchett.

DELILA DILLINGHAM-BEAM

It is believed that Delila was born in 1799. We have not been able to trace any of Delila's descendants. In his memoirs, Rev. John W. Roberts wrote that Delila was a very stout woman, as were most of her sisters. He referred to her last name as Dillingham, although historian Rev. Dwight Costner stated that she took the surname Beam when she was freed. The Census of 1880 listed her as living with her son, Josh Beam (born 1839), his wife, Mary, and their two children, Netty and Silas, in Gaston County.

FANNIE BRIGGS

It is believed that Fannie was born in 1803. Fannie was married to Nelson Briggs, Sr. and they were the parents of ten children: (1) Fannie – Jacob McNair, (2) Jane – Gideon Whisnant, (3) Emerline - Robert Woods, (4) Nelson, Jr. – Caroline, (5) Ann, (6) Carrie, (7) Ernestine, (8) Martha, (9) Rado, (10) Ray. Fannie and Jacob McNair had six children: William, Wesley, Martha, Mary Elizabeth, Maggie, and Clarence. Jane had one son, Henry Briggs. Emerline and Robert Woods had eight children: Johnson, Fannie, Robert Vance, Marshall Leroy, Rado, Plato, Martha, and Carrie. Nelson, Jr. and Caroline had eight children: Alice, Leroy, Emma, Allen, Philetus, William, Roxie Anna, and Otto. Fannie's descendants include Briggs, Sumlars, Woods, Coles, Lindsays and McNairs.

KITTIE BIRD ROBERTS

It is believed that Kittie Bird (Catherine Magness Roberts) was born in 1805. Kittie Bird married Big George Roberts (b. 1804), son of Lucy Roberts, a slave on the Roberts plantation and they had 15 children: (1) Noah – Hannah Wray and Eliza Oates, (2) Archie – Harriet Webber & Violet Dixon, (3) Betsy – Rev. Adam Webber, (4) George – Jane Ware and Laura Gaither, (5) John – Jrifhena Aderhold, (6) Oliver – Dinah McAfee, (7) Adeline, (8) Jane – Martin Hambrick, George Williams and Ezakel Casstrhan, (9) Gilbert, (10) Lucinda – Martin McAfee, (11) Nelson, (12) Patsy – Abe Roberts, (13) Peter, (14) Vatch – Harriet Roberts (daughter of Isaac and Haney Roberts), (15) Wattie – Lorena Beam and Hannah Miller.

Noah and his first wife, Hannah Wray, had ten children: Susannah, Nelson, William, Sidney, Mary, Jennie, Emma, Charles Frank, Sallie, and George. Archie and Harriet Webber had eleven children: Dora, Mary, Martha, Oliver, George, Berry, Adam, Philetus, Harriett, Hattie, and Archie William, Jr. Betsy and Rev. Adam Webber had eleven children: Sidney, Jacob, Samuel, Emmarit, Elizabeth, Emmajean, Jana, William, Archie, Mary, and Henry. George Jr. with his first wife, Jane Ware, had six children: Nelson (died in infancy), John Wesley – Ida Roberts (daughter of Rev. Benjamin & Sophia Dameron Roberts), Margaret Catherine (Fulla), Gilbert, George and Hattie. George with his second wife, Laura Gaither, had five children: Oliver Lafayette, Marjorie, Augusters Kessler, Florence and William Gould. Laura Gaither had five children prior to her marriage to George, Jr. and their names were Jane, Lewis, Martha, Mary and Leola. John and Jrifhena Aderhold had five children: