

Aug. 30, 1987

Dear Cousin Robert,

Wow! You have really said a lot in your recent letters to me. I've been a bit overwhelmed as to how to reply, and I've let too much time pass. But surely, your words about giving thanks to God in all things were well put. And I appreciate the truth from someone even when I already know it.

For some time I have had copies of some Bible studies, which I wrote out as a result of personal, private study. Since they were in longhand, I'd put off sending them to you, hoping to get them typed soon. They are enclosed. Maybe they will help you sense the mind I have in Christ.

Like you, Cousin, I seem to have drifted away from the Baptist denominational fellowship. This happened over ten years ago. I was in a divorce crisis at the time. But there were several factors. I remain, like some of my colonial Carolina forebears, committed to the practice of antipedobaptism. And I have the same reverence for the scriptures which caused some of the early "Baptists" to assume the stance they did during the

Reformation. But I agree with you that some of the culture which we find in "Baptist" society today could use some reform. Indeed, many, many things about current denominational life in that church trouble me. Yet, as a matter of the heart, I love this church and much of its history.

I do not really know that Granddaddy Buckner was a "Baptist". His children and their families are not. He was religious, and was considered a Protestant lay preacher. Daddy was not a practicing Christian for the great part of his life. However, he did become a "Baptist" after he and my mother divorced. He was a well liked man generally, but was not really considered spiritual until perhaps the last few years of his life. (Always did have a certain reverence, though)

Since writing you I have discovered the State Library across from the State Legislature in Raleigh. I've been much in touch with Cousin Gladys Dreyer and Cousin Ruth Elsom lately, and have become keenly interested in the Buckner family history. Cousin Gladys and others have sought for around forty years to determine the origins of the early ancestor, Bernard Buckner, of Beaufort district, who fought with the Swamp Fox.

The old family legend is that he came here from Caroline County, Virginia, where, as churches and the courthouse were burned, his roots would remain a mystery. But this week I discovered, through the library here, that a Maryland cousin (with Savannah roots) had made a breakthrough, and a cousin, E. Stanley Barnhill, had assisted her. I really don't know who made the discovery, but Winifred Suman of Lanham, Maryland, published a small book, Ellis-Buckner and allied Families, in which she said some archives have placed an ~~early~~ earlier Buckner, one Thomas, in Colleton county, his estate having been inventoried there in 1762. And a will of one John M^cCord, same county, proved 1762, left his estate to his nephew, Bernard Buckner and his niece, Jean Buckner. So now we think Bernard's mother was a M^cCord and his father was probably this Thomas. And an ad in the S.C. Gazette, Sept. 3, 1737 addresses Thomas, who "lately came from Virginia and went to the Southward!" If this indeed be the case, that Thomas was Bernard's father, then there were three consecutive generations of males in my surname line who lost their father

early in life. The Buckner family/families had already been in Virginia for at least two, possibly three, generations by 1737. But several other Thomases are already documented enough that, through elimination, I might figure out his place. Winifred seems to be just about guessing Thomas was son of Richard Buckner and wife Elizabeth Cook.

You mentioned a Cousin Mamie Willingham. I know of one in the records, who married J. O. Lawton (you probably know there were several), who was described by one writer as ^{from} a "dyed-in-the-wool Methodist family." Her husband then became a good Baptist churchman. But this Mamie would have been too old for you to have known her. I think one of her daughters was Cousin Mamie Neely. I think her son was President of North Greenville Junior College. Papa Willingham had an Aunt Mamie, but she died in childhood (and her double first cousin, Josephine Mary, dau. of Ben and Elizabeth Willingham, likewise died in childhood). Of course there are so many Willinghams it's hard to distinguish them, but I want to try. Once when I was in the mountains at Redcrest, I hiked by a serene little cemetery and to my surprise I saw some Lawton Willingham grave markers. Someone told me I had

seen the "missionary graveyard." Later on in life, my "in-laws" settled at Black Mountain, and prior to retirement, they briefly held jobs at the Assembly. On at least one occasion there I met Miss Olive Lawton, at the little church where they went on Sunday. This lively, alert lady, cousin of ours, was retired from mission work overseas. Her family had a mountain home there, but she resided permanently in Laurens at the time.

Thank you so much, Robert, for sending me the Smith pedigree. It is an amazing document, and I hope we have an opportunity some day to discuss it together.

Sincerely,
Cousin Tommy Buchner