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Wilson Family Origins

Immigrating from Northern Ireland, Robert Francis Wilson (1809-1881) arrived in the Clayton area in 1847. He bought more than 1,600 acres at Fries Mill village from Mr. Benjamin Beckett, of Beckett & Fisler, a Clayton glass works. There was a sawmill there, and the bridge was built over the stream at the channel.



Fries Mill Dam, Clayton, N. J.

PHOTO ABOVE: Picture postcard published by J. F. Mackay (Clayton, N. J.) of Fries Mill Dam, Clayton, N. J., circa 1914. Photo from CHP archives.

A pole or corduroy road connected Fries Mill (pronounced FREEZE MILL) with Clayton. Some of the poles are still at the bottom of the road over the Big Bridge stream which drains what was then known as the Synnott Tract. Today, it is known as CCC Woods because the Civilian Conservation Corps camped in the area during the public work relief program of 1933 to 1942; and officially it is known as Clayton/Glassboro Woods Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

Robert F. Wilson was a very progressive farmer, and operated a store in a building adjoining the land. Homestead description is detailed as the parlor having been raised two steps above the rest of the house; had winding stairs at the front of the room; a very wide heavy door opened into the middle sitting room; a fireplace connected with the chimney; a ladder and trap door led upstairs.

*The Wilson family in front of home ...
Lake Clayton, N.J., ca. 1895 One section of the house was of log.*



*Presented by Mrs. Betty Bajewicz of Box 440, R.D. 1,
Franklinville, N.J. 08325 June 5, 1995*

PHOTO BELOW: Wilson Family Homestead, circa 1895. Presented by Mrs. Betty Bajewicz of Franklinville, N. J. in June 1995.

The kitchen was once a schoolroom for the children; prayer meetings were held on Friday evening and Presbyterian Church services were held on Sunday. Later a schoolhouse was built across the lake on the road to Williamstown. This school house was located along the road approximately half way between the lake and the Wilson Lake Memorial Park. A large sandstone, used by the Indians for holding corn to be ground into meal, was used as the first front step of the school. Today this Indian stone may be seen at the Robert Sandelier Memorial Park on East High Street, after being moved from its original place at Fries Mill in the 1980s.

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