

The Koonce Family

The family originated in the Palatine region of the Rhine River near present day Heidelberg, Germany. The inhabitants were subjected to being impressed into service in the various wars between warring princes. They were also victims of the wars waged by the French and Spanish. The religion of the ruling prince was the required religion of the masses. At times the religion was Catholic and at other times, Protestant.

The year 1709 winter was especially brutal with reports that the sea froze and would support a heavily laden cart. This caused the loss of all the vines and famine was eminent. The English Queen Anne accepted a large number of immigrants from this region who traveled down the Rhine to Amsterdam, Holland and then to England.

In England, they were housed, fed and clothed at the expense of Queen Anne. During the eight months they were in England, Queen Anne's subjects complained of the expense. During this time, Christopher Von di Graffinried had applied for a land grant in the Carolinas in the "New World." Di Graffinried was a Swiss and a land speculator. He had information that silver could be mined in great quantities in the area.

Di Graffinried contracted for ten thousand acres for himself, and a large tract for colonists he would bring with him. Each family was to receive seed, implements, animals and three hundred acres of land. Queen Anne paid for passage, food and clothing for the journey. Ninety-two families were selected for the colony that would be established. Only young, healthy and talented families were chosen. Each occupation was represented, including a minister and schoolmaster.

Johan Cunitz, aged 36, his wife Alicia, son 15, son 6 (George, our ancestor, born 6, April, 1704), and 1-year old daughter were listed as passengers of the first group to sail. Johan's occupation was listed as husbandman or farmer and his religion, Catholic.

This first group boarded three ships on 10, January 1710 and sailed from Gravesend, England for the New World. Winter storms blew the ships off course and delayed their arrival. In March of 1710, the ships arrived at the mouth of the James River in Virginia. It took them thirteen weeks to cross the Atlantic. Upon making landfall at the James River, one of the ships was captured by French privateers. Most of the food and equipment was lost. Fully half of the passengers had died of sickness during the journey, Others died after making landfall from the overeating of new foodstuffs.

Johan Cunitz and his family survived and the group traveled overland through the Albemarle region of Virginia, to the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers. The colony settled in present day New Bern, North Carolina. This was in land claimed by the Tuscarora Indians, which caused many problems. On 23, September 1710, the Indians massacred one hundred and twenty-five colonists, including the Cunitz family with the exception of six-year-old George. George was captured by the Indians and held for six months. He was later returned to the colony and was made a ward of Jacob Mueller. Mueller later named George as an executor of his will.

George Koonce, as the name was now spelled, married Mary (last name unknown). George and Mary had seven sons, John Jacob, Michael, George Jr. (born 12, September 1734), Tobias, Christian and Daniel and acquired a large plantation. George Koonce Jr., and his wife, Mary had six sons, George, John, Phillip, Christopher, Lemuel and Daniel, (born October 1777). Phillip served as a substitute for his father in the Revolutionary War and for his service, was granted a tract of land in what is now Tennessee. Phillip and his father moved there.

Other brothers and cousins from the New Bern area joined Phillip in Tennessee. Including Daniel Koonce, our ancestor, who joined his brother, Phillip, in Sumner County, Tennessee, later moving to Lincoln County.

Daniel Koonce and his wife Catherine McQuillen had children, George, Phillip, Needham B., Thomas McQuillen, Daniel Marion (born 1819), Manerva Ann, Lucinda Jane and John Alexander. Son Daniel Marion Koonce was born in Lincoln County and the family later moved to McNairy County.

Daniel Marion Koonce married Mary Jane Wilson and had a son, Wilson Daniel (Dee), who was born 4, October 1844. In 1846, Daniel Marion, his wife Mary Jane and son Wilson Daniel moved to Texas. With them went Thomas McQuinllen (Mack) Koonce, his wife Sarah Elizabeth Wilson and their three daughters.

The Koonce brothers had married Wilson sisters. Together the brothers bought 511 acres of land in Titus County, Texas. Daniel Marion and Mary Jane had other children, including Lucinda Jane (Jennie), who was the first Koonce born in Texas, 1, February 1847, then Flora Elizabeth in 1848, and John Marion on 18, August 1851.

Daniel Marion Koonce died in 1851, one month before the birth of John Marion. His wife, Mary Jane Wilson Koonce, never remarried and lived on their land until her death in 1909. John Marion remained on the land, farming and caring for his mother.

Daniel Koonce, father of Daniel Marion, and grandfather of John Marion had moved to the Mt. Enterprise area of Rusk County in 1849. He lived there until his death in 1860.

On 4, January 1877, John Marion Koonce married Rebecca Jane Ward in Mt. Vernon, Franklin County, Texas. To John Marion and Rebecca Jane were born many children: Needham, who died in infancy, Holbert 2, December 1878, Marion Franklin 20, June 1881, Lawson B. 25, January 1883 who died in 1905, Rebecca Mae 15, January 1885, Noah Robert 2, October 1886, Wilson Dee 2, August 1888, Birdie September 1890 who died young, Merrida Likey 4, November 1891, Charles Augusta 18, August 1893, Flora Bryan 2, February 1897 who died in 1916, Teagie 13, September 1898 and Admiral Dewey 11, November of 1900.

John Marion Koonce was born on the original land purchased by his father and lived there all his life with the exception of one year spent in Thackerville, Love County, Oklahoma.

John Marion Koonce was not only a farmer but he was an accomplished fiddle player and hunter. Merrida Likey Koonce (Uncle Red) is said to have been named for a fellow fiddle player of the same name.

John Marion Koonce died 19, October 1919 at the home of his sister Flora in Mt. Pleasant, Texas. His death occurred after several days of illness most probably a result of the flu epidemic of 1918 and 1919. He is buried at the Friendship cemetery near Mt. Vernon. His wife, Rebecca Jane Ward Koonce, died 16, October 1942 and is buried in the Midland cemetery.

(Historical information provided by Johnny Koonce, of Gainesville, Texas, grandson of Holbert Koonce.)

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