

## ORIGIN OF THE SURNAME PRIESTER

Family names or surnames were first used in Italy around 900 A.D. by persons of wealth and influence. The purpose of surnames was to set these important people apart from ordinary citizens. Within a few decades the use of surnames had spread to other countries and throughout Europe.

Surnames frequently originated from an individual's place of residence, occupation, or appearance. Some dictionaries define 'prester' as meaning a priest or presbyter. John PRESTER was a legendary, medieval priest and king having great wealth and power. In medieval pageants, an actor who played the priest was called PRIEST or PREACHER. Early variations of the name PRESTER were recorded in the years 1228 and 1248. Early Scottish records show that Richard PRESTRE was Burgess of Sterling in 1276. In London in 1551 John Jessop and Margaret PRESTER were issued a marriage license. Early French documents contain the names PRESTRE, LEPRESTRE, and LEPRETRE and early German records include PRIESTERS, PRESLEERS, PFISTER, and REISTERS.

The name PRIESTER and its variations first appeared in South Carolina with German immigrants arriving at Charles Town in the early 1700's. Passenger lists and land grants included the names PRIESTER, PRESTER, PFISTER, PESTER, PRESTON, PRISTER, PRUSTON, PUSLER and REISTER. It is believed that the variations resulted more often from inaccuracies in recording (spelling) the spoken name than from intended changes in its pronunciation. Variations in the spelling of the same name frequently appeared in a single document. Much of this is attributed to the inability of many early immigrants to write their names or to spell them correctly or consistently for another person to write for them. As literacy became more common in later years, the variations diminished.

### ANDREW PRIESTER

In the 1820 U. S. Census we find the earliest known record of ANDREW PREASTER (1790-186?). He was living in the Beaufort District in Prince William's Parish on Jackson's Branch near the present Hickory Grove Community in Hampton County. Existing records on ANDREW are meager, but he apparently lived his entire life in the Beaufort District. Records of the Beaufort District were destroyed during the Civil War. ANDREW was listed in the 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850 and 1860 Census Records and the 1825 Tax Records. The 1820 Census shows ANDREW PREASTER to be in the 26-45 age group. In his household were 1 male under 10, 2 females under 10, 1 female 10-16, and one female 26-45.

In the 1830 Census of Prince William's Parish ANDREW and 1 female are listed in age group 40-50. At this time there were in his household, 3 males 5-10, 1 male 10-15, 1 female under 5, 1 female 5-10, and 2 females 20-30. GEORGE and JACOB PRIESTER are living nearby.

In the 1840 Census of Prince William's Parish ANDREW and 1 female are again listed in the 40-50 age group. In his household, also, were 1 male 5-10, 2 males 15-20, 1 male 20-30, 1 female under 5, 1 female 5-10, 1 female 10-15, 1 female 15-20, and 1 female 20-30.

In the 1850 Census ANDREW PRIESTER and his household are listed by names for the first time. ANDREW was 60, a farmer with real estate valued at \$250.00. The most significant information in this census was the absence of any female near ANDREW's age in his household. His wife must have died during the preceding decade. Listed in the household were Rebecca 36, JACOB 29, WILLIAM 26, McFORD 20, Mary 16, and Nancy 6. Was Rebecca a daughter, or a new young wife?

In the "Records of The Prince William Primitive Baptist Church, 1812-1912, Hampton County, S.C.", by Vina Chandler Price, C.G., Elizabeth Priester was reported to have died March 4, 1844. She would have been of the approximate age to have been ANDREW's first wife, and may have died during the birth of Nancy Priester in 1844. Collective efforts failed to produce any proof of Elizabeth Priester's maiden name. Harriett (Barnes) Priester, his second wife is listed as dead November 15, 1884.

In the 1860 Census in the Beaufort District, St. Luke's Parish, ANDREW was listed as age 83, a farmer with real estate valued at \$400.00. In the household were Mary L. 20, Nancy 17, and Perry 5.

The 1870 Census did not list ANDREW PRIESTER in any household in Beaufort or Barnwell County. However, in the Peoples Township, Prince William's Parish, the families of GEORGE, MILES, WILLIAM, JOHN, JACOB, and CHARLES PRIESTER were listed -

If ANDREW PRIESTER had a Will, it must have been lost with the records of the Beaufort District. A thorough search failed to establish the date of ANDREW's death or where he was buried. However, other evidence indicated he was living until 1871. Beaufort County Deeds, Vol. 7, Page 192, April 6, 1858, lists ANDREW PRIESTER, planter, of the state and county aforesaid, to JOHN M. PRIESTER of same for \$140 in hand, 32 acres situated on the Whippy Swamp waters of Saltketchers bounded North and West by land of John F. Platts, east by lands of the said ANDREW PRIESTER, and South by land of Mary Priester and Mary Mole. ANDREW PRIESTER (seal) Wit: W. F. PRIESTER, Robert J. Manaker. On May 4, 1871, Beaufort County, W. F. PRIESTER swore that he with ANDREW PRIESTER signed the within written Deed and that he with R. J. Manaker witnessed the execution thereof. Recorded April, 1873.

ANDREW's son, JACOB, was listed in the 1860 Census of Prince William's Parish as CHARLES. He was farming with real estate valued at \$30.00. His wife was listed as Rebecca, age 21.

JACOB CHARLES PRIESTER was a Private in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment Cavalry of the Confederate Army, along with several other members of the PRIESTER family. He enlisted October 16, 1863 and appears' on the rolls of Prisoners of War belonging to the Confederate Army .... who surrendered at Augusta, Georgia on May 24, 1865.

In the 1870 Census of Beaufort County, Prince William's Parish, JACOB CHARLES was listed as age 50, farming with real estate of \$300 and personal property of \$150. Rebecca was listed as age 45. They had to children: JOHN 6, and Mary 4.

Fortunately for us, CHARLES PRIESTER did leave a Will wherein he was styled as JACOB CHARLES PRIESTER of Beaufort County, June 11, 1872. He stated that he was in feeble health, but sound of mind. His brother, WILLIAM F. PRIESTER, was to be the Executor to whom he conveyed all of his property, both real and personal. His children were mentioned, but not by name (Part of the original document is illegible). His wife was mentioned as Sara Rebecca (formerly Williams). Signed JACOB CHARLES (X) PRIESTER. Wit: D. W. Platt, W. F. Mole, H. H. Harvey. The Will was filed for probate on July 19, 1872. Apparently there were some problems with the Will as the administration returns were not concluded until 1880. By that time, Hampton County had been formed and the will was filed there in the Probate Records, Package #495.

On June 11, 1872, CHARLES PRIESTER also signed a Deed to his brother, WILLIAM F. PRIESTER, Beaufort County, Vol. 6, Page 324-325. "JACOB CHARLES PRIESTER to WILLIAM F. PRIESTER in consideration for \$200.00 in hand, did bargain, sell and release all the plantation or tract of land in Peeples Township, except one acre for the Isaac Ellis graveyard, containing one hundred acres situated on the Coosawatchie Road, about one mile from its junction with the Pocotaligo Road, bounded on the NORTH by lands of the former estate of Samuel Lewis, now of George H. Hoover, and on all other sides by lands belonging to the estate of B. M. McBride." This land was also known as the upper part of the White House or Horse Tract. JACOB CHARLES (X) PRIESTER, June 11, 1872. Wit: D. W. Platts, W. F. Mole, H. H. Harvey. Recorded July 19, 1872.

JACOB CHARLES's wife, -Sara Rebecca Priester, was listed in the Beaufort County Deeds, Vol. F, Page 466. On August 1, 1873, Sara Rebecca Priester made a Deed for a gift to her children, JOHN ANDREW, and Mary Louisa. The Deed also mentioned certain livestock and personal items. H. Goethe was appointed as Trustee. In the event of his death, J. A. PRIESTER was to be appointed Trustee until the children became of age.

Signed, Sara Rebecca (x) Priester. Wit: Mary Lewis. Recorded September 27, 1873.

Sara Rebecca Priester later married Don J. Sinclair and had three children. JOHN and Mary PRIESTER were listed in the 1880 Census of Hampton County in the household of Don J. Sinclair.

The 1890 Census records were lost in a fire in 1921. The 1900 Hampton County Census listed Mary Louise Priester married to James Louis Corbin and having nine children. JOHN PRIESTER was listed in the household of Robert Harris in the same census. JOHN is believed to have had three sons and to have died in Hampton County, date unknown.

This chapter on ANDREW PRIESTER was written by Douglas MacArthur Corbin, a great grandson of JACOB CHARLES PRIESTER (1821-1872). His address is 658 River North Blvd., Macon, GA 31211.