

Letter to Mrs. Frances Abraham

Atlanta, Georgia  
April 21, 1970

Dear Mrs. Frances Abraham,

Replying to your letter of 4/7/70 requesting information about John Bethune of Wilkes County, Ga, I am awfully sorry but cannot give you any information concerning him. However I will relate what I know about my own Bethune family and you may draw some benefit from this information.

It is my understanding that the first Bethune family came over from Scotland in 1730 and landed in Boston, Mass. They resided in Boston until after the Revolutionary War or about 1800. They decided to go South and settled in South Carolina for a while. Sometime later a number of families moved to Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee with some remaining in South Carolina. There is a town in South Carolina by the name of Bethune. Among a group of families, namely Blues, Bethunes, Shaws, Asbells, McLeans and McWilliams and others moved from South Carolina to Alabama and formed a settlement which they called Scotland. My father's mother and my grandmother came with this group. My father's mother had two sons, David Shaw Bethune and I believe John Bethune.

My father was a lawyer and his brother a Doctor. The group of families organized a Presbyterian Church at Bethel, Alabama which still stands and is located about 12 miles from Union Springs, Ala. All of the older members of my family are buried here at Bethel. Members of this church came from all around the nearby country and small towns namely Inverness, Scotland, Aberfoil, and Perote. The families living in this community-Scotland are considered Scots-Irish.

My father, David Shaw Bethune, attended Oglethorpe University in Georgia near Atlanta. He was a major in the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 and was around 20 years of age when he entered the service. His mother passed away sometime around the Civil War. They lived at Inverness, Alabama. After the Civil War he moved to Union Springs and practiced law until he died in 1908.

He married two McLeans and I am from the second marriage. His first wife died after having 3 girls and 2 boys. His second family consisted of three boys, namely myself, John Lee Bethune, James Jackson Bethune in Birmingham, and Wilbur Hector Bethune in California.

My father's brother moved to Arkansas. This must have been around 1850 or earlier. I do not know where he located or to whom he was married. We have not heard from him during my lifetime.

I am sorry that I cannot give you any information about your John Bethune or his wife but my father died when I was too young to worry about family trees and too the family scattered to various places.

My son says to tell your nieces and nephews that they are from a distinguished and illustrious family. He has done a lot of research on the Bethune family. He also says that originally the family came from France. There is a town in France by the name of Bethune.

I am now 76 years of age with impaired eye sight, unable to drive and therefore cannot go to Wilkes County to secure information concerning your family.

Sincerely

John Lee Bethune  
Atlanta, GA