

Letter from Galveston

Hawkins Wilson

May 11, 1867

Hawkins Wilson was a formerly enslaved man living in Texas who had been sold there from Virginia as a young man. In this letter, written after the Civil War, Wilson asks Freedmen's Bureau agents to help him locate his long-lost relatives.

Dear Sir, I am anxious to learn about my sisters, from whom I have been separated many years— I have never heard of them since I left Virginia twenty four years ago— I am in hopes that they are still living and I am anxious to hear how they are getting on— I have no other one to apply to but you and am persuaded that you will help one who stands in need of your services as I do— I shall be grateful to you, if you oblige me in this matter— One of my sisters belonged to Peter Coleman in Caroline County and her name was Jane— Her husband's name was Charles and he belonged to Buck Haskin and lived near John Wright's store in the same county— She had three children, Robert, Charles and Julia, when I left— Sister Martha belonged to Dr. Jefferson, who lived two miles above Wright's store— Sister Matilda belonged to Mrs. Botts, in the same county— My dear uncle Jim had a wife at Jack Langley's and his wife was named Adie and his oldest son was named Buck and they all belonged to Jack Langley— These are all my own dearest relatives and I wish to correspond with them with a view to visit them as soon as I can hear from them— My name is Hawkins Wilson and I am their brother, who was sold at Sheriff's sale and used to belong to Jackson Talley and was bought by M. Wright, Boydtown C.H.* You will please send the enclosed letter to my sister Jane, or some of her family, if she is dead— I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Hawkins Wilson

* Wilson recalls being sold at a courthouse ("C.H.") in a "Sheriff's sale," which means he was likely sold by court order to settle an owner's debt or estate.

Dear Sister Jane, Your little brother Hawkins is trying to find out where you are and where his poor old mother is— Let me know and I will come to see you— I shall never forget the bag of biscuits you made for me the last night I spent with you— Your advice to me to meet you in Heaven has never passed from my mind and I have endeavored to live as near to my God, that if He saw fit not to suffer us to meet on earth, we might indeed meet in Heaven— I was married in this city on the 10th March 1867 by Rev. Samuel Osborn to Mrs. Martha White, a very intelligent and lady-life woman— You may readily suppose that I was not fool enough to marry a Texas

girl— My wife was from Georgia and was raised in that state and will make me very happy— I have learned to read, and write a little— I teach Sunday School and have a very interesting class—

45 If you do not mind, when I come, I will astonish you in religious affairs— I am sexton of the Methodist Episcopal Church colored— I hope you and all my brothers and sisters in Virginia will stand up to this church; for I expect to live and die in the same— When I meet you, I shall be as much overjoyed as Joseph was when he and his father met after they had been separated so long—[†] Please write me all
50 the news about you all— I am writing tonight all about myself and I want you to do likewise about your and my relations in the state of Virginia— Please send me some of Julia's hair whom I left a baby in the cradle when I was torn away from you— [...]

[†] Wilson refers to the biblical story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. After being sold by his brothers as a slave to Egypt, Joseph was later reunited with his family.