Chronology of Joseph Wills who is buried in Vernon Parish.
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My thanks to Houston for allowing me to submit this chronology of Joseph Wills. Gaytha Thompson.

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**CHRONOLOGY OF JOSEPH WILLIS**

About 1758
Born a slave in Bladen County, North Carolina to Agerton Willis and a (suspected) Cherokee woman.

18 Sept 1776
Will of Agerton Willis written and in it wishes after his death, his son, Joseph be set free.

10 Oct 1777
Letter written by Daniel Willis, Senr. brother of Agerton Willis, deceased and written to Governor Caswell objecting the wishes of his brother to have the greatest part of his estate given to his...Molato boy Joseph and he is a born slave...

About 1784
Joseph married to Rachel Brafford or Brasford. (North Carolina did not allow inter-racial marriages)

Abt 1785
First known child born in South Carolina: Agerton Willis II

Abt 1787
Daughter born, Mary Willis

29 Nov 1787
Received for the House (State of North Carolina) a Bill to emancipate Joseph, a mulatto slave, the property of the Estate of Agerton Willis late of Bladen (County), deceased. Mr. (John) Willis (Joseph's cousin, son of Daniel) moved for leave and presented a Bill to emancipate Joseph...which was read, passed the first time and sent to the House of Commons.
01 Dec 1787
The Bill to emancipate Joseph...to confirm the said Joseph Willis and to
invest certain property herein referred to in the said Joseph, by the name of
Joseph Willis, was read the first time, passed and sent to the Senate.

05 Dec 1787
Same Bill read a second time...

06 Dec 1787
Same Bill read a third time....passed and ordered to be engrossed.

1787
Joseph, a slave, is emancipated by an Act entitled: Chapter 35. Held before
the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina. Joseph received 320
acres of the at least 2490 acres he was entitled. He immediately sold all
real and personal properties and moved to South Carolina. With that money he
bought a horse, bridle & saddle.

Abt 1790
Joseph married an Irish woman known only as Sarah. Their supposed children
Joseph Jr. 1792 born in South Carolina; Rachel 1794; Jemima 1796; Sarah 1798,
born in the Natchez District, Spanish Province of Louisiana.

Abt 1793
Came with Richard A. Curtis Jr., a licensed but not ordained Baptist Minister,
from South Carolina to the Natchez District.

Abt 1795
Curtis was arrested for public teachings of his Protestant religion. Upon his release,
he was threatened with deportation to the mines of Mexico as a
prisoner.

1795
Curtis writes an open letter to protest Gov. Carondelet's reenactment of the
"Black Code" against Protestant worship. Did not allow more than 9 persons to
assemble. Curtis also detailed reasons for his not departing.

1798
Joseph associated with Curtis (upon his return to the now, U.S. Territory of
Mississippi) and William Thompson to constitute a church near Natchez,
Mississippi.

Nov 1804
Crossed the Mississippi River and traveled to the Attakapas District at
Vermillion, about 40 miles southwest of Baton Rouge. He is to have been the first Protestant minister to preach the Gospel, west of the Mississippi. Besides Vermillion, he preached at night at Plaquemine Brule'.

Abt 1805
Returned to Mississippi, due to violent prejudices because of both his color and being a Baptist. Also to seek ordination by the Baptist Church, so that he could officially baptize and establish member churches.

Late 1805
Moved to Bayou Chicot in St. Landry Parish.

Abt 1808
Joseph married a yet unknown woman. Their supposed children all born at Bayou Chicot. William 1810; Lemuel 1812; John 1814; 3 yet unknown named girls and Martha 09 April 1825.

1810
Appears on the 1st U.S. Census of Louisiana.

1811
Presented his letter, requesting ordination, to the Mississippi Association of the Baptist Church.

13 Nov 1812
Calvary Church was constituted, thought to be the first Baptist Church in Louisiana and the first Protestant Church west of the Ms. New evidence of an earlier Baptist Church. At the request of the new church Joseph was ordained at Bayou Chicot by Moses Hadley and Lawrence Scarborough.

1813
Mississippi Association recognizes Calvary Church.

1816
Now that he was ordained he could readily set about his goal to establish other congregations. Founded Beulah Church at Cheneyville, La.

1817
Established churches at Vermillion (Lafayette), Plaquemine Brule' and Hickory Flat, also known as Aimwell or Debourn. (Debourn, 5 miles southwest of Oberlin).

1818
The Louisiana Association of Baptist Churches is founded.

1820
Established a church at Bayou Sale in St. Mary Parish. Appears on the 2nd U.S. Census of Louisiana.

02 May 1824
Established Zion Hill Church at Beaver Creek.

26 Sept 1828
Amiable Baptist Church was constituted.

By August 1829
Joseph removes his family to Rapides Parish.

1830
Appears on the 3rd U.S. Census of Louisiana.

01 Jan 1832
Joined Amiable by letter.

1832
Occupy #1 Baptist Church founded.

Abt 1836
Joseph married Elvy Sweat. Their supposed children born in and around Spring Hill Ward. This area included the east side of 10-Mile. Samuel 1837; Aimuwell 1839; James 1841; William 1845; Timothy 1847; Bernard 1848.

1840
Appears on the 4th U.S. Census of Louisiana.

12 Jan 1842

20 Sept 1850
Appears on the U.S. Census of Louisiana.

1852
Last appearance, before the Louisiana Association. Gave a personal oratory and summary of his life. To include personal information, re.: birthdate, etc.

04 Sept 1854
Joseph Willis, "Apostle of the Opelousas" and Father of the Louisiana
Association, died. Buried at Occupy #1 Baptist Church Cemetery, located at 10 Mile near the Calcasieu River in Vernon Parish, Louisiana.

18 Jan 1958
Memorial Service held at Occupy #1 to commemorate the placement of a large memorial stone at the site of his grave. 16 Baptist ministers and 250 persons were in attendance.

References for Chronology of Joseph Willis.

A History of Baptist Churches in the United States.
Personal oratory by Joseph Willis before the Louisiana Baptist Association.
First Baptist Church, Minister's Study, in Opelousas, LA.

Unpublished manuscript by Randy Willis, a descendant in Texas.
NOTE: This manuscript and the first "existing" Minute Book of Bayou Chicot Baptist Church were stored in a broken Ice Cream Box Freezer at a store at Bayou Chicot, 1984.

Marriage Record # 7, St. Landry Parish, LA.
Agerton Willis to Sophie Story.
St. Landry Parish Courthouse in Opelousas, LA.

Newspaper, The Baptist Message, (Official publication of the Louisiana Baptist Convention)
"Half Moon Bluff church was organized October 12, 1812 in Washington Parish near Franklinton." Rapides Parish Public Library in Alexandria, LA.


St. Landry Parish, LA., Conveyance Book G, Page 519.
"...Joseph Willis, resident of Rapides Parish..."
St. Landry Parish Courthouse in Opelousas, LA.

All the remaining were viewed at the Alexandria Historical & Genealogical Library in Alexandria, LA.

The State Records of North Carolina.
Compiled, written & Published by authority of Walter Clark, Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court.
Papeles Procedente de Isla de Cuba (The Cuban Papers), Legajo (Bundle) 32, Folios 537-538.

A History of the Baptists of Louisiana from the Earliest Times to the Present.
Pages 139-155 (Chapter entitled "The Apostle of Opelousas") & 515-516 (Short biographical sketch).

1st Minute Book of Amiable Baptist Church, 1828-1874.

U.S. Census of 1810, Opelousas County, LA (Later became St. Landry Parish)
Page 325. Shown as Free Person of Color.
1820, St. Landry Parish, LA.
Page 107.
1830, St. Landry Parish, LA.
Page 95.

More About REV., JOSEPH WILLIS:
Event 1: 1790, Moved to SC

Event 2: 1794, Joined— Main Suluda Church

Fact 3: 1798, Licensed to Preach the Baptist Word

Fact 4: Left SC to Go to Mississippi

Fact 5: 1799, Sold land in SC to Father in Law

Occupation: Minister
Residence: 1800, Woodville Miss.

More About JOSEPH WILLIS and RACHEL BRAFFORD:
Marriage: Bef. 1785, Cheraws Co., Now Marlboro Co. SC

More About SARAH JOHNSON:
Event 1: An Irish Woman

More About JOSEPH WILLIS and SARAH JOHNSON:
Marriage: Aft. 1792, Greenville Co., SC

More About JOSEPH WILLIS and SARAH:
Marriage: Abt. 1808

More About JOSEPH WILLIS and ELVY SWEAT:
Marriage: Abt. 1836

Children of JOSEPH WILLIS and RACHEL BRAFFORD are:
29. i. AGERTON WILLIS, b. 1785, BLADEN CO., NC; d. April 18, 1811, LA.
ii. MARY WILLIS\textsuperscript{143,144}, b. Abt. 1787, North Carolina; m. (1) JOHNSON\textsuperscript{144}; m. (2) THOMAS DIAL\textsuperscript{144}.

More About THOMAS DIAL:
Burial: Rapides Parish, LA

Children of JOSEPH WILLIS and SARAH JOHNSON are:
30. iii. JOSEPH\textsuperscript{5} WILLIS, JR, b. Abt. 1792, Cheraws Dist., SC; d. St. Landry Parish, Louisiana.
   iv. RACHEL WILLIS\textsuperscript{145}, b. 1794, South Carolina\textsuperscript{145}.

More About RACHEL WILLIS:
Burial: Natchez Dist., LA

v. JEMIMA WILLIS\textsuperscript{145,146}, b. 1796, SC\textsuperscript{147}; m. WILLIAM DYER\textsuperscript{147,148,149}.

More About JEMIMA WILLIS:
Burial: Natchez Dist., LA

31. vi. SARAH WILLIS, b. 1798, South Carolina.

Children of JOSEPH WILLIS and SARAH are:
32. vii. WILLIAM\textsuperscript{5} WILLIS, b. January 06, 1804, Louisiana; d. November 24, 1881.
33. viii. LEMUEL WILLIS, b. 1812, Elizabeth, LA; d. 1862, Bayou Chicot, Louisiana.
   ix. JOHN WILLIS, b. Abt. 1814.
   x. DAUGHTER WILLIS, b. Abt. 1816.
   xi. DAUGHTER WILLIS, b. Abt. 1818.
   xii. DAUGHTER WILLIS, b. Abt. 1820.
34. xiii. MARTHA WILLIS, b. April 09, 1825, Louisiana; d. August 18.

Children of JOSEPH WILLIS and ELVY SWEAT are:
xiv. SAMUEL\textsuperscript{5} WILLIS\textsuperscript{150}, b. 1837\textsuperscript{150}.
35. xv. AIMUWELL WILLIS, b. 1839.
   xvi. JAMES WILLIS\textsuperscript{150}, b. 1841\textsuperscript{150}.
   xvii. WILLIAM WILLIS\textsuperscript{150}, b. 1845\textsuperscript{150}.
   xviii. TIMOTHY WILLIS\textsuperscript{150}, b. 1847\textsuperscript{150}.
   xix. BERNARD WILLIS\textsuperscript{150}, b. 1848\textsuperscript{150}.