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SUBJECT: Parentage of **Charity Sessums** (c1810–aft.1880), Wife of Jesse Courtney and William Nail;
Daughter of Jacob Sessums (c1777–c1856) & Penny Fisher (c1780–c1845): A Proof
Summary

No known document provides direct evidence (an explicit statement of fact) regarding Charity Sessums's parentage. That connection is proved beyond reasonable doubt by a body of indirect evidence placing Charity in the middle of one Sessums family cluster in both Mississippi and Texas—specifically, the family of Jacob Sessums and wife Penny Fisher.¹ The most-relevant points are these:

- 1830 U.S. census, Simpson County, MS.: **Jesse Courtney** (1 male 20–29; **1 female 15–19**), is enumerated **next door to Jacob “Sessons”** and next door to **Neal Williams** (who married **Jacob Sessums's daughter Polly** in January 1820, Lawrence County, MS).² Jacob Sessums' household had lost a daughter in Charity's age bracket since the 1820 census.³ The fact that no child is enumerated in Jesse's 1830 household suggests that the couple were newly wed.
- Simpson County's marriage, probate, land, and court records are destroyed before 1872.⁴
- 1836: Jesse Courtney is taxed in Simpson County, consecutive with his brother Samuel who married Charity's sister **Sarah Sessums**.⁵
- 1840: Jesse Courtney is not a head of household in Mississippi. **Redding Sessums**, a son of Jacob and Penny whose placement in the family is proved by direct evidence⁶) is also missing from the 1840

¹ For abstracts, transcriptions and/or images of all documents found to-date for Jacob and Penny Sessums in North Carolina, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas, see E. S. Mills, “Jacob Sessums (c1777–c1856) & Spouse Penelope “Penny” Fisher (c1780–c1845): Research Notes,” 86 pp., a work in progress last updated 17 January 2022; archived online at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/JacobSessumsPennyFisherResearchNotes.pdf>).

² 1830 U.S. census, Simpson Co., MS, p. 286 (penned), lines 22 (**Jacob Sessums**), line 23 (**Jesse Courtney**), line 24 (**Neal Williams**). For the marriage of Neal Williams to Polly Sessums, with permission of her father Jacob, see Lawrence Co., MS, Marriage Book 1: 33; Office of the Circuit Clerk, Monticello.

³ 1820 U.S. census, Lawrence Co., MS, p. 64, line 34 (“Jacob Sessims”). In 1820 he had 1 female b. 1805–10 and two females b. 1810–20. In 1830, he had only 1 female child b. 1815–20.

⁴ “Simpson County, Mississippi, Genealogy,” *FamilySearch Research Wiki* (https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Simpson_County,_Mississippi_Genealogy). In 1823 he moved from Lawrence (whose marriage records survive) to adjacent Simpson (whose records have been destroyed). No identity has been found for the second daughter missing from Jacob's 1830 household.

⁵ “Mississippi, State Archives, Various Records, 1820–1951,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919687>) > Browse > Simpson > County tax rolls 1824–1845 > image 139 (Cortney, Courtney), 150 (Williams). For Sarah's placement in Jacob and Penny's family, see E. S. Mills, “Parentage of Sarah Sessums (1816–aft.1900), Wife of Rev. Samuel Courtney; Daughter of Jacob Sessums (c1777–c1856) & Penny Fisher (c1780–c1845): A Proof Argument,” 23 September 2022; publicly posted at *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/71173579/person/292295486153/media/08bdcf4d-6697-46dd-aad1-692a81f41004> : 23 September 2022).

census, this being the period in which he migrated from Mississippi to Texas.⁷ It appears that the Courtneys moved with him.

- 1845–50 Panola and Shelby Counties, TX: **Jacob Sessum Jr.** and **Redding Sessums** were taxed a poll in Shelby in 1845, then Jacob was dropped and Redding remained through the 1850 census where he made a home for his father Jacob Sr.⁸ **Jacob Sessums Jr.** and brothers **Solomon and Reuben Sessum** were taxed as polls in Panola, 1846; Solomon and Jacob Jr. were taxed in Panola in 1847–48; and then Solomon alone remained in 1849.⁹
- 1850 census, Panola County, TX: **Charity Courtney's** children are said to be born in Mississippi through 1840 and in Texas in 1843 and 1845, placing her period of migration during the same time frame as that of Redding and Jacob Sessums. No children were born thereafter, suggesting Jesse Courtneys's death c1844–46.¹⁰
- 1850 census, Panola County, TX: the widowed **Charity "Cortney"** and her four Courtney children are **living in the home of Reuben Sessums 25** (a still-unmarried son of Jacob & Penny, as proved with direct evidence¹¹). They were also **adjacent** to the newlywed **Solomon Sessums** (also a son of Jacob and Penny¹²).
- 1850–1860, the Panola Co. Sessumses moved across the county line into Shelby Co. There, about 1851, **Charity Courtney** married the widower William Nail, who died before the census of 1860.

⁶ For Redding as son of Jacob and Polly, see *Senate Documents, 62d Congress : 3d Session, December 2, 1912–March 4, 1913*, vol. 15 (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1913), 595–600, "W. R. Sessums et al., Choctaws," specifically p. 599, para. 2. Also see chart of descendants of Redding Sessums compiled by the Dawes Commission, in Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums, claimant; imaged in "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54727038> and [54727067](https://www.fold3.com/image/54727067)).

⁷ For abstracts, transcriptions, and/or images of all documents created by Redding Sessums, see E. S. Mills, "Redding Sessums (1798–1877) & Spouse Mary Ann Brown (c1800–1877): Research Notes," a work in progress last updated 17 January 2022, 46 pp.; archived online at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/ReddingSessumsMaryAnnBrownResearchNotes.pdf>).

⁸ "Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1837–1910," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1827575>) > Browse > Shelby > 1844 > image 9 "Redden" Sessums. *Ibid.* > Shelby > 1845 > images 10–11 "Redden" and Jacob Sessums. *Ibid.* > 1846 > image 19 (Redden Sessums). *Ibid.* > 1847 > image 11 ("R" Sessums). *Ibid.* > 1848 > image 23 ("Redmond" Sessums). *Ibid.* 1849 > image 21 ("R" Sessums). Also 1850 U.S. census, Shelby Co. TX, pop. sch., p. 35 (stamped), dwell./fam.485/485, "Redden" Sessums, 50, b. NC (children born MS)... "Jacop" Sessums ... 73, b. NC.

⁹ "Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1837–1910," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1827575>) > Browse > Panola > 1846 > image 13. *Ibid.* 1847 > image 15. *Ibid.* > 1848 > image 17.

The Jacob Sessums who was taxed in Shelby in 1845 and Panola in 1847 cannot be Jacob Sr. because Jacob Sr. had passed the maximum poll tax age (55). See *Early Laws of Texas: General Laws from 1836 to 1879*, 2d ed., 3 vols. (St. Louis, Mo., Gilbert Book Co., 1888), 2: 150, ch. 21, art. 1877 §2.

Jacob Jr. enlisted in the Mexican War after the 1847 tax roll; he died in the hospital at at "Jalapa" [Xalapa] near Vera Cruz on 1 January 1848. "U.S., Compiled Military Service Records for American Volunteer Soldiers, Mexican War, 1845–1848," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2058/>) > Texas > First Texas Mounted Volunteers > Jacob Sessums > images 4068–4074. Jacob Jr.'s listing on the 1848 tax roll appears to be a carry-over from 1847 that was corrected before 1849.

¹⁰ 1850 U.S. census, Panola Co., TX, pop. sch., p. 154, dwelling/family 137/137.

¹¹ Testimony of John Washington Sessums, 21 January 1902, in Choc. MCR 184; imaged, "Dawes Packets," database with images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54726856> and [54726953](https://www.fold3.com/image/54726953)). John W. identifies his father as Reuben Fisher Sessums and grandparents as Penny Fisher and Jacob Sessums. See also the commission-prepared Reuben Fisher family chart at *ibid* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54727057>).

¹² For Solomon, see E. S. Mills, "Parentage of Solomon D. Sessums (c1819–aft. 1870), Son of Jacob Sessums (c1777–c1856) & Penny Fisher (c1780–c1845): A Proof Summary," 23 September 2022; publicly posted at Mills, "Shown-Jeffcoat Family Tree," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/71173579/person/292295486811/Gallery>).

Shelby Co.'s marriage, probate, and land records before 1882 have been destroyed.¹³ Analysis of the surviving tax rolls of the 1850s offer only one option for her husband, the Nail family patriarch William who was last taxed on his land in 1856 and was dropped from the roll in 1857.¹⁴ Tradition among William's descendants hold that his granddaughter Margaret married **Solomon Sessums**; but no direct evidence has been found, given the county's loss of records. The 1850 census does cite Solomon's wife as "Margaret," 23, living next door to Abner Nail, 42.¹⁵

- 1860 census, Shelby County, TX: "Charity Nail," aged 50, is said to have been born in Kentucky—i.e., c1810.¹⁶ The household of her proposed father, Jacob "Sessons" was indeed enumerated in 1810 in Christian County, KY (p. 572) with three females 0–10.¹⁷
- 1880 census, Smith County, TX: Charity's birthplace is again cited as Kentucky, with both parents born in North Carolina.¹⁸ That also conforms to known data for Jacob and Penny Sessums. They were married in North Carolina, c1796, as children of parents who were residents of Duplin Co. at the time Jacob and Penny were born. Records there place Jacob and Penny in Sampson County, NC, until late 1807.¹⁹
- When Charity's children came to adulthood, three of them married their Sessums cousins. A son and granddaughter of **Solomon Sessums** married two of Charity's children. A third child of Charity married a grandson of **Redding Sessums**. Those marriages were:
 - John Washington Nail, son of Charity, married 1878 to Mary Frances Sessoms,²⁰ daughter of Solomon D. Sessums.²¹
 - John Charles Courtney, Charity's grandson, married 1880 to Nancy Mandy "Nan" Sessums,²² daughter of Solomon D. Sessums.²³

¹³ "Shelby County, Texas, Genealogy," *FamilySearch Wiki* (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Shelby_County,_Texas_Genealogy).

¹⁴ "Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1837–1910," database with image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939J-4Y69-L>) > 1855, image 13; 1856, image 14; 1857, image 15.

¹⁵ 1850 U.S. census, Panola Co., TX, pop. sch., p. 154, dwells./fams. 135 (Abner Nail, 136 (Solomon "Sesom"), and 137 (Reubin Sessoms and Charity Cortney).

¹⁶ 1860 U.S. census, Shelby Co., TX, pop. sch., p.o. Beunavista, Beat 8, stamped p. 422, dwell./fam. 489/489. Charity's youngest child is said to be 2—i.e., born between 2 June 1857 and 1 June 1858 and conceived between September 1856 and March 1857. That corresponds to William Nail being last taxed in 1856 but dropped in 1857.

¹⁷ 1810 U.S. census, Christian Co., KY, p. 572, line 20, Jacob "Sessons."

¹⁸ 1880 U.S. census, Smith Co., TX, pop. sch., ED 111, p. 12-D, dwell./fam. 108/108.

¹⁹ For abstracts, transcriptions, and/or images of all known records created by Jacob, Penny, and their birth families in *Duplin and Sampson Cos.*, NC, see E. S. Mills, "Sessums & Fishers of Sampson County (Formerly Duplin), NC: Preliminary Survey," report, 29 June 2021, 146 pp.; archived online at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/SessumsFisherSampsonCoNCprelimsurvey.pdf>).

²⁰ Panola Co., TX, "Marriage Book D Transcribed," p. 26; imaged *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L94V-1H2P>) > image 166.

²¹ 1870 U.S. census, Panola Co., TX, pop. sch., p.o. Carthage, Beat 1, p. 50, dwell./fam. 418/418, for Mary, aged 15, in the household of Solomon Sessums and his second wife Elizabeth.

²² The actual marriage record has not been found. The death certificate of this couple's son "Solmon" Courtney identifies his parents as John Courtney and Nancy Mandy Sessums. See "Texas, U.S. Death Certificates, 1903–1982," database with images, *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2272/images/33154_b062813-01950). The 1900 census states that John Charles and Nancy had been married 21 years; however, John was enumerated as single on the 1880 census. See 1900 U.S. census, Rains Co., TX, pop. sch., Justice Precinct 2, ED 76, p. 2-B, dwell./fam. 19/29; and 1880 U.S. census, Shelby Co., TX, pop. sch., Precinct 5, ED 91, pp. 31-32 (penned), dwell./fam. 10/10, for John Courtney 21, single, in parental home. Nancy is not found on the 1880 census. If the 1879 marriage year given in 1800 is correct, then it would appear that the young couple were living with John's parents and that John's wife was simply omitted from the large household.

- Sarah Catheryn “Kate” Nail, Charity’s daughter, married about 1878 William Buchanan Sessums Jr.,²⁴ grandson of Redding Sessums.²⁵

²³ 1870 U.S. census, Panola Co., TX, pop. sch., p.o. Carthage, Beat 1, p. 50, dwell./fam. 418/418, for Nancy, aged 11, in the household of Solomon Sessums and his second wife Elizabeth. Nancy (Sessums) Courtney’s death certificate identifies here father as Solomon “Sassor” but mistakenly identifies Solomon’s wife (the informant’s grandmother) as “Phanie” [Penny] Fisher, which was the name of Solomon’s famed mother through whom the heirs of Charity, Reuben, and Redding Fisher were claiming Choctaw descent.

²⁴ Tarrant co., TX, Marriage Book, 1876–1879: 142, “Wm. B. Sessums and Miss Sarah C. Nail,” 10 June 1877; imaged in “Texas, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1837–1965,” database with images, *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9168/images/45605_b220549-00165).

²⁵ For William Buchanan “Buck” Sessums Jr. as son of William Buchanan Sr. and grandson of Redding, see Redding Sessums chart, in Choc. MCR 184, John Sessums, claimant; imaged in “Dawes Packets,” database with images, Fold3 (<https://www.fold3.com/image/54727070>).