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## A Charleston Family for Milton Bernerdine Robinson

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of Rutherford County, North Carolina



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## **A Charleston Family for Milton Bernerdine Robinson of Rutherford County, North Carolina**

### ***Introduction***

An increased interest in genealogy over the past several decades has led to the proliferation of undocumented data by amateur and hobbyist genealogists who have not yet realized the need to provide source information for the names, dates, places, and relationships they include in their genealogies. As a result, fact-checking and verification of data found in online and user-submitted genealogies has become more of a priority for genealogists. This is one such case in which data submitted by a client needed to be checked before proceeding with further research.

### ***The problem***

In early 2014, an African-American resident of Rutherford County, North Carolina commissioned a research project involving the extension of his paternal line. He provided an undocumented electronic family file showing his father's descent from a family in Charleston, South Carolina. Even though the client insisted that his lineage was accurate, it was necessary to verify and document the line from his father to his great-grandfather before attempting to extend the line further.

According to the client, his father Milton Bernerdine Robinson was a native and lifelong resident of Rutherford County, North Carolina. He was said to be the son of Plato Robinson and the grandson of one Charlie J. Robinson who was born about 1853 in Charleston, South Carolina. Charlie was reported to have married his wife Sallie in Charleston and to have relocated to Cleveland County, North Carolina, a neighboring county of Rutherford. He supposedly died "in the hospital" in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1927.<sup>1</sup> These assertions, along with the connections supplied by the client, were confirmed by this research.

### ***The hypothesis***

Milton Bernerdine Robinson was the son of Plato Robinson and the grandson of Charlie J. Robinson who was born about 1853 in Charleston, South Carolina. Charlie married his wife Sallie in Charleston and relocated to Cleveland County, North Carolina, dying in a Columbia, South Carolina hospital in 1927.

### ***The records***

#### Positive results from:

*Federal Census:* 1880 - 1930 North and South Carolina

- image copies of the federal **copies** of these census records (derivative records)

*Online databases:* indexes of births and deaths in North Carolina

- indexes of vital records (derivative records)

*Death certificates:* images of death certificates from North and South Carolina

- image copies of original death certificates (original records)

*Marriage Licenses and Certificates:* from Rutherford County, North Carolina

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<sup>1</sup> "Robinson Family Personal Ancestry File Database," compiled by Milton Robinson; supplied by EvaLou Wetherington, 11 April 2014; copy held by Greg Lovelace, Charleston, South Carolina. This is an undocumented database supplied by a family history hobbyist with little experience.

- image copies of loose marriage licenses and certificates from the county marriage register (original records)

Consulted with negative/indeterminate results:

*Online databases:* indexes of 1910 United States Census records

- indexes from the census (derivative records)

*City Directories:* 1874-1899, Charleston, South Carolina

- multiple matches in each year for Charles/Charlie/Charley Robinson/Robertson/Robison/Robson
- no spouses listed, so not possible to distinguish among the different men without more extensive research

*Capitation tax records:* Charleston, South Carolina

- tax on free blacks in Charleston
- No listings for Charles/Charlie/Charley Robinson/Robertson/Robison/Robson

*Probate Records:* Cleveland County and Wayne County, North Carolina, and Richland County, South Carolina

- No estate records for Charles/Charlie/Charley Robinson/Robertson/Robison/Robson
- No estate records for Plato Robinson/Robertson/Robison/Robson

***The Findings***

Milton Bernerdine Robinson, "colored," died at age 77 in Shelby, Cleveland County, North Carolina on 24 May 1991. He was born 29 June 1913 in Harris, Rutherford County, North Carolina, the son of Plato Robinson and Connie McEntire.<sup>2</sup> On 19 February 1910, a license was issued for the marriage of Plato Roberson, age 24, of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, the son of Chas Roberson and Sallie Roberson, to Connie McEntire, age 19, of Forest City, North Carolina, daughter of Ella McEntire. Both were "col[ored]." The license did not name Connie's father but listed him as "dead." On 27 February 1910, Plato "Robins" and "Carnie" McEntire were married by E. T. McDonald, pastor, at Doggett's Grove Church in Forest City, Rutherford County, North Carolina.<sup>3</sup> Two months later, on 15 April 1910, Plato and "Carnie" Robinson, a black couple aged 21 and 18, respectively, and married within the past year, were boarders in a home in Crowders Mountain Township, Gaston County, North Carolina, near Kings

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<sup>2</sup> "North Carolina, Deaths, 1931-1994," index, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/FGDL-TM2> : accessed 16 March 2015), entry for Milton Bernadin Robinson, 24 May 1991; citing NC Death certificates no. 18500-21499 v. 18B-21A 1991, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh. Also, "North Carolina Birth Indexes, 1800-2000," digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 30 April 2014), p. 144, entry for Milton Bernerdine Robinson; imaged from "North Carolina Birth Indexes," North Carolina State Archives Microfilm publication, film NCVR\_B\_C\_086\_6800; citing "Index to Delayed Birth Certificates, 1880-1959," Rutherford County, North Carolina.

<sup>3</sup> Rutherford County, North Carolina, marriage licenses, Roberson-McEntire, 1910; Register of Deeds Office, Rutherford County; digital image #3183 by W. D. Floyd, *W. D. Floyd Website on CD*, CD-ROM #6 (Forest City, North Carolina: The Genealogical Society of Old Tryon County, 2005). At this time, both the marriage license and the marriage certificate were included on a single form held in the office of the Register of Deeds.

Mountain, Cleveland County, North Carolina (See Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> There was no other Plato Robinson resident in North Carolina in 1910.<sup>5</sup>

Were Connie/Carnie McEntire, Carnie Robinson, and Connie Robinson the same woman? Examination of the marriage license and certificate (see above), census records, and death records show that they all refer to the same woman who married Plato Robinson and was the mother of Milton. Clearly, the names Carnie and Connie are phonetically similar, and regional accents may account for the difference in spelling. "Conney" McEntire, age 8, was living with her parents Franklin and "Ellar" McEntire in Sulphur Spring Township, Rutherford County, North Carolina, on census day in 1900.<sup>6</sup> The death certificate of Connie Robinson names her parents as Frank McIntyre and Ella McKinney.<sup>7</sup> Connie/Carnie/Conney McEntire and Carnie/Connie Robinson are clearly the same woman.

Milton Bernerdine Robinson's early life was one of tragedy. On 8 October 1915, when he was only two years old, his father Plato died at the State Hospital in Wayne County, near Goldsboro, in the eastern coastal plain of North Carolina about 220 miles east of where the Plato and Connie had lived in 1910. This hospital, now Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro, was established in 1878 as a hospital for mentally ill blacks and first occupied in 1880.<sup>8</sup> The informant for Plato's death certificate, his attending physician, listed him as "colored," and born in South Carolina. It is probable that, given the distance between Plato's home and the State Hospital, the doctor knew little or nothing about Plato's life prior to his admittance to the hospital. He made no entries for Plato's birth date or his parents, but reported his age as 29 (born *circa* 1886) and gave his former residence as Cleveland County, North Carolina.<sup>9</sup>

In 1920, about 5 years after the death of his father, Milton lived with his mother Connie in High Shoal Township in Rutherford County, North Carolina (See Figure 1). Connie, black, age 27, was a widow,

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<sup>4</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Gaston County, North Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 54, sheet 40 (penned) A (stamped), 89 (stamped), dwelling 719, family 724, Plato and Carnie Robinson, home of Kattie Johnson; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 22 March 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1112. Also, *Wikipedia* (<http://wikipedia.org>), "Crowders Mountain Township, Gaston County, North Carolina," rev. 21:36, 25 November 2014.

<sup>5</sup> "1910 United States Federal Census," database, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 22 March 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T624; exact search for Plato Rob\*son living in North Carolina, USA. Also, "United States Census, 1910," database, *FamilySearch.org* (<http://www.familysearch.org>: accessed 22 March 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T624; exact search for Plato Rob\*son living in North Carolina.

<sup>6</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Rutherford County, North Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 144, sheet 10 (penned) B (stamped), dwelling 202, family 202, Franklin and Ellar McEntire; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 20 April 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1216.

<sup>7</sup> Rutherford County, North Carolina, death certificate no. 221 (stamped), Register No. 58 (penned), "Connie Robinson," 10 May 1922; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 30 April 2014), citing North Carolina State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>8</sup> *Wikipedia* (<http://wikipedia.org>), "Cherry Hospital," rev. a5:28, 4 December 2014. Until 1965, Cherry Hospital, then called the State Hospital at Goldsboro, "served the entire black population for the State of North Carolina.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne County, North Carolina, death certificate no. 453 (stamped), Register No. 120 (penned), "Plato Robertson," 8 October 1915; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 30 April 2014), citing North Carolina State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Raleigh, North Carolina.

working as a cook in a private home. Milton was 6 years old.<sup>10</sup> Two years later, on 25 June 1922, in Henrietta, High Shoal Township, North Carolina, Milton lost his mother to tuberculosis, leaving him an orphan.<sup>11</sup> In 1930, he was listed as a step-son in the home of Horace and Essie Ford in Cool Springs Township in Rutherford County (See Figure 1).<sup>12</sup> The death certificate of Essie Mae Ford, wife of Horace Ford, who also supplied the information for the certificate, reveals that she was the daughter of Frank McEntyre and Ella McKinney, also the parents of Connie (McEntire) Robinson.<sup>13</sup> Essie and Connie were sisters.<sup>14</sup> After Connie's death, Milton lived with his aunt and uncle, listed in the census as their step-son. So Milton was in fact the son of Plato and Connie (McEntire) Robinson, as the client reported.

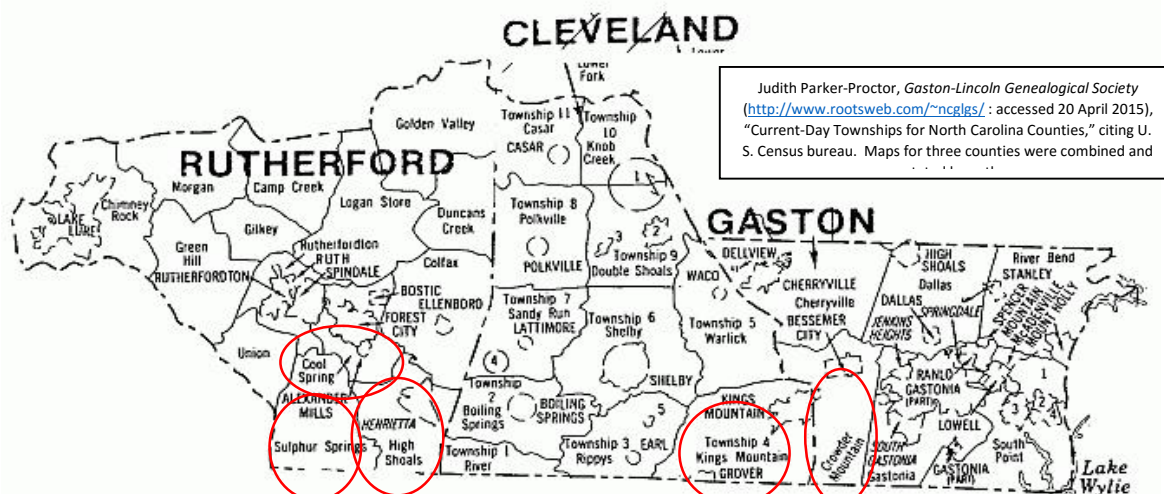


Figure 1: Townships in the counties in which the Robinson families lived

Who were Plato's parents? The information supplied by the client named them as Charlie J. and Sallie Robinson of Charleston, South Carolina. As stated earlier, Plato was about 24 years old when he married Connie McEntire in 1910 in Rutherford County, North Carolina. His parents were listed on the marriage license as Chas Roberson and Sallie Roberson.<sup>15</sup> His death certificate gave his place of birth as South Carolina, but in the 1910 census, it was given as North Carolina.<sup>16</sup> Given that the doctor who supplied the information for his death certificate did not know his birthdate or his parents, and that the hospital

<sup>10</sup> 1920 U.S. Census, Rutherford County, North Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 165, sheet 5B (penned), dwelling 86, family 92, Connie and Milton Roberson; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 30 April 2014; citing NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1321).

<sup>11</sup> Rutherford Co., N. C., death certificate no. 221-58, Connie Roberson.

<sup>12</sup> 1930 U.S. Census, Rutherford County, North Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 10, sheet 8B (penned), dwelling 131, family 132, Milton Roberson; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 29 April 2014), citing NARA microfilm publication T626, roll 1719.

<sup>13</sup> Rutherford County, North Carolina, death certificate no. 10651 (stamped), "Essie Mae Ford," 2 March 1963; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 20 April 2015), citing North Carolina State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>14</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Rutherford Co., N. C., pop. sched., E.D. 144, sheet 10 (penned) B (stamped), dwell. 202, fam. 202, Franklin and Ellar McEntire.

<sup>15</sup> Rutherford Co., N. C., marriage licenses, Roberson-McEntire, 1910.

<sup>16</sup> Wayne Co., N. C., death certificate no. 453 (stamped), Register No. 120 (penned), "Plato Robertson," 8 October 1915. Also, 1910 U.S. Census, Gaston County, North Carolina, pop. sched., E.D. 54, sheet 40 (penned) A (stamped), 89 (stamped), dwelling 719, family 724, Plato and Carnie Robinson.

where he died was over 200 miles distant from his home, it is probable that the doctor was misinformed and that Plato was actually born in North Carolina. In 1900, ten years before his marriage, Plato was living in No. 4 Township, Cleveland County, North Carolina, in the home of his parents Charlie J. and Sallie Robinson. Charlie was black, born March 1853 in South Carolina. Sallie was black, born May 1854 in South Carolina. Plato was 14 years old, born in May 1886. Sallie was reported to be the mother of twelve children, ten of whom were still alive. Six of those children were present in the home in 1900, including Plato and his sister Bertha, age 8, and brothers Price, age 6, and John, age 2.<sup>17</sup> Cleveland County's No. 4 Township included Kings Mountain and was bordered on the east by Crowders Mountain Township in Gaston County, North Carolina, where Plato and "Carnie" Robinson were living in 1910 (see Figure 1).<sup>18</sup> In 1910, Charlie and Sallie were still living in No. 4 Township, and their household included Bertha, Price, and John, along with an older daughter, Mittie Whimpie, and her two children Benjamin (age 3, born Washington, D. C.) and Marie (age 10, born North Carolina).<sup>19</sup>

The Whimpie family was also enumerated eleven days earlier in West Hoboken, Hudson County, New Jersey.<sup>20</sup> Mittie was listed as Armetta (Mittie could be a nickname for Armetta), born in North Carolina and both parents born in North Carolina, with her husband Benjamin. Her age (40) does not match up with the age of Mittie in her parents' home (31), but the ages and birthplaces of her two children Marie (age 11, born North Carolina) and Benjamin (age 3, born Washington, D.C.) agree. It is possible that Mittie was visiting her parents in North Carolina at the time, and that someone besides Benjamin or Mittie supplied the information to the census enumerator. In 1920, Benjamin and Armettie (age 41, born North Carolina, parents born South Carolina) are living in Hoboken with Marie (age 20, born North Carolina) and Benjamin (age 12, born D. C.) and two younger children.<sup>21</sup>

Not quite two years after Plato's Robinson's death in Wayne County, North Carolina, his mother Sallie died in Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, on 22 June 1917. Sallie's daughter Mittie was the informant for her death certificate.<sup>22</sup> According to the client, following his wife's death, Charlie developed financial

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<sup>17</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Cleveland County, North Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 52, sheet 6 (penned) A (stamped), 72 (stamped), dwelling 99, family 106, Charlie J. and Sallie Roberson family; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 28 May 2014), citing NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1189.

<sup>18</sup> Judtih Parker-Proctor, *Gaston Lincoln Genealogical Society* (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ncgigs/>: accessed 22 March 2015), "Current-Day Townships for North Carolina Counties;" citing "US Census Bureau."

<sup>19</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Cleveland County, North Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 39, sheet 18 (penned) A (stamped), 54 (stamped), dwelling 234, family 256, Charlie J. and Sallie Robinson family; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 22 March 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1103.

<sup>20</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Hudson County, New Jersey, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 283, sheet 4 (penned) A (stamped), 78 (stamped), dwelling 18, family 65, Benjamin and Armetta Winpy family; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 20 April 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 894.

<sup>21</sup> 1920 U.S. Census, Hudson County, New Jersey, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 257, sheet 4 15 (penned) A (stamped), 90 (stamped), dwelling 202, family 331, Benjamin and Armettie Wimpy family; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 20 April 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 894.

<sup>22</sup> Cleveland County, North Carolina, death certificate no. 450 (stamped), 26 (penned), "Sallie Robinson," 22 June 1917; digital image, *FamilySearch.org* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-267-11782-75932-47?cc=1609799> : accessed 29 May 2014), citing State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

difficulties and relocated to Columbia, South Carolina.<sup>23</sup> In 1920, Charley Robison boarded with a mulatto family in Columbia. He was a 64-year old black widower, born in South Carolina, and it is likely he was the surviving spouse of Sallie Robinson.<sup>24</sup> He died at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina on 12 February 1927. The informant for his death certificate was his daughter Bertha Robinson Lawrence.<sup>25</sup> This information is consistent with the client's assertion that Charlie died in a hospital in Columbia.

Death certificates and census records show that Charlie and Sallie were both born in South Carolina. But were they from Charleston as indicated by the client? Since no population schedules from the 1890 census survive, it is not possible to examine those records for the location of the Robinsons. However, the 1880 census shows that Charlie and Sallie were indeed living in Charleston on 1 July 1880. Chas. and Sarah Robinson, black, ages 28 and 24, respectively, resided on Chinquapin Street in Charleston with a young son Charles, age 1, and a Richard Robinson, possibly a younger brother age 20.<sup>26</sup> Once again, the information received from the client was corroborated by documented evidence.

### **Summary**

It is important in any genealogical research project to examine the results of prior research, especially if that research lacks documentation of information. In this case, no documentation for the lineage of Milton Bernerdine Robinson of Rutherford County to his grandfather Charlie J. Robinson of Charleston, South Carolina was included in information supplied by a client seeking help in extending his paternal line. Information gleaned from census records, death certificates, marriage records, and online vital record indices support the hypothesis that the data supplied by the client was indeed true. Milton Bernerdine Robinson was the son of Plato Robinson of Cleveland County, North Carolina, and Connie McEntire of neighboring Rutherford County. Plato Robinson was the son of Charlie J. and Sarah "Sallie" Robinson, residents of Cleveland County, North Carolina, who had relocated from Charleston, South Carolina sometime between 1 July 1880 and 1 June 1900.

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<sup>23</sup> Joshua Robinson to Greg Lovelace, e-mail, 10 June 2014, "Re: Milton's Family history search"; privately held by Lovelace, Charleston, South Carolina. Joshua Robinson is the client's grandson. His grandfather, who doesn't use e-mail, asked him to relay some messages between the researcher and the client about Charlie Robinson's hospitalization and his financial problems.

<sup>24</sup> 1920 U.S. Census, Richland County, South Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 84, sheet 8 (penned) A (stamped), 131 (stamped), no dwelling or family no. listed, 605 Taylor Street, Rosa Jones family; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 22 March 2015), citing NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1707.

<sup>25</sup> Richland County, South Carolina, death certificate no. 2614 (stamped), 136 (penned), C. J. Robinson, 12 February 1927, digital image, *FamilySearch.org* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-267-12150-32074-78?cc=1417492> : accessed 30 Jun 2014); citing Department of Archives and History, State Records Center, Columbia. While the birth date on the certificate is 1886, the age at death (67) provides a calculated birth date of *circa* 1860. Also, Robinson to Lovelace, e-mail, 10 June 2014.

<sup>26</sup> 1880 U.S. Census, Charleston County, South Carolina, population schedule, enumeration district (ED) 77, p. 5 or 6 (penned), 517A (stamped), dwelling 9, family 10, Chas and Sarah Robinson family; digital image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 28 May 2014), citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 1222.