

# Casefile Clues

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Weekly case studies, sources, and  
methods

## Mother's Ninety-Two:

### An 1881 War of 1812 Pension Affidavit

Researching the extended family is a valuable genealogical tool. It is one that is particularly helpful in the United States before the Civil War. In this issue of *Casefile Clues*, we look at an 1881 affidavit<sup>1</sup> made for a War of 1812 widow's pension claim. The claimant is actually the mother of an aunt by marriage and our analysis and suggestions are based on the extended nature of the relationship to the actual family being researched.

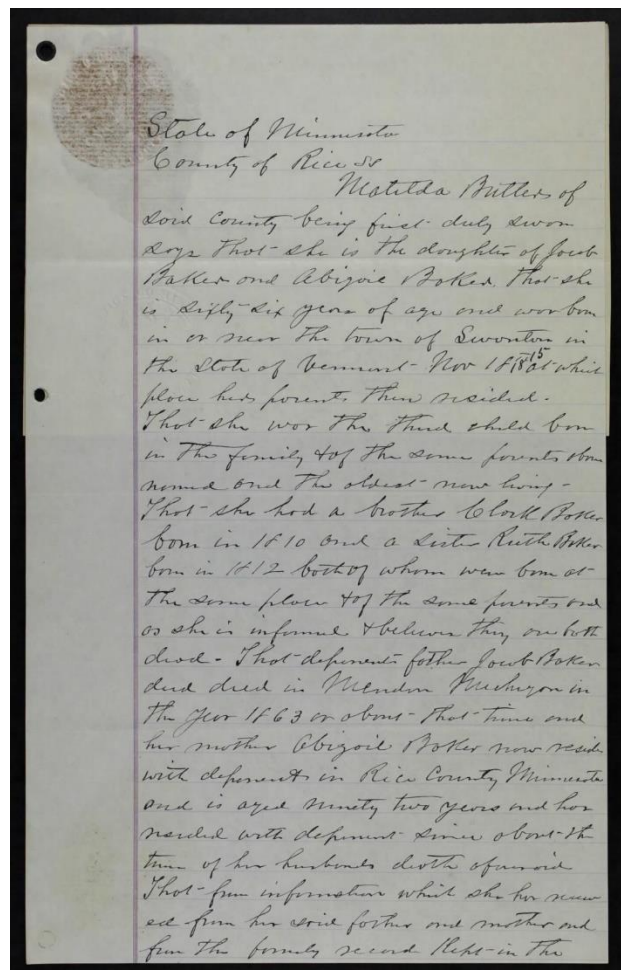
*Note: Only the affidavit itself is used as an illustration in this issue. The certification of the notary public is not.*

[begin transcription]

State of Minnesota

County of Rice Ss

Matilda Butler of said County being first duly sworn says That she is the daughter of Jacob Baker and Abigail Baker that she is sixty-six years of age and was born in or near the town of Swanton in the State of Vermont Nov



<sup>1</sup> Matilda Butler, Deposition of Witness, 10 May 1881, Abigail Baker, widow's pension application number 40300, certificate number 31996; service of Jacob Baker (fifer, Capt. Stockton's Co, 6th US Inf.); Case Files of Approved Pension Application ..., 1861-1934; Civil War and Later Pension Files; Record Group 15: Records of the Department of Veteran's Affairs; National Archives, Washington, D. C.; digital image, *Fold3.com*, accessed 24 July 2018.

18 1815 at which place her parents then resided.

That she was the third child born in the family & of the same parents above named and the oldest now living. That she had a brother Clark Baker born in 1810 and a sister Ruth Baker born in 1812 both of whom were born at the same place & of the same parents and as she is informed & believes they are both dead. That deponents father Jacob Baker died [sic] in Mendon Michigan in the year 1863 or about that time and her mother Abigail Baker now resides with deponent in Rice County Minnesota and is aged ninety two years and has resided with deponent since about the time of her husbands death aforesaid That from information which she has received from her said father and mother and from the family record kept in the family bible of the said Jacob Baker as he believes from the time of his marriage to said Abigail up to the time of the burning of their home in the year of 1834 or 1835 as near as she can recollect in which fire said bible & record was destroyed, the deponent completely believes that said Jacob Baker & Abigail Baker were married in the year 1809 and lived together to her knowledge up to the time of his death.

That she distinctly recollects of seeing and reading said record so kept by the family of the marriage of her parents the said Jacob & Abigail and is confident they were married during that year viz 1809

Subscribed & Sworn to before )

her

Me this 10<sup>th</sup> day of Nov 1881 )

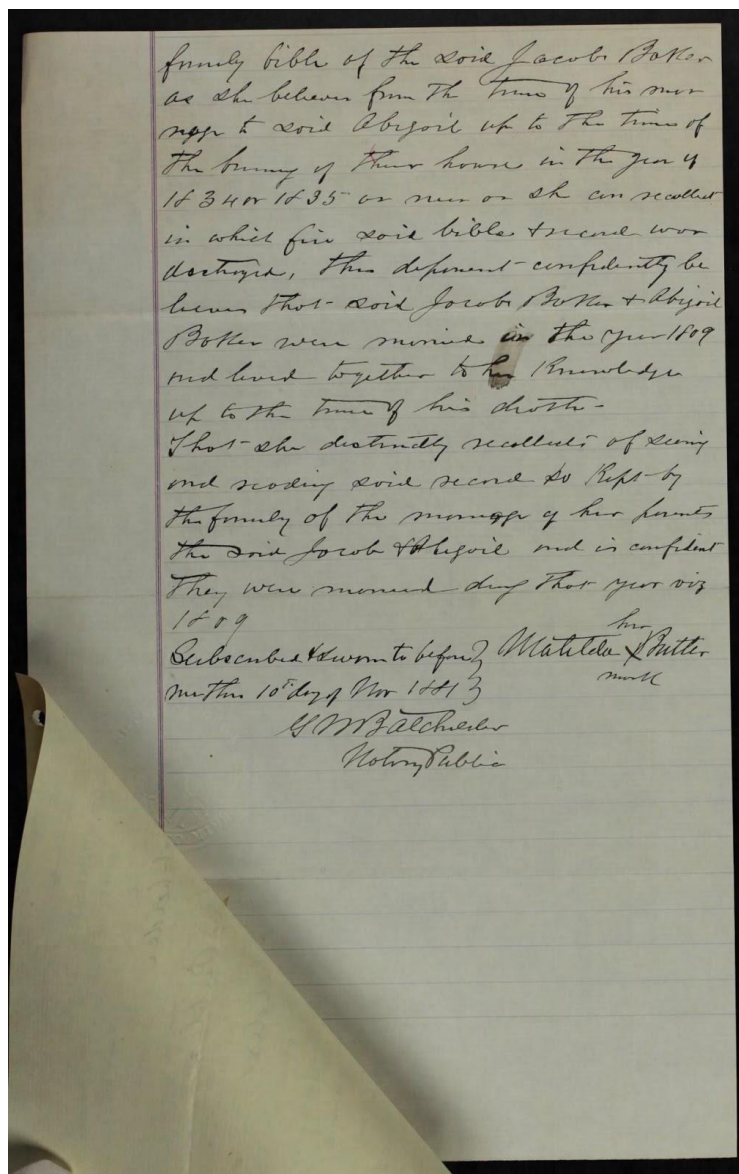
Matilda X Butler

Mark

G W Batchelder

Notary Public

[attached to the signed statement]



State of Minnesota )

County of Rice ) SS. I C. T. Palmer, Clerk of the District Court, in and for the County and State aforesaid, being a Court of Record, do hereby certify that G. W. Batchelder, whose name is subscribed to the Certificate of proof of acknowledge of the annexed instrument, and thereon written, was, at the date of said Certificate, an acting Notary Public in and for said County, and duly authorized to take such proof or acknowledgement; that I am well acquainted with the handwriting of said G. W. Batchelder and verily believe the signature of said Certificate to be genuine; and further, that said instrument is executed and acknowledged according to the laws of the State of Minnesota.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed the seal of said Court, at the Clerk's office, in Faribault, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of November 1881

C. T. Palmer

Clerk of the District Court

By [J. Woods Champion?] Deputy

[end transcription]

### **Initial Analysis**

This is an affidavit made by Matilda (Baker) Butler in support of the petition of Abigail Baker for a War of 1812 widow's pension based upon the service of Jacob Baker. The affidavit's main purpose appears to be establishing the marriage date of Abigail Baker. The affidavit concludes with the year of marriage for Abigail and Jacob. The text references the birth of the affiant her two older siblings. This appears to have been done to help establish the year of marriage for Jacob and Abigail.

The affidavit suggests that the date of the marriage of Jacob and Abigail was written in the family Bible that was destroyed in an 1834/1835 fire. Matilda also indicated her year of birth (1815) and that of her older siblings, Clark (1810) and Ruth (1812). Matilda does not mention where these dates were obtained. She would not have had firsthand knowledge. It is possible that she had been told these dates or knew the age differences between she and her older siblings. It is also possible that the dates of birth for Jacob and Abigail's children had been written in a new family bible or that her mother (who lived with her) provided them to her before making out the affidavit. Matilda's knowledge of the birth information and her parents' names is secondary.

Matilda would have been twenty-four or twenty-five at the time of the fire. She may have witnessed the fire herself or lived close enough to her parents at the to have had firsthand knowledge of the event. There is no reason to doubt the year and place of Jacob Baker's death or the fact that Abigail Baker lived with Matilda from shortly after Jacob's death until the time of the affidavit. Matilda's knowledge of her father's year of death is likely primary. Matilda also indicated in the affidavit that Jacob and Abigail Baker were her parents. That information is secondary.

There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the information in Matilda's affidavit. The affidavit should be listed as the source for any information from it that is incorporated into a genealogical database.

## **Matilda's Age?**

Matilda stated that she was born on 15 November 1815 and was sixty-seven years of age as of the date of the affidavit--10 November 1881. Her date of birth and age are consistent with the document date. Consistency among these details does not guarantee they are correct, but an inconsistency among these would be cause for concern. Matilda's knowledge of her date of birth would be secondary. An approximate knowledge of her age (which is not what she gave in this affidavit) would not be secondary.

## **Other Children for Jacob and Abigail**

It is possible that Jacob and Abigail had additional children. The intention of Matilda's affidavit was to establish her parents' year of marriage. That was done by starting with her year of birth and then including the years of birth for her older siblings in an attempt to provide additional evidence suggestive of the 1809 marriage. Information on younger children would not have been significant. It should not be concluded that the Jacob and Abigail had only three children. Matilda's knowledge of her siblings' name is primary. Her knowledge of their years of birth is secondary to a point. She would have known they were older than her, but the precise difference she would have had to have been told.

## **Chronology**

The following chronology was developed using information contained in the affidavit.

about 1789	Abigail (---) Baker was born.
1809	Jacob Baker and Abigail were married.
1810	Clark Baker was born in Swanton, Vermont.
1812	Ruth Baker was born in Swanton, Vermont.
1815--15 November	Matilda Baker was born in Swanton, Vermont.
1834/1835	Home of Jacob and Abigail Baker destroyed in a fire.
1863	Jacob Baker died in Mendon, Michigan.
about 1863	Abigail moved in with Matilda Butler.
10 November 1881	Matilda (Baker) Butler makes out affidavit regarding parents' marriage.
10 November 1881	Matilda (Baker) Butler and Abigail Baker live in Rice County, Minnesota.

## **Going Forward**

This document was located as part of a research project on the family of Matilda Butler's husband, Arvin Butler. The pension file of Abigail Butler, Arvin's mother-in-law, was located to see if anything was mentioned about the Butler family, particularly migration clues or residences of the family before they lived in Mendon, Michigan. It is not known if the Baker and Butler families knew each other for any significant amount of time before Arvin and Matilda married around 1835. The details of the Butlers' residences before their arrival in Michigan is not specifically known and it was hoped that this pension

file would provide more details on the Baker family that could be used to locate information on the family of Arvin Butler.

The decision about where to search going forward must be made in the context of why this record was located and what the actual family of focus is. While exhaustive and extensive research is often the theoretical idea for any person or family to be researched, sometimes it is not possible or practical given the realities of records access and cost. Because of this, research on the Bakers in Vermont will not be performed at this point. Reevaluation of this decision will be made after the other suggested records have been searched.

### **View Remainder of File**

The other papers in the pension application will be reviewed for additional members of the Butler family and clues as to where the Baker family lived before arriving in Michigan. It could be that other affidavits for Jacob or Abigail contain additional clues. It should particularly be determined if the pension file contains information that states specifically Abigail's date of death or allows for its reasonable approximation.

### **1880 Census and Before**

Matilda (Baker) Butler, her mother, and other family members will be located in the 1880 U. S. Federal census. That search will begin in Rice County, Minnesota. Census work should continue before and after 1880 to locate these individuals and others mentioned in households in which they are enumerated.

### **Probate of Jacob Baker**

Probate records in the county in which Mendon, Michigan, is located will be referenced to determine if records for Jacob can be located. It may be that there is mention of members of the Butler family in these records or that there are additional clues as to where the Bakers might have lived before they lived in Michigan.

### **War of 1812 Bounty Land Warrant**

It should be determined if Jacob Baker ever obtained bounty land based upon his War of 1812 service. This can be done at no charge through the website of the Bureau of Land Management. Obtaining the actual warrant and application should wait until other records have been accessed and evaluated. Jacob Baker died in 1863 after the vast majority of these warrants were applied for and issued. It is probable that if a warrant was received that Jacob was the applicant. Applications made out by the veteran typically contain fewer biographical and genealogical details than do those made out by the widow as the veteran only had to prove his military service. The widow had to document her relationship to the soldier.

### **Evaluation**

After the above materials are located, information should be evaluated and compared to determine what (if any) clues about the Butler family can be sifted from the materials. At that point it will also be determined if additional work will be done on the Baker family.