

ROBERT BURNS STEWART
Times Building
Brazil, Indiana

January 7, 1930

Mrs. Elizabeth Bosson
1633 South Third Street
Terre Haute, Indiana

Dear Madam:

After your daughter came to see me I investigated the matter which she brought to my attention and I feel that I can now answer your inquiries candidly, factually, and without violation of confidences or my own code of ethics.

First, let me state that the accusations against your late father are without foundation and totally in error. He was neither a profiteer nor a bigamist. Your mother was his one and only wife. Mrs. Wilson and her daughter, Mrs. Hawthorne, are drawing conclusions based on faulty assumptions and neither is to be taken seriously. They are however, able to stir up a great amount of excitement with their claims.

After consultation with several persons who are knowledgeable on the subject, and having reviewed the file in my possession, I feel that I should fully outline the matter and if you wish you may pass this letter on to your attorney. Then if he desires, he can contact me. I feel that the fewer persons involved in the matter the better but you may want to review this with your attorney.

The problem simply stated (if that be possible) is that your father has been confused with another man of the same name who died before your father by some thirty years and through faulty research by persons exhibiting poor qualifications the business dealings of the two men have been mixed.

As to the claims against your father, please dismiss them from your mind as they are totally without foundation and spurious. His presence in Terre Haute since at least 1850 is fully provable and his attendance to his duties at the Eagle Foundry Company required him to be there during every work day during the period when it is claimed he was elsewhere. The problem is an obvious mistake in identity.

Allow me for a moment to review the situation. Mrs. Wilson claims that your father, Mr. John Wilkes (sometimes also spelled WILKS) who died in Terre Haute in August of 1916 was the same man who was reported to have died in Assam, India in October of 1883. The claim is made that the alleged death in 1883 was some sort of Machiavalleian conspiracy to allow Mr. Wilkes and his family to utilize funds held by the government of the United States. These funds, it is further alleged, had accrued during the Civil War as a result of the contraband trade. It is further alleged that the death in India was faked and that Mr. Wilkes came to Terre Haute and took up residence so that a will which had been executed in India could be probated and monies previously frozen could be released. To support this claim Mrs. Wilson has presented a document which, it turns out, is genuine in its source but certainly erroneous in its content, which shows that Mr. John Wilkes fled the United States in 1866 or thereabout, and entered the Colony of Ceylon, claiming British citizenship and giving his place of birth as Sheffield England, the date of his birth as December 15, 1822, and the names of his parents as Samuel Wilkes and Olivia Barber Wilkes.

Mrs. Wilson then presents a certified copy of a death record for Mr. John Wilkes, your father, which shows the same identical information. Mrs. Wilson therefore concludes that Mr. Wilkes of India and Mr. Wilkes of Terre Haute are one and the same person.

Totally ignored are the full facts of the case. Mr. Wilkes, your father, was in Terre Haute as early as 1850 and his presence in that city can be accounted for continuously thereafter until his death in 1916. This is not a matter of conjecture but of record. Therefore, one must look elsewhere for an explanation of this apparent conflict of documentary evidence.

The quality of the documents in the case of your father are beyond reasonable dispute. Such is not the case with the documents alleging the vital statistics on the man entering Ceylon in 1866. The source for the information on that document is the man himself and when the British authorities checked the birth records they found that such a person had been born in 1822 and so they concluded (erroneously) that the man who had entered Ceylon was your father when in fact, he was using your fathers vital information to circumvent entry requirements. Just who he really was is not to my mind at all certain.

I am now settling an estate having to do with the Mr. Wilkes of India. That case was originally handled by the banking firm of Grant and Ward of New York, who enlisted General Lew Wallace to handle matters in Indiana. The case was later handed over to me and the file contains a number of documents which are both informative and interesting in regard to Mr. John Wilkes who allegedly died in India in 1883. I could show certain of these to your attorney but some could not properly be disclosed. I'm sure you understand. A man who held a life estate in a trust stemming from that legacy died last October here in Clay County. The trust will now be dissolved in accordance with the stipulations set forth in the trust. If you wish to get further information on that trust, have your attorney contact me or Mr. Gaylord McCluer of Crawfordsville. Mr. McCluer is a banker and custodian of the trust and can probably supply information of value.

A Mr. Andrew Potter assisted General Wallace in the investigation of the circumstances of the death of Mr. Wilkes of India and now resides in Virginia. His address is:

Mr. Andrew Potter
c/o Paul Potter
Potters Store
Noakesville, Virginia

Mr. Potter is elderly but I am sure he could help you if you desire to contact him. I am not suggesting it for I feel that there is no need of it but if you, for your own peace of mind wish to examine the claims further, those made made by Mrs. Wilson and her daughter, this would be one avenue open to you.

I find Mrs. Wilson's attitude strange for it is quite clear that your father left no fortune. He died intestate and possessed of property of less than \$100 so that letters of administration were not required. Therefore, even if Mrs. Wilson should prevail it is difficult for me to see how she would gain. I can only assume that either she knows something of which I am unaware or she is pursuing this venture based on compulsions of some sort or another.

As for Mr. Wilkes of India, the estate flows in several directions. He left a will which provided for the distribution of specific amounts to definite persons, including Mrs. Wilson's mother. Additionally, Mrs. Wilson would be in the lineage of "Elizabeth Marshall Wilkes" who received "the remainder of my belongings, real and personal..."

It is the claim of Mrs. Wilson that your father did not have a will, that the terms of his "India will" still apply, and that she is an heir to a secret estate which has been cleverly concealed from her and the rest of the heirs. It is her claim that your mother was a widow who married your father after he came to Terre Haute in 1885 and therefore her children by a previous marriage are not his heirs. She really has it figured out except that her figures are in serious error.

As I have stated, Mrs. Wilson's mother was referred to in the Wilkes will and she was left the sum of two thousand pounds Sterling, which was received by her. It is the residue of the estate which was specifically left to "Elizabeth Marshall Wilkes" which interests Mrs. Wilson.

The trust fund I previously referred to stems from the fourth bequest in that will, to Sarah Catherine Scott, who received \$25,000 in trust for her, Mr. Andrew Potter being the trustee. There is no way on earth that Mrs. Wilson can lay claim to that even though she has stated she is going to have her attorney try.

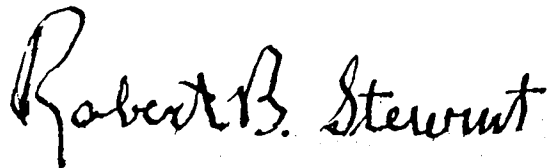
When Mr. Furry called me I told him I would not discuss anything about this case over the telephone. He then asked about an attorney in Brazil and I referred him to one. You may or may not hear further from him. He is, I am told, a reputable man but Mrs. Wilson is his mother-in-law and who knows what that can lead to.

Mrs. Wilson has stated on the telephone that she is going to subpoena my files on the estate but I rather doubt that any judge is going to order such an action. Even if she were to get them released to her they would reveal anything of interest to this generation and if Mrs. Wilson can locate a hidden fortune then perhaps we will wish to join her in her actions.

Again, let me suggest that you set your mind at ease in this matter and let Mrs. Wilson run her course and soon she will haunt someone else with her presence. People such as her seldom stay on one track for long but are distracted in other directions. Even now she is going to Louisville to search out the records of the Southern Bank of Kentucky where she is sure millions of dollars are being concealed from her by "crooked bankers." I wish her luck.

If you will have your attorney call me as soon as he has had time to review this letter (if you desire to show it to him) I will be more than glad to assist in any way to set this matter at rest once and for all. Please let me know if I can be of help to you or your attorney.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Stewart". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

ROBERT B. STEWART
Counsellor and Attorney-at-Law

RBS/lp