

Migration from Scotland to Illinois

Name	Place of Origin	Date Immigrated/ Place Landed	Place Settled
Walter Wilson, Janet, Hellen, John C.	Scotland	1834 Chicago 1836 St. Charles	St. Charles, Kane, Illinois

Walter Hebden Wilson (1782-1867)

Walter Wilson was born in 1872 into a large family in East Kilbride, Scotland, some records showing 15 children. Little is known of Walter's parents, John and Helen, but a Wilson family Bible traces the line back to the early 18th century in East Kilbride.¹ East Kilbride is an ancient village founded in the first millennium.

In the 18th century, East Kilbride was a quiet rural village tucked into the farmland and moorland of the south-west Scottish Lowlands. Centered around the old parish church at Kirkton, it consisted of simple thatched cottages, a few scattered farms, and muddy tracks that served as roads. Daily life revolved around the rhythms of agriculture: planting oats and barley, tending cattle and sheep, and relying on small local trades like blacksmiths, weavers, and millers. With only a few hundred inhabitants, it was a close-knit community where the church guided education, morals, and social life.

Though nearby Glasgow was beginning to grow rapidly thanks to global trade, East Kilbride remained largely untouched by the early Industrial Revolution. The broader turbulence of the Jacobite era and the 1707 Union passed around its edges rather than through it. To the people living there, the village was a world defined by fields, seasons, familiar neighbors, and the steady pace of rural Scottish life.

Walter obtained an apprenticeship in Glasgow, and he moved there as a young man around 1806.

[The story of Walter Wilson's immigration is told in the Biographical Sketches.]

Janet Russell (1779-1845)

Janet was born in 1779 to a family from Duniplace, Stirlingshire, Scotland about 20 miles northeast of Glasgow. Janet's parents had six children, but records indicate that three of them died young. Duniplace was a small, quiet rural parish centered on farming, kirk life, and a handful of local trades. Situated beside the River Carron, the area consisted of scattered cottages, tenant farms, and small estate lands. Most residents worked the land, growing oats, barley, and potatoes, and raising cattle and sheep, while the parish church served as the heart of social and religious life. Although nearby regions were touched by the Jacobite risings and the rise of the Carron Ironworks later in the

¹ The dates and place of births of John Wilson's children were found in the family Bible of John Wilson 1798, which was in the John G. Wilson family when the group sheets were originally developed in the 1970's.

century, Dunipace itself remained a largely peaceful agricultural community on the edge of Scotland's coming industrial transformation.

Janet left Dunipace for Glasgow before marrying Walter Wilson in 1806. The records don't show whether she moved to Glasgow before their marriage or after it. In any case, Janet left her small village to move to Glasgow, not knowing that she would experience more significant moves in her future.

[Janet's life and immigration experiences are told in the Biographical Sketches.]