The search for Joseph Wilkinson started as a search for Joseph Wilkins, the name I was given as having owned the house on the north half of lot 13, Washington Ward (11 Houston Street). After searching through many sources at the Georgia Historical Society (G.H.S.) I began to suspect that Mr. Wilkins perhaps had never existed. I was unable to find a Joseph Wilkins even in such a seemingly all-encompassing place as the Savannah newspapers from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Obviously (or not so obviously as it seemed at the time) someone had not pulled the name from thin air. The one thing I had to go on was that Mr. Wilkins had had some connection with the above-mentioned house at 11 Houston Street. The only course open seemed to be to find a deed for the house with Mr. Wilkins' name on it.

At the courthouse I looked at the deed index for the year 1807 and still could find no Joseph Wilkins. However I found a Joseph Wilkinson, and, on a hunch, looked up the deed. At least I had found the right trail. The deed confirmed that a "Joseph Wilkinson of Savannah, shopkeeper for...the sum of four hundred dollars...sell...to Susannah Miller a house in Washington Ward on Lot number thirteen (13)." It was signed December 15, 1807.

I was so elated that I completely ignored the next deed in the book, which will be mentioned later, and rushed back to the G.H.A. to pursue Mr. Wilkinson, thinking my problems were over. How little I knew!

Arriving at the G.H.A. flushed with excitement, I felt my good luck would hold. I looked up Wilkinson in the card catalog. I found a family history of a Wilkinson family. Unfortunately, this Wilkinson family dated from the middle 1800's and lived in North Carolina. Dead-end.

1. Deed Book BB, Folio 83, Superior Court, Chatham County, Georgia
The next two places I looked, Chatham County Marriages 1805-187:
and the General Index to Wills, Administrations, Ect. of Chatham
County, also proved to be fruitless.²

I decided that if he wasn't married in Savannah and didn't
leave a will in Savannah, he probably did not die in Savannah, but
I checked anyway. Wrong again! I found the following entry in
the Annals of the Georgia Mortuary Records "Joseph Wilkinson,
grocer, of St. Peters Parish, S. C. died March 29, 1816 at age 34
in the home of his wife's mother at Houston Street and Bay Lane.
He left two children."³

The address rang a bell. Houston Street and Bay Lane is the
location of Lot 13, Washington Ward. How could he have died in the
very house that he had sold over eight years before? Had he bought
the house back?

My next stop was again the courthouse basement and back to the
deedbooks. It didn't take long to realize that Joseph Wilkinson
had sold the house in 1807 and had died in 1816 at "the home of
his wife's mother at Houston Street and Bay Lane."⁴ He had sold
the house to his mother-in-law! In the next deed after the one
transferring the house from Wilkinson to Susannah Miller, Susannah
Miller sets up a trust under a Mr. William Lewden⁵ "for my daughter
Susannah Wilkinson, the wife of Joseph Wilkinson at present of the
city of Savannah."⁶ It was signed April 26, 1806. (Both deeds
were not recorded until February 11, 1808.)

2. At that time I found an application for Letters of Administrat
for the estate of Joseph Wilkinson who died in 1808. This sub
sequently proved to be another Joseph Wilkinson.
4. Ibid.
5. William Lewden was apparently the uncle of Susannah Miller.
In his will he left property or money to several nieces named
Miller, among them Susannah. He died in early 1814.
Joseph Wilkinson and Susannah Miller Wilkinson were apparently not married in Savannah for there is no record of their marriage in Savannah. Susannah's father, Nicholas Miller, had died in 1800\(^7\) and Joseph's family were from St. Peter's Parrish and Colleton District, South Carolina, so perhaps they were married in South Carolina. It is probable that they were married after early 1805\(^8\) and surely before April, 1806.\(^9\)

Joseph and Susannah Wilkinson had two children, Joseph Isiah Wilkinson and Sarah Ann Wilkinson.\(^10\)

Further searching for any information of Joseph Wilkinson proved futile in Savannah. Perhaps after selling the house to his mother-in-law in 1807, he and his wife moved back to South Carolina.

I decided to go back to the courthouse and read Susannah Miller's entire estate file.

Her will, written in December 1816, left the bulk of her estate to her grandchildren, Joseph Isiah Wilkinson and Sarah Ann Wilkinson, and one of the executors was "Morton Wilkinson, Esq., of Beaufort."\(^11\)

Susannah Miller decided to write a will and see to the future care of her grandchildren because she was sick and because she was now in sole custody of the children. Joseph and Susannah Wilkinson had both died, within three months of each other. Susannah died first in the house at 17 Houston Street on December 28, 1815 at the age of 28.\(^12\) She died of consumption and was buried at her birth-

7. Warren, Marriages and Deaths 1763 to 1820, p.79.
8. Susannah Wilkinson was 28 at her death in Dec. 1815. It is unlikely that she would have married before the age of 18.
10. Will of Susannah Miller, File #162, Probate Court, Chatham Co., Ga. 1817.
11. Ibid.
Joseph died three months and one day later at the same house on March 29, 1816. He was 34. His official cause of death was pleurisy and he was "buried in the country."

Perhaps they had moved back to Savannah shortly before they died because they were sick and weak and needed someone to care for the children. Both consumption and pleurisy were chronic, progressive lung diseases and would have greatly weakened before they killed. (Consumption is known today as tuberculosis; pleurisy is a disease which inflames the thorax and lungs.)

At any rate, Susannah Miller made out her will and gave instructions to her executor, John Shaw, Esq. as to the disposition of her grandchildren upon her death.

Susannah Miller died on February 17, 1817 at her home, 11 Houston Street. She was 50 years old and the cause of death was listed as asthma.

Upon her death, John Shaw, Esq., wrote a letter to Morton Wilkinson, Esq., of Beaufort informing him of Mrs. Miller's death and requesting that he send for the children as soon as possible. It was the wish of Mrs. Miller that her grandchildren go live with one of their uncles or aunts in South Carolina.

On the 27th of February 1818, William Wilkinson, the brother of Joseph Wilkinson, came to Savannah with a letter of guardianship for Joseph Isiah and Sarah Ann Wilkinson. Under the terms

14. See Footnote 3.
16. Susannah Miller owned at least 5 slaves according to her will. See Footnote 10.
17. Letter from J. Shaw to M. Wilkinson, March 6, 1817, File #162 Estate of Susannah Miller, Probate Court, Chatham Co., Ga.
19. See Footnote 17.
of her will he took charge of the children and their possessions, including slaves, and took them to live with him in Colleton District, S. C. 20

On February 15, 1830, J. N. Coachman, acting as agent for J. I. Coachman, husband of Sarah Ann Coachman, formerly Sarah Ann Wilkinson, received over four hundred dollars, the final accounting of Susannah Miller's estate and released Mr. Shaw from any other duties on the estate. 21

The trail of the family of Joseph Wilkinson ends here. St. Peter's Parrish and Colleton District are located in the Beaufort, Estill, Charleston, South Carolina area. 22 A trip to Beaufort proved fruitless as their records go back only to 1865. This has been a problem all along in this search. Most records do not go back to the very early 1800's.

The records of this district earlier than 1865 are apparently kept in Charleston, S. C., either at the South Carolina Historical Society or at the County Courthouse. 23 I would like to follow this further but have not been able to go to Charleston.

20. Estate of Susannah Miller, File #162, Probate Court, Chatham Co., Ga.
21. Ibid.
22. South Carolina Folder, Maps, Georgia Historical Society.
23. Word of mouth from Mrs. Hall of Beaufort Historical Society, Beaufort, S. C.
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City Ledger Ground Rents 1781-1820

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1806 to 1810

Including:
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Georgia Gazette
Georgia Republican and State Intelligencer
Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger

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Superior Court Deed Books-Chatham County Court House, Savannah,
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Marriage Index, Probate Court, Chatham County Courthouse,
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OTHERS
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