

### **Episode 3 Transcript:**

**Guest Bill Gipson-** Retired Dentist, Author and Researcher, Bill Gipson, shares his vast knowledge and research findings into the historic migration of the Gipson/Gibson and Collins families, in addition to surprising possible foreign origins related to Melungeon ancestry.

**Lis Malone (Co-Host):**

This is Melungeon Voices, presented by the Melungeon Heritage Association. My name is Lis Malone, and I am here with the president of the association, Heather Andolina. Heather, great to be with you once again.

**Heather Andolina (Host):**

As always, great to be with you too, Lis.

**Lis:**

For this week's episode, you had a very interesting dialogue with Bill Gipson. Can you share some information with the listeners about who Bill is?

**Heather:**

I sure can. Bill Gipson is a retired dentist who attended Augustana College located in Rock Island, Illinois. But Bill never graduated, going instead straight on to his dental training, making him one of the few doctors that do not hold a bachelor's degree. He is also the author of Country Kids: A Rich, Full Life, available on Amazon, which is a collection of over 200 stories from his wild youth as a baby boomer out in the country. In my discussion with Bill, he shares with me his extensive knowledge of the Gibson's and Collins' families and provides interesting accounts of his family's travels into the Appalachian Mountains and beyond.

**Lis:**

Now, if I'm not mistaken, Heather, you have some Gibson and some Collins in your ancestry, correct?

**Heather:**

I sure do, Lis.

**Lis:**

Well, I'm looking forward to hearing from your extended cousin, Bill Gipson.

**Heather:**

Hi, Bill.

**Bill Gipson (Guest):**

Hello Heather. How are you doing?

**Heather:**

I'm doing very well. My first question for you is I would like to know what got you interested in your family ancestry.

**Bill:**

Yeah, I have a whole story about that. I have a twin brother, and he took an airplane ride up into Montana and he started searching out my father's roots. Then, by way of a 92-year-old banker up there, they mentioned to him about where the family came from, because they knew about the later family. That directed him back to Johnson City, Texas. So, he dialed Johnson City, Texas, and he asked, "Hey, you got any Gibson's down there?" and they said, "Hey, we got a whole lot of them. Who do you want?" He said, "I don't know, just connect me to anybody."

Then, kind of like a novel, he got connected to the right guy on the first call. This was a, what do you call it, a telephone booth where you stick the money in. This was long time ago. Anyway, Jules Gibson answered the phone, and he was the best genealogists down in Texas where the people came from before they went to Montana. Jules Gibson sent us all kinds of information about where our family came from and everything that goes on about it, and that got us started. After that, we just kept picking away at it and took all of his information, and we've been adding information to it ever since. Mostly, I don't do research myself. A little bit, we do, but mostly I research the research, and that's pretty much where all of our information comes from.

**Heather:**

How or when did you learn about your Melungeon ancestry?

**Bill:**

That came from Jules. He knew about the Melungeon ancestry. He's now passed away, he's gone, but Johnson City, Texas, is where President Johnson came from. It's just a very small town in Texas by Dripping Springs. But he had most of that all down there, so most of it was there. We did make another contact with another lady, Marion Shirley Porter, and she had hired a professional genealogist to research her family, which is the same connection to our family. It goes back to Archibald Gibson, our oldest of the old that we absolutely know about for sure. Born in 1760, died in 1855, and we tracked his life all the way through to all the places they lived during his lifetime. So, mostly, it was a following of Archibald Gibson and his wife, Bathsheba, or Vashti as she was called. That pretty much is the following of the Gibson part, and we've researched from before him and going back to the earliest Gibson's we know of since then.

This Jules fellow was interesting. He was not raised by his father. His father ran off when he was fairly young, so he was raised by his grandfather, and his grandfather loved to tell stories. His grandfather was a wealth of information, going back more generations than he should've known, and that's how Jules knew so far back. It's an odd connection, but it's how it happened and how we got lucky.

**Heather:**

How far back were you able to go with your ancestry? Do you have a year?

**Bill:**

Archibald was born in 1760 in Pennsylvania. That much we know from family history and family knowledge. I've made some recent discoveries that are pretty jolting, that are pretty cool, back beyond

all of that. Mostly, the people that know about the Gibson and Collins history goes back to Thomas Gibson and the early Collins', and that's around 1738.

However, there's been a piece of thing come out on the internet recently that is really cool. They have a law case that they discovered that was from some Indians and happens to be a lady named Jane Gibson. She's called Jane Gibson the elder, and she had a daughter who was also a Jane, so they call her Jane Gibson the younger. Anyway, her children, of Jane the younger, were loaned out for an indentured servant thing. This is all in court case, so it's all documented, it's all pretty close. They had an 80-year-old fella that remembered the Jane the elder. Her brother was a George Gibson, and then her daughter, of course, was Jane. Then Jane the younger gave birth to and had a George Gibson. Then, later, she married some Evans', so it's tied in with both Gibson and Evans's, but it goes back two generations farther than we ever knew.

Jane Gibson the elder was born in 1640, believe it or not. Jamestown was in 1607, as you know, so we're talking not that many years after our very first community was ever established. Then she died in 1722. Her daughter, Jane Gibson the younger, was born in 1660, 20 years later, and she lived until 1738. If you remember some of your other history, 1738 is about the time that Thomas Gibson was establishing a residency on the Turkey Creek. We've done some research on that.

**Heather:**

So, Bill, have you actually been to any of the sites where the Gibson's have lived over the centuries?

**Bill:**

Yes. Actually, we've visited all of them but one, and they always lived on a creek, so we've traveled to the creeks that they lived on. Sometimes we didn't get to the actual home site. Most of these creeks are short, they're only like a mile long or something, and they tend to be very, very small creeks. It appears that they liked to be in the upper water before anybody else can contaminate the water.

There's a Turkey Creek that feeds into the South Anna River. Now, South Anna River is by Richmond, Virginia. It actually flows out of not the James River that Jamestown was on, but the one just north of that, which is the York River. Then York River splits, and it splits into the Pamunkey River and the Mattaponi River. The one that's the Pamunkey River splits again into North and South Anna River, and this Turkey Creek flows into the South Anna River. We've been there, right after one of our Melungeon meetings out in Virginia.

They have, now, Google Maps, and you can google it. There's a little town right on the interstate that's called Oilville. You take a north out of Oilville, and I've got all the maps on this and it would make better for a video thing to who show maps. Anyway, it's very close to Oilville, just due north, and it's a very small, little creek. I actually took my fishing pole and went fishing in the South Anna River, which isn't much of a river, by the way. It's, oh, 30 feet wide, give or take. It's like a monster big creek, but not so big.

The one that we missed, they moved from there and they went down to the Flat River in North Carolina. The North Carolina river, they had two of them, the Rocky Creek and Deep Creek. Gibson's lived on the Rocky Creek, which we have not been to, it's a very long creek, unlike the usual other creeks, and Collins's lived on Deep Creek, which was two creeks away; there's one creek in between the two creeks. Anyway, that spot we haven't been to.

That's when they got into the Battle of Alamanca, and that had to do with a terrible raising of rents and lots of nasties in the political arena. So then they had a war down there, and then they killed a few people, six people or something. Because of all of that unrest is when they moved from there and kind of picked up en masse. All the Gibson's, all the Collins's, all Goins, because they always moved in a mass. Then they moved to the New River, and that's on Obids Creek and Cranberry Creek, which are... I think they call it the South Branch, even though it's to the east. These things are a north-flowing river, there's two big branches to it, and they're on the eastward branch if you look on the map. Anyway, they call it South. Why, I don't know. Anyway, the Obids Creek is a tiny, little creek. It's maybe 15 feet wide and it was really rolling along when we saw it. We have a video of that one as well.

Then, after that, they moved... our people did not go to Newman's Ridge, oddly enough. Cumberland Gap was not opened up wider to accept wagon traffic until 1795. Before that, it was just a horse trail, so the very first people that went down it went down a horse trail, but the mass exodus happened after a widening of the trail. Boone did not widen the trail. He found the trail, but they hired somebody else to widen it. It probably made him angry.

Anyway, our Gibson's left the New River, bypassing Newman's Ridge, and went directly to Kentucky. There's a town down there called Hazard, Kentucky, and I only say that for a reference point. It's very Southeast Kentucky, and the hills down there, we visited. Then they lived on a creek, and I think this is from Jules, that they lived on Mallet, M-A-L-L-E-T, Mallet Creek. Lo and behold, even though I had it jotted down in the corner of a map that I had, like one of these travel maps where all the maps are in the same book, all the states... Anyway, we went down there and we googled it, and sure enough we found Mallet Creek and we drove right to it. It's right beside Branham's Creek, which is another name that the Gibson's were related to, going clear back to the earliest of our known Gibson's, meaning of the Thomas Gibson and where they lived up by Richmond.

Anyway, we found that little creek, little gravel bottom. Been raining for three or four days; still crystal clear, flowing nice. You could jump across it, it's so narrow. Only goes back about half a mile or better. Anyway, that's where they lived. Oddly enough, our people, according to the genealogist that did a lot of this research, were down there in 1793, which is prior to the widening. They had to come in on horseback, they didn't come back on wagons, so they moved down there very, very early, bypassing Newman's Ridge. Why they did it and how... but all the names are there. They've got a Mullins that are there, Collins that are there, and all these different creeks that they lived on right, close there.

Ezekiel, brother to Archibald, lived on the next creek up. Archibald lives on Carr Creek, and that's where Mallet flows into Carr Creek. It's a littler creek that flows into a bigger creek. Just north of there is where Ezekiel lived, on Caney Creek, and they're just a few miles apart. They're not very far.

We were down there and took pictures. There's a Gibson cemetery, and all of the names of all the Gibson's that are in the cemetery for Ezekiel. We got lucky and made a DNA connection with a Rhet Gibson who lives right down there in a little town called Kite. Kite is just a few miles away from any of these spots. He is related to Ezekiel Gibson and he knows his descendancy right down through Leonard and who begat, who begat, until he became Rhet. Anyway, we have followed the family from creek to creek and from homestead to homestead.

Our Archibald that lived on Mallet Creek stayed there until 1828. His son John had moved to up near Indianapolis. It's called Jamestown, and it's 27 miles to the northwest of Indianapolis. It's a very small town, it's only got 1,000–2,000 people in it today. Archibald is buried there in the Pioneer Cemetery. He lived there from 1828 until 1855 when he and his wife both died at roughly age 95 a piece, which is quite amazing.

We did a little research of our own and found a wonderful, wonderful writeup in one of the libraries up there. It's GW Gibson, which happens to be the grandson of Archibald Gibson. He writes

about that trip leaving from Kentucky all the way up to Jamestown, Indiana. He was four years old, but he remembered the trip entirely, including getting sick and making a mess out of himself, to put it politely. His mother, being a good mother, washed up all of his clothes, which were leather, put beside the fire one night to dry them out for morning because they needed some cleaning up, and somehow the stick that was holding them fell over into the fire and it burned up all of his clothes. So he had to go the rest of the way in his long johns. Anyway, it's a traumatic thing for a four-year-old to not have any clothes left anymore. They didn't have multiple sets of clothes.

His dad was a tanner, of all things, and made leather, made clothes, made things. This is a fairly long story that people can look up, the GW story. Early Life and Times of Boone County is the name of the book that it's in. Anyway, it's very detailed, all about that trip, and it's quite amazing. It's very good background documentation about Archibald, the move, what life was like and what the country was like, the big snakes they dealt with and all the wild pigs, and the Indian battles. That was right at the cusp of the Black Hawk War, which ended in 1832. All of the people were quite afraid of Black Hawk swooping in and killing people, so there's lots of nervousness about Indians. It's really quite a history piece.

One of the sons of Archibald moved from this Jamestown, Indiana, to Texas and a little town called Gonzales, Texas. Gonzales, Texas, at this point was having lots of Indian battles, and two of the sons: one named Archibald Jr., and the other one was James. James happens to be my great-great-grandfather. He ran a ferry across the river right there. Anyway, they were both in Indian battles. James was shot in the shoulder. That was called the Battle of Plum Creek. It was a running battle where it didn't stay in one place; it just kept moving as the battle went on. It was probably the last big Indian battle that was there.

The other brother, Archibald Jr., was an actual, terrible wild man and he would fight the Mexicans, but they would use him to what was called sting the cannon. He would ride his horse into a cannon firing at him and he would take a file, like a garden file, and they have a tang on the end. It's a very brittle piece of metal. You ram the little tang into the hole that you set the cannon off with, give it a quick twist, and break it off in there so the Canon is rendered useless. Anyway, he got shot in the eye and blinded, and he has all kinds of harrowing stories. I've got 16 horror stories about him. He was just a crazy man.

From there, they moved to Montana, and from there they moved out to California. My dad was actually from California, mostly, but he was born in Montana. That kind of gives you the whole family trip, going out that direction. More detail can be done when we do a real conference.

**Heather:**

Yes. Of course, Bill, as you well know, you and I share a common ancestor because my great-great-grandfather was Jesse Gibson. We have Gibson's in common, so I just love hearing your stories because we share that common surname in Gibson. Speaking of next year's union, what are you going to be presenting at next year's meeting?

**Bill:**

There are several different folds of it. We made a trip to Ireland, and we were at all the places that the Gibson's started out in Ulster. It's up by Londonderry, it's very Northern Ireland, and they have a historical center of people there. They gave speeches about it, and they showed where the Gibson's came from and the McGoins. He was called McGoins at that time. Collins's didn't show up, but Cole showed up and other family members. Coles were there, as in married into Archibald; Bathsheba Cole married him. Her father was Levin Cole, which is also in our history books. Anyway, that's a whole video of itself. That's 22 minutes long, I believe.

Then we have the video that you shot, all the Gibson's, where they moved, when they moved, and why they moved. That's also about 20–25 minutes long. Then, if you wanted this rundown, I am intending and haven't done it quite yet, but the talk we had today about where the Gibson's moved and when they moved. I have all the maps and all the pictures of all the people, including gravestones of Thomas Gibson, alias Mingo Jackson. By the way, Mingo was a tribe of Indians, and it became universally used to mean Indian. So Mingo Jackson, I believe really just means Indian Joe. That was his nickname, Indian Joe, but they call him Mingo Jackson. That was their vernacular of the time.

Anyway, those three things are possible, but I haven't shot the last video to show all these maps because they're just intensely interesting. I've got maps of each of these places where they lived. Anyway, you can do with that as you will. I don't quite know the length of it yet because I haven't quite done it yet, but I've got all the papers laid in front of me right now. It will be video style.

**Heather:**

Well, Bill, I am very looking forward to your presentation at next year's union. I do have one more question. When you mentioned that you had been to Ireland, I too have been to Ireland and to Londonderry. How far back in Ireland were you able to trace the Gibson family?

**Bill:**

It doesn't actually go by a date, some of those things get fuzzy, and they have areas like farms that they lived on. They had where the Gibson's lived. It's kind of like southwest of Londonderry. They have very detailed maps of where these farms were and where the people were.

The first migration out of Ulster, this Londonderry area, was in 1717. There was five migrations. Our people were already here in 1728–1734, living on that Turkey Creek I was talking about. Which migration they came out, it had to be in the 1717, and there was 1722, 1725, the migrations. A lot of them came into Boston. I think our people came in during that side, but the conflict of that is that this Jane Gibson was here way before that and she was married to a George, so maybe they came earlier. How did they get here? It's an unknown, so there's lots of pieces of the puzzle. I think it's like a jigsaw puzzle, and I think is like a cake: sometimes you have to keep putting in pieces and taking out pieces, and the recipe changes, but the cake is still good.

I took a little survey at one of the meetings we were at, and I had everybody raised their hand and said, "Who in here claims to be Scots–Irish?" I'd say at least 80% of the audience raised their hands and said, "We're Scots–Irish. We've always been told we're Scots–Irish." That's got to tie into this somehow between the Indian part... By the way, I know the types of Indians that Jane was, and it ends up being the same group of Indians that had Pocahontas in it, the same group of Indians that Roanoke Island scratched on the tree, the Croatan. They were Pamunkey Indians and the Chickahominy Indians, which don't exist anymore, by the way. They used to have a bunch of tribes, and they're pretty much all gone now.

There's some of that mixing of the unknown in there, so you have to just go along and find the unknown. Sometimes it's a smell that you have to follow, which I have a whole story about that. A hunter friend of mine shot a deer and couldn't find it. He finds this possum on the ground. He decides to watch this possum, possum followed this dent and founded this deer buried in brush back there. He couldn't find it, but the possum found it. So sometimes you have to follow the smell. Anyway, there's a little funny story for you.

**Heather:**

Well, thank you so much, Bill. This has been a wonderful interview, and I personally very much cannot wait for your presentation next year and what else you will discover, because you do continue to discover new research in the ancestry. Like you said, you just follow the scent, and, with Jane the elder, we could discover why she was there before and at least tie up some loose ends on that part.

**Bill:**

I have one other piece that's brand new that maybe you'd like to know about. In the research, cleaning out my basement that was flooded a while back, I found that paper from the genealogist. It claims to know where the Portuguese came from and who he was. That, I think, is kind of shaking to everybody because they always claim to be Portugee. His name was Denham, D-E-N-H-A-M. It's in a thesis that was written, a doctoral thesis, and they have all their ibids and op. cites. They've got to document everything they say. He was one of the very early people, and he married a Collins. It's actually listed in his paper, pages 46–48, from the Kentucky Library, University of Kentucky. They've been talking about Portuguese, Portuguese, Portugee, and there he is: Denham. His name shows up in the early people with Thomas and what have you. So there's your Portuguese connection. I think that's a hot, big ticket. I found that one. I'm proud of that one.

**Heather:**

All right. Well, once again, thank you, Bill Gipson, for taking the time to give this wonderful interview and share with us your research on the Gibson family. We are looking forward to your presentation at next year's union.

**Bill:**

I would love it. It'll be lots of pictures and lots of maps, and it'll be a lot of fun.

**Heather:**

Yes, it will.

**Lis:**

You've been listening to the Melungeon Voices podcast.

On behalf of myself, Heather Andolina and the entire MHA executive committee, we'd like to thank all of those who participated in making this episode possible. For more information, you can visit them on the web at [melungeon.org](http://melungeon.org). That's M-E-L-U-N-G-E-O-N-dot-O-R-G.

The information, views and opinions expressed in this podcast episode do not necessarily represent those of the MHA. Melungeon Voices is presented by the Melungeon Heritage Association. All rights are reserved.