

This is A Few Forgotten Women Story



This story was written, in October 2025, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who were working in the Ulster linen industry.

Jane Wilson (nee McKinney) 's Story

Jane Wilson was born Jane McKinney (sometimes written as McKenney) 23 May 1872, the youngest of five children to Alexander McKinney and his wife, Mary, nee Richardson. Alexander was a weaver and the family lived in the small, rural township of Derryinver, in the parish of Montiaghs, County Armagh. This is located right on the southern shore of Lough Neagh, to the north of the town of Lurgan. Apart from agriculture, linen constituted one of the major industries of the area¹.

On 16 September 1892, at the age of 20, Jane married Christopher Wilson, a 21 year old labourer, in Ardmore parish church. Christopher had been born in the township of Ardmore, a couple of miles to the east along the shoreline from Jane's birthplace². His father, Edward, was also noted as a weaver. Neither the bride nor groom was able to sign the register. The witnesses appear to have been relatives: Richard Wilson and Sarah Anne Richardson³.



Ardmore Parish Church, Derryadd by Dean Molyneux.
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By the time of the census, taken on 31 March 1901, Christopher and Jane were living in Ardmore, with children Christina (7), Edward (5) and Alexander (1). Also living with them was a nephew, John Wilson, aged 10. Christopher was working as an agricultural labourer, and Jane, as her father and father-in-law before her, was a linen weaver⁴.

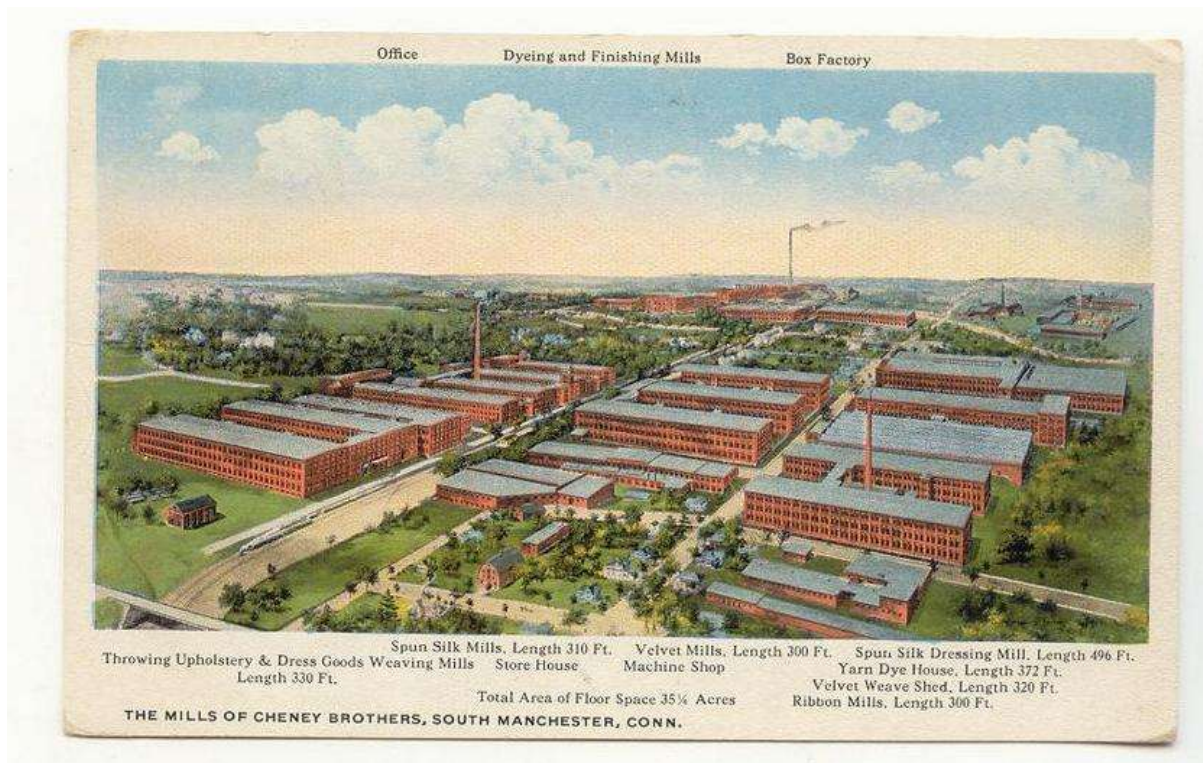
Three further children were born to the couple, William Henry, in 1902, Mary in 1905, and Thomas James in January 1908, before Christopher made the decision to emigrate to the United States.

He sailed from Londonderry aboard the *California*, arriving in New York in May 1908. His decision must have been influenced by his brother, Edward, who had emigrated the year before and was living in South Manchester, Hartford County, Connecticut⁵ where he worked for a soap company⁶. Christopher obviously found the life in South Manchester to be agreeable because in 1909 he paid the passage for his eldest daughter, Christina, to join him⁷ and the following year, Jane made the journey to America with her children Edward, 13, Alexander, 10, William, 8, Mary 5, Thomas, 2⁸. Their happiness at being

reunited was marred by the death little more than two months later of young Thomas⁹.

Unfortunately, the family arrived too late to be enumerated in the US census in 1910, but Christopher and Christina were living with Christopher's brother-in-law, William Powers and his wife, Sarah¹⁰. Christopher was described as a labourer at a paper mill, and Christina was a spooler at a silk mill. Over the next few years, Christina married a Swedish immigrant, Carl Waldemar (or Walter) Rudin, and son Edward married Florence Hunt. Edward and his brother, Alexander, were both included in the World War I draft¹¹, but there is no evidence of Alexander serving in the military. Edward, however, had enlisted in 1914, served in the Border Campaign against Mexico in 1916¹², and probably served on the Western Front, as his regiment, 102nd Infantry, was stationed and fought in many battles there¹³.

In the 1920 US Federal Census, we find Christopher and Jane living in Singleton Street, South Manchester with their unmarried children, who include two further daughters born in the United States, Elizabeth, 8, and May Louise, 5¹⁴. Christopher, we learn, owned his own home, although it was mortgaged, and he and Alexander both worked at a silk mill, which is likely to have been Cheney Brothers, one of the major employers of the area. Cheneys were benevolent employers, providing land for housing, schools and churches and the facilities such as electricity and water provided for the factory were also made available for use further afield¹⁵.



Cheney Brothers (public domain) [/File:PostcardManchesterCTCheneyBrothersMills1920.jpg](#)

By the 1930 census, the family had moved to 24 Knighton Street, where they remained. Christopher was still employed at the silk mill as were William and Elizabeth. We also learn that their home was valued at \$9000, and that they owned a radio set¹⁶. Christopher Wilson died 24 April 1939, and was buried in the East Cemetery, Manchester, not far from the family home¹⁷. Jane continued living in Knighton Street In the 1940 census she is aged 64 and a widow, living with a William J. Wilson, aged 20, born in Connecticut, who is listed as a lodger, and could well be a grandson. His occupation is helper at the paper mill¹⁸.

Jane died on 18 March, 1942¹⁹ and is buried with her husband in the East Cemetery, Manchester²⁰.

By Ruth Wilson

¹ Birth certificate, Jane McKinney https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/view/?record_id=ac592530e4-6008295; Family Search <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/LZQR-HQ8>)

² Birth certificate, Christopher Wilson b. 9 Jun 1871, in Ardmore https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/view/?record_id=ac592530e4-6154133

3 Marriage certificate <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/view/>

4 1901 census Ireland <https://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Armagh/Montiaghs/Ardmore/1027014/>

5 The National Archives in Washington, DC; Washington, DC, USA; *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Serial or NAID: T715; RG Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004*; RG: 85 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/7488/records/4005900600?>

6 1910 United States Federal Census <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/7884/records/2367244>

7 Ancestry: The National Archives in Washington, DC; Washington, DC, USA; *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Serial or NAID: T715; RG Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004*; RG: 85

8 The National Archives in Washington, DC; Washington, DC, USA; *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Serial or NAID: T715; RG Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004*; RG: 85 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/7488/records/4008226366>

9 Connecticut State Library; Hartford, Connecticut; The Charles R. Hale Collection of Connecticut Cemetery Inscriptions and Newspaper Notices, 1629-1934 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2900/records/75791236>

10 Year: 1910; Census Place: Manchester, Hartford, Connecticut; Roll: T624_131; Page: 4b; Enumeration District: 0214; FHL microfilm: 1374144

https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/7884/records/2366584?tid=&pid=&queryId=5e36b83e-67d5-4815-8ab2-1dc4223fc961&_phsrc=upW3018&_phstart=successSource

11 Connecticut US Military Questionnaires <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2278/records/39951>; US World War I Draft Registration Cards https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2238/records/12225929?tid=164779461&pid=352144861406&queryId=0e375a4d-7d6e-409d-8d46-1ec9280423cf&_phsrc=upW2955&_phstart=successSource

12 Ancestry.com. *Connecticut, U.S., Military Questionnaires, 1919-1920* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2278/records/39951?tid=&pid=&queryId=75f05218-948f-456c-a590-bc95cb5e739b&_phsrc=upW3026&_phstart=successSource

13 U.S., Army Transport Service Arriving and Departing Passenger Lists, 1910-1939

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61174/records/929546>;
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/102nd_Infantry_Regiment_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/102nd_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States))

14 Year: 1920; Census Place: Manchester, Hartford, Connecticut; Roll: T625_181; Page: 30A; Enumeration District: 139 https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/6061/records/105775266?tid=164779461&pid=352144861404&ssrc=pt&show=ai_recordnarrative

15 Manchester Historic Society <https://manchesterhistory.org/2024/04/14/the-cheney-silk-mills/>

16 Year: 1930; Census Place: Manchester, Hartford, Connecticut; Page: 27A; Enumeration District: 0154; FHL microfilm: 2340002. https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4531871_00914?pld=9402870

17 Connecticut Vital Records https://data.ct.gov/History/Connecticut-Vital-Records-Index-of-Deaths-1897-200/psf6-3vsu/data_preview; Find a Grave <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/65869075/christopher-wilson>

18 Year: 1940; Census Place: Manchester, Hartford, Connecticut; Roll: m-t0627-00504; Page: 6B; Enumeration District: 2-105 <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/m-t0627-00504-00435?pld=128559674>

19 Connecticut Vital Records https://data.ct.gov/History/Connecticut-Vital-Records-Index-of-Deaths-1897-200/psf6-3vsu/data_preview

20 Find a Grave <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/65869221/jane-wilson>

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