

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
)
COUNTY OF SUMTER)

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
2024-CP-43-2109

RECEIVED
NOV 03 2025
SC Court of Appeals

Celestine Parker and Loretta Black,

Plaintiff

-vs-

John Doe, Jane Doe, Richard Roe, Mary Roe, Infants, Insane Persons and Incompetents, Being Fictitious Names, Designating as a Class Any Unknown Person or Persons, Whose Tur Names are Unknown, Who May be an Heir, Distributee, Devisee, Legatee, Wido, Widower, Issue, Personal Representative, Executor, Administrator, Successor, Creditor, Assign and/or alienee of Phillis Weathers; Valarie McCray, Harry Burns, Alma Jackson, Lynn Neely, Matthew Peterson, Carolyn Dupree, Gary Dupree, Greogry Dupree, Edith Davis, May Thelma McGee, Rodney Pitts, Denise Pitts, Sheryl James, Marie Giles pie, Eugene Canty, Ethel Swain, Amanda Canty, Connie Canty, Alexander Canty, Clarence Canty, Jr., Daniel Canty, Luther Brogdon, Everette Brogdon, Naomi Brogdon, Obar Davis, Wilaba Brogdon, Michelle Thompson, Harold Brogdon, Jr., Janice Brogdon, Lillie Mae Cleaveland Payton, Brian Canty, Gloria Canty, Herbert Canty, Randolph Gaymon, Alvin L. Gaymon, Ernestine Gaymon, Aaliyaa Hasan, Taheedah Griffin, Eugene Dowling, Sheryl Dowling, Donna Dowling, Sherly Richards, Gail White, Debra White, Dana White, Damon White, Danielle White, Also Any and All Other Persons or Legal Entities, Known and Unknown, having or claiming and Right, Title, Estate, Interest in or Lien upon the Real Property Described in the Complaint,

Defendants.

ORDER

MASTER IN EQUITY:	MICHAEL M. JORDAN
DATE:	May 27, 2025
PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL:	William M. Connor, V
COUNSEL FOR Defendant McCray:	Charles T. Brooks, III

This matter comes before me pursuant to a Summons and Quiet Title Action concerning a tract of land situate in the County of Sumter, State of South Carolina as filed by the Plaintiffs on or about December 2, 2024.

The Plaintiffs file this action in order to Quiet Title to a tract of land indicated as Parcel No.: 205-00-01-006, physically located on Loring Mill Road in Sumter County, South Carolina. The subject property is currently titled in the names of Phyllis Weathers, et al. Phyllis Weathers

is a deceased person, having passed away in or around 1920. The Plaintiffs and named Defendants are all descendants of Phyllis Weathers. The Plaintiffs allege in their Complaint that the Defendant Valarie McCray is not a legitimate heir or descendant of the late Ms. Weathers and therefore has no interest in the subject property. The Plaintiffs request any and all named Defendants set forth their claims to the subject property, the adverse claims of the subject property be determined and a decree or title to this subject property in the names of the valid heirs of Phyllis Weathers.

The Defendant McCray asserts that she is the natural daughter of Juliaette Blanding, who is the natural daughter of Edna Williams. Further the Defendant asserts that Edna Williams is the daughter of Ella Clark Murphy (née Willis), a daughter of Persicella Robinson Geynes, a/k/a Priscilla Weathers Willis. The Plaintiffs, in their Complaint, have made an allegation that Ella Clark Murphy (née Willis) was not a child of Persicella Robinson Geynes a/k/a Priscilla Weathers Willis and therefore dispute the conveyance of the interest of Persicella Robinson Geynes a/k/a Priscilla Weathers Willis, in this subject property to the heirs and descendants of Edna W. Williams or Ella Clark Murphy (née Willis), of whom the Defendant McCray is descended.

The parties were properly notified of the Hearing to be commenced on this date as appropriate and as evidenced with the Notice of Hearing and Proof of Delivery on file with Clerk of Court for Sumter County, as filed by the Plaintiffs.

Present before me at this hearing were the Plaintiffs along with their counsel of record, William M. Connor, V, of the Orangeburg County Bar. Also present was named Defendant Valarie McCray, and she was represented by counsel, Charles T. Brooks, III, of the Sumter County Bar. No Guardian *ad Litem Nisi* was appointed to represent the interests of John Doe, Jane Doe, Richard Roe or Mary Roe, in this matter.

The Plaintiffs offered their testimony in this matter along with their witness, Mr. Canty, who also testified in support of the Plaintiffs assertion regarding the family history and lineage as known to him regarding the lineage of Phyllis Weathers. The Plaintiffs also provided Exhibits in support of their claims and requests in this matter; including the Plaintiff's "Family Tree" which indicates that "Priscilla Geynes" had no children, a July 19, 2000, (Plaintiffs Exhibit A); Deed of Distribution with an attached schedule indicating three children of Persicella Robinson Geynes, Ella Willis, Mary Willis and Benjamin Willis (Plaintiffs Exhibit B); Death Certificate of Ella Willis (Plaintiffs Exhibit C); a 2008 letter to the Attorney who prepared the Deed of Distribution in July 2000, disputing the familial relationship between Edna Williams and Persicella Robinson Geynes and the response from that attorney (Plaintiffs Exhibit D); a 1998 letter to the Probate Court requesting relief (Plaintiffs Exhibit E); a March 2, 1995, Deed of Distribution (Plaintiffs Exhibit F); documents from a 2002-2003 SCDOT Condemnation action against the subject property filed in order to obtain access to the property to construct a sidewalk along Loring Mill Road (Plaintiffs Exhibit G); a 2024 letter from Defendant McCray's counsel with the death certificate information for Ella Murphy and Edna Williams (Plaintiffs Exhibit H); and a notarized statement from a non-testifying witness opining on a central issue in the case, which the court accepted for identification only (Plaintiffs Exhibit I). The Court sustained an objection from defense counsel in regards to the provision of the Affidavit of a non-testifying witness. There was no raised objection or Motion made by the Plaintiff or her counsel in this proceeding regarding the service of counsel for the Defendant McCray in the previous action of condemnation as the guardian twenty-three years preceding the initiation of this action.

The Defendant McCray offered her testimony in this matter along with her witnesses Vera Williams Bower and Vernetta Swinton, who both testified affirming the testimony of the

Defendant McCray as to her family history and the issue of Phyllis Weathers known to them. The Defendant also provided documents and evidence in support of her defenses and claims in this matter, to include; Social Security Death Index for Ella Murphy (née Willis) citing date of death in 1974 and her birth indexed as August 15, 1888 (Defense Exhibit A); the 1910 Census Report (handwritten) reflecting Priscilla Willis and her three children; Benjamin, Mary and Ella, as residents of Sumter County (Defendant Exhibit B); the 1900 Census Report (handwritten) reflecting Priscilla Willis and her three children; Benjamin, Mary and Ella, as residents of Sumter County (Defendant Exhibit C); 1943 Probate Estate Petition for the Estate of Louise Richards (a daughter of Phyllis Weathers) showing familial relationship with Benjamin Willis, Ella Clark and Mary Dicks (Defendant Exhibit D).

The Court has reviewed the evidence and documents and exhibits presented by counsel for the parties finding that the evidence of both parties is not entirely consistent and some records were difficult to discern due to the age of the documents; the Court has also heard the remarks of counsel for the parties present and has heard the testimony of the Plaintiffs and the witness for the Plaintiffs; Daniel Canty; and the Court heard the testimony of the Defendant Valarie McCray and witnesses for the Defendant McCray; Vernetta Swinton and Vera Williams Bower. After a thorough examination of the above-mentioned documents and testimony, the Court makes the following findings and rulings

BACKGROUND

In or around 1891, Phillis Weathers a/k/a Phyllis Weathers, was granted title and ownership of the subject property for which this matter was commenced, by Order of Partition found of record in the Sumter County Register of Mesne Conveyances in Book H at Page 367. At the time of her death in or around 1920, Phyllis Weathers, a widow, and the mother of four

daughters, to wit: Persicella Robinson Geynes, Louise Richards, Lena Canty and Mary Robinson.

It is believed by the parties herein that Mary Robinson passed away and had one daughter, whose name is not known to any of the parties herein.

Louise Richards is deceased, having left no children or spouse, with her Estate filed of record in the Sumter County Probate Court as Estate Package 53 (bundle 233). Ms. Richards Estate Package which lists in series and to the right of Phyllis Weathers; Mary (Willis) Dicks, Benjamin Willis and Ella (Willis) Clark.

Persicella Robinson Geynes is deceased and at the time of her death she was not known to be married and had three living children, she shared with Pinckney Willis, to wit: Benjamin Willis, Mary Willis and Ella Willis. There is no record of an Estate for Ms. Geynes with Sumter County.

Several of the family members and heirs of Phyllis Weathers, as listed above are now deceased, to include: Persicella Robinson Geynes (née Weathers), Louise Richards, Lena Canty and Mary Robinson, Benjamin Willis, Mary Willis (Sumter County Probate Court, Estate No.: 96-ES-43-55), Ella Willis a/k/a Ella Clark Murphy, Angeline Dupree, Lena Canty Gilespie, Moses Canty, Joshua Canty, Evola Canty, Clarence Canty, Simon Canty, Gardenia Brogdon (Sumter County Probate Court Estate No: 94-ES-43-145), Lillie May White (mother of the Plaintiff Parker), Willie Heyward Canty, John Canty, and James Canty.

The Plaintiffs assert in their Complaint that several of the grandchildren and/or great-grandchildren of Lena Canty are also now deceased, including the following persons; Earline Burns, Ferdinand Burns, Sarah Walker, Bertha Mae Dupree Hastie, Lue Dupree, Julia Mae Bennett, Joshua Dupree, Willie Dupree, Daniel Dupree, Isaiah Dupree, Leon Dupree, Ronetta

Pitts, Rodney Pitts, Silas Gillespie, Moses Canty, Jr., Mozelle Canty, Eula Canty, Joshua Canty, Alexander Canty, Elijah Canty, Elijah Canty, Jr., Ruth Brogdon, Chris Brogdon, Harold Brogdon, Lena Canty Dowling, Henry W. White, Henry W. White, Jr., Daniel White, Herbert Canty, James Canty (son of John Canty), Ethel Dupree Gaymon, Mary Lou Gaymon Strudwick, and Porter Gaymon (father of the Plaintiff Black).

The Defendant Valarie McCray, is the daughter of Juliaette Blanding (Sumter County Probate Court Estate No: 2023-ES-43-178), who is the daughter of Edna Williams (Sumter County Probate Court Estate No: 97-ES-43-247), the daughter of Ella Clark Murphy (née Willis). The Defendant is in receipt of a shared interest in the title of this property by virtue of Deeds from the Estate of Juliaette Blanding and also through her uncle, Willie Williams. Upon the conveyance of the interest of Juliaette and Willie, and the recording of the Deed and/ or Deed of Distribution, the Sumter County Tax Assessor modified the property card to the subject property and the remission of the tax bills to reflect the Defendant McCray's name and mailing address, which the Plaintiff Parker had previously directed to her sole attention and remitted payment towards for at least twenty (20) years.

It is the belief and the allegations made by the Plaintiffs that the Defendant McCray's Deeds from her uncle and her mother's estate were erroneous and that the Defendant McCray deliberately removed the Plaintiff Parker from the tax records. The Defendant McCray asserts that she was not aware or responsible for the actions of the Tax Assessor's offices in processing the property cards for Sumter County to reflect the filings with the Register of Deeds offices.

The Defendant McCray denies any malicious action on her part as it relates to the issuance or titling of the Sumter County property cards or tax bills. Defendant McCray further

asserts that she has a valid interest in the subject property as evidenced by her valid Deeds for the same as she is a descendant of Phyllis Weathers.

JURISDICTION

1. The Plaintiff Parker is a citizen and resident of the County of Richland, State of South Carolina and has been so for more than one (1) year prior to the commencement of this action.
2. The Plaintiff Black is a citizen and resident of the County of Sumter, State of South Carolina, and has been so for more than one (1) year prior to the commencements of this action.
3. That the Defendant Valarie McCray is a citizen and resident of the County of Sumter, State of South Carolina, and has been so for more than one (1) year prior to the commencement of this action.
4. That the Defendants John Doe, Jane Doe, Richard Roe and Mary Roe, are fictitious persons representing as an unknown class any unknown heirs of any deceased named Defendants, and all persons claiming any right, title, estate, inheritance, and interest in or lien of the real estate described in the Complaint filed in this matter, and are all believed to be or to have been residents of the State of South Carolina.
5. That this matter involves a dispute regarding real property situate and being in the County of Sumter, and this Court has jurisdiction of this action.

DISPOSITION AND ORDER OF THE COURT

6. That Priscella Robinson Geynes, born Weathers, is the daughter of Phyllis Weathers.

7. That Priscella Robinson Geynes had three children with Pinckney Willis, to wit: Benjamin Willis, Mary Willis and Ella Willis.
8. That Ella Willis is the mother of Edna W. Williams, and therefore Edna is a descendant (granddaughter) of Phyllis Weathers.
9. That Edna W. Williams, had two children, to wit: Willie Williams and Juliaette (Williams) Blanding (the mother of the Defendant Valarie McCray).
10. That the Plaintiffs and the Defendant Valarie McCray are legitimate heirs of Phyllis Weathers and possess interest by virtue of intestacy of certain real estate located on Loring Mill Road, in the County of Sumter, State of South Carolina,

THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the above directives are hereby made an Order of this Court.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED!



Sumter Common Pleas

Case Caption: Celestine Parker , plaintiff, et al VS John Doe , defendant, et al
Case Number: 2024CP4302109
Type: Master/Order/Other

And It Is So Ordered

S/ Michael M. Jordan - 3085