



## **WHERE IS MY LAND HELPS THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY ENSURE THE PROPERTY RECORDS REFLECT THEIR OWNERSHIP OF SURFACE, MINERAL, AND ROYALTY INTEREST**

Debra Christian is battling the Gregg County Appraisal District, which refuses to change its records to reflect deeds the family has filed over the decades that prove their ownership of surface and mineral rights to their land, including royalties from various oil and gas leases. Debra Christian has come to Where Is My Land for assistance to ensure the property records correctly reflect the Christian's lawful interest in the acreage and mineral interest on their land.

*"I was blessed being brought up as a military child. My vision of being able to reach back and see the struggle of my ancestors, become a part of that struggle, bring it back alive, and possibly see in my lifetime some justice for a system of injustice in Gregg County with the outcome being a victory to the injustice would make it all worthwhile."* Debra Christian.

*"Stating the actions that transpired against the Christian family is unjust is an understatement. Generational wealth has been stolen and their legal property rights have been ignored by the same judicial system that was established to protect those rights."* Kavon Ward, CEO and Founder of WIML

Butcher C. Christian, Sr. was born in 1836 in Chambers County, Alabama to Lottie Christian a slave woman owned by Louis Christian. After the Civil War, according to the family's oral histories from the former slaves' descendants, the Christian slaves stayed nearby and farmed land that had been conveyed to several emancipated slaves. Butcher Christian, Sr. became a major landholder, first owning 80 acres through a conveyance from Gideon Christian, Jr. At the time of Butcher's death, the G.W. Hooper Survey, Gregg County, shows his estate owned 665 acres. The area is currently known as Gregg County, Texas, and became part of the East Texas Oilfield.

In 1930, B.C. Christian, Sr's heirs had the land officially surveyed by the county surveyor, W.E. Jones, and divided between them/). Direct heirs, including Debra Christian's great-grandfather, B.C. Christian, II received 119 acres each. The Christians assert surveyor Jones fraudulently obtained mineral and royalty deeds, and oil and gas leases from the family. Jones presented a document he said was meant to divide the land between the sibling heirs, when in fact it was an oil and gas lease and royalty deed.

While some of the heirs were successful in regaining their rights to the land stolen by W.E. Jones, not all were. When certain heirs attempted to file a petition to have one of Jones' leases declared invalid and fraudulently obtained, it turned out that not only was Jones the county surveyor, but additionally, he was the judge presiding over the case! Oil companies have been put on notice that the W.E. Jones oil and gas leases are not valid and were fraudulently obtained, but they continue to operate on leases they obtain through assignments. They also refuse to place the heirs into pay status for royalty payment.

In 2019, the Christian family hired its own landman to identify all of its land and rights. The Christians then implemented and filed deeds with the county courthouse in an attempt to set the records in order. The courthouse filed the records, but the county appraisal district would not adhere to the filed instruments and refused to change its records.

*The Gregg County Appraisal District in Texas needs to be held responsible to reflect rightful ownership of the Christian Family's land and the financial resources that come with it. Their refusal is an abdication of duty. The Christian Family, a family that has also defended this country, must have their land rights respected and honored,"* says Dreisen Heath, Advocacy and Policy Lead for WIML.

### **FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT**

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