

## Origin of Rabon Creek's Name

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Rabon Creek is a large creek in western Laurens County. Rabon merges with the Reedy River about 3.5 miles before the Reedy merges with the Saluda River.



**Figure 1. A sandbar in Rabon Creek.**

The first known petition for a land grant along Rabon Creek was made in 1752 by John Turk. At that time, the area was in Indian Territory. It was well known by Indian traders, hunters, and trappers. In a treaty in 1755 the Cherokee ceded the area to the British crown. Immigrants from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina began settling in the Rabon Creek area. Many were of Scotch-Irish heritage.

By the time of the Revolution, the area was specifically known for its inhabitants' loyalist sentiments. Some historians have described the area as an isolated community consisting of Quakers, separatist "New Light" Baptists, and other eccentrics.

The origin of the Rabon Creek name is a mystery. At the time of the John Turk land grant petition, it was designated as Raburns Creek. Since that time, the name has been spelled many other ways, including Raeburn, Raiborn, Raibourn, Raybans, Raybons, Rayborn, Raybournes, Raburn, Rabun, Rayburn, Rayburnes, Rayburns, Reaburns, Rebans, Redburn, Redburns, and Reighbourn.



Most ideas about the name are that it was named after a person. However, there is no known historical record of a person named Raburns, or such, having lived along the creek in the mid-1700s. It seems that the creek was known as Raburns, or such, before any European settlement.

The answer to the name mystery may lie in etymology. It is known that the early European travelers in the backcountry were of Scotch heritage. In Gaelic, the word “burn” is “a large stream or small river.” The words “bourn,” “bourne,” “born,” and “borne” are all cognates of “burn.” Placing “burn” or one of its cognates in a name is the same as adding creek or river to the name. This leads us to the question of what does the “ra”, “rae”, “ray” or such, in the name mean. Overwhelmingly, the “rā” pronunciation is used in the names for the creek. “Rae” is the Scottish form of roe, a deer.\* “Raeburn” is the name of a stream in Dumfries, Scotland and is reported as meaning “a stream where does drink” in Middle English.



**Figure 2. A doe and fawns at a Beaver dam in Rabon Creek. Ocoee Springs Farm, Waterloo, SC, 08/31/2015, (image highly edited from trail camera).**

On a personal note, I prefer the name “Raeburn” Creek. My mother’s maiden name was “Stewart,” a strong Scottish surname. When Laurens County was adopting the 911 emergency system, all roads without names (i.e., just State ID numbers) were given names. There is a short road in western Laurens County that follows the Abbeville Road as shown on the 1825 Mills Atlas in the immediate

vicinity of Rabon Creek. My mother's suggestion that this road be named "Deer Valley Road" was accepted. This coincidence with the "Raeburn" name was purely serendipitous but so appropriate!

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\* Lower, Mark Antony 1860 "Patronymica Britannica – A Dictionary of the Family Names of the United Kingdom" J. R. Smith, London.