

ARKANSAS COURT OF APPEALS

Julius Williams v. Carson Bridges, Jr.

2026 Ark. App. 221 · No. CV-24-590 · Decided April 8, 2026

SUMMARY

The Arkansas Court of Appeals affirmed orders admitting a copy of a lost or destroyed 2017 will to probate and appointing Carson Bridges, Jr. as executor. The majority held that circumstantial evidence, including the decedent’s dementia, guardianship, nursing-home confinement, and the disposal of attic documents, rebutted the presumption that the missing original will had been revoked. Chief Judge Klappenbach dissented, concluding that the evidence was insufficient to establish by a preponderance that the will had not been revoked.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Arkansas Court of Appeals
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stephanie Potter Barrett; Harrison; Tucker; Wood; Brown; Klappenbach
JURISDICTION	Arkansas Court of Appeals
DECIDED	April 8, 2026
DOCKET	CV-24-590
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Julius Williams appealed orders admitting a copy of a lost or destroyed will to probate, appointing Carson Bridges, Jr. executor, and denying Williams's motion for reconsideration.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Probate cases are reviewed de novo, but factual findings are not reversed unless clearly erroneous. A circuit court's findings under Arkansas Rule of Civil Procedure 60 are reviewed for abuse of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Arkansas Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Julius Williams v. Carson Bridges, Jr.

TOPICS

- lost will
- probate
- estate administration
- standard of review
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

probate

estate administration

estate litigation

appellate procedure

evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the evidence rebutted the presumption that the original 2017 will was revoked when it could not be found after the testator's death.
2. Whether the circuit court abused its discretion or otherwise erred by denying Williams's motion for reconsideration under Arkansas Rule of Civil Procedure 60.

HOLDINGS

1. The circuit court did not clearly err in finding that the presumption that Carson Bridges, Sr. revoked the 2017 will was rebutted by a preponderance of the evidence and in admitting a copy of the will to probate as a lost or destroyed will.
2. The circuit court did not abuse its discretion in denying the motion for reconsideration because the motion established no basis for Rule 60 relief and merely reargued the merits of the probate ruling.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Moreover, our case law does not require any specific type of evidence to rebut the presumption of revocation, including evidence of postexecution statements or the nature of familial relationships.” (8)

“Rule 60 provides limited grounds for relief and does not allow a party to reargue the merits of the underlying ruling.” (9)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Carson Bridges, Sr. executed a 2017 will that made specific bequests to his wife and children and left the remainder of his estate to Carson Bridges, Jr. He was later diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, placed under a guardianship, and confined to a nursing home until his death. After his death, the original will could not be found: it was believed to have been stored in a safe-deposit box, while documents in the attic had been discarded during a cleanout. The circuit court found that these circumstances, together with the absence of evidence that Carson Sr. revoked or changed the will, rebutted the presumption of revocation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

After Carson Bridges, Sr. died, the Jefferson County Circuit Court conducted proceedings to convert a guardianship into estate administration. Because the original 2017 will could not be located, Williams sought intestate administration. Following a hearing, the circuit court admitted a copy of the 2017 will as a lost or destroyed will under Arkansas Code Annotated section 28-40-302 and appointed Carson Bridges, Jr. executor. The court denied Williams's motion for reconsideration, and Williams appealed both orders.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Whatley v. Est. of McDougal, 2013 Ark. App. 709, 430 S.W.3d 875
- Abdin v. Abdin, 94 Ark. App. 12, 223 S.W.3d 60 (2006)
- Griffith v. Griffith, 2018 Ark. App. 122, 545 S.W.3d 212
- Garrett v. Butler, 229 Ark. 653, 317 S.W.2d 283 (1958)
- Remington v. Roberson, 81 Ark. App. 36, 98 S.W.3d 44 (2003)
- Tucker v. Stacy, 272 Ark. 475, 616 S.W.2d 473 (1981)
- Toney v. Burgess, 2018 Ark. App. 54, 541 S.W.3d 469
- Barrera v. Vanpelt, 332 Ark. 482, 965 S.W.2d 780 (1998)
- Gilbert v. Gilbert, 47 Ark. App. 37, 883 S.W.2d 859 (1994)
- Edmisten v. Bull Shoals Landing, 2014 Ark. 89, 432 S.W.3d 25

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