

Jay Family of Bedford Co. Pennsylvania

by Vince King and Guy Perry III
July 2013

The purpose of this report is to document the early origins of the Jay family in Bedford Co., Pennsylvania and to correct, with documentary evidence, several years of published misinformation concerning the earliest years. The descendants of Thomas Jay (1779-1866)*, the progenitor of the family who remained in Bedford Co., are well documented and it is not our intent to repeat the known history of his descendants. Within the body of this report, an asterisk * by the name Thomas Jay will designate that the individual referenced is Thomas Jay (1779-1866).

Traditional Bedford Co. Jay Family Background

The earliest traditional account of the Bedford Co. Jays is found in the History of Bedford, Somerset, and Fulton Counties, Pennsylvania published in 1884.¹ It states:

"Thomas Jay* came to Bedford county prior to 1800 from Loudoun County, Virginia."

This article does not speak to his parentage or identify his siblings.

In 1926, a Jay family reunion was held in Bedford Co., Pennsylvania. At that gathering the Rev. M. W. Jay of Winston-Salem, NC met his relatives and compiled a family history, titled the "Thomas Jay Family", which was published in 1933. He specifically stated that his comments about the family originating from Loudoun Co., VA were gleaned from the 1884 county history previously mentioned.

In summary, Thomas Jay* was the only Jay male to produce descendants who remained in the county. As a result, it is very logical that he is remembered as the progenitor of the Jay clan in Bedford Co., PA. It can also be confirmed by the above that he was the focus of their family genealogy and remembrances.

Eli Jay's Letters

About 1893, Eli Jay, a Quaker historian in Richmond, IN, and a descendant of William Jay of Frederick Co. VA, began writing letters to Jay family members across the United States, requesting them to submit their family information to him. Mr. Jay's archives contain a letter which references other letters that document that he was corresponding with David Jay (1818-1906) of Iowa and James Jay (1848-1912) of Bedford Co. PA regarding this family.

In David Jay's Iowa letters, he details how he was born in Bedford Co. PA and was taken away as a child into Ohio and Indiana before settling in Iowa. He also discusses his assumed relationship to the other Jays in Bedford Co.

James Jay of Bedford Co., PA, wrote transmitting information identifying some of Thomas Jay's* siblings. In summary, these 1894 letters detail additional information about the Bedford Co. Jays that was either unknown or at least not published in Dr. Jay's 1933 book on the family.²

The Jay Family Index

Between 1915-1925, Cassius M. Jay of California, abstracted information from Eli Jay's letters and placed the information in a notebook which contained a section on the Thomas Jay* family of Bedford Co., PA. Cassius Jay also added information or references from easily available published materials of the day. One such added note in the Bedford Co. section references a list that contains a David Jay named as a "Ranger on the Frontier" in Bedford County, PA in 1778-1783.³

In 1963, long after the death of Cassius M. Jay, his notebook was published by the Jay Family Association and titled the "Jay Family Index". In general, the notebook was published without access to Eli Jay's original letters and no effort was made to validate the accuracy of the information. Certainly, no Bedford Co. Jays were involved in reviewing the manuscript during the publishing process. As a result, it was implied that "Frontier Ranger David Jay" is the father of Thomas Jay*.

In summary, a cursory glance of currently posted Bedford Co. Jay genealogies and online discussions leave it quite clear that family enthusiasts following this line have used the unsubstantiated implied information contained in the Jay Family Index. Unfortunately, there has been nothing confirmed by documentary evidence concerning this family before Thomas Jay*.

Bedford Co. Documentary Evidence

Background

When the Jay Family Association Research Committee focused on the Bedford County Jays, starting in 2011, it was noted that the 1830 Bedford County PA census enumerated Thomas Jay* as Thomas Gee. Once the alternate surname was recognized, the committee began further analysis into county records and discovered a listing of a Thomas Gee in the county prior to 1800. Finally, Bedford Co. land deed analysis, which had not been done previously, yielded the key bit of evidence for tracing the family before Thomas Jay*.

The Family of an Older Thomas Gee/Jay

Thomas Gee/Jay married Elizabeth Davis, a daughter of Thomas and Mary Davis of Bedford Co., PA about 1775. While their marriage location is unknown, it can be assumed that they were living near each other at that time and the father-in-law Thomas Davis can be shown to have been in Bedford by at least 1779.

Multiple tax lists for Bedford Co. exist between 1772 and 1800. However, Thomas Gee/Jay can only be found on the 1799 county list.⁴ He was enumerated without land. He also appeared on an 1800 state septennial Bedford Co. tax census.⁵ As a result, we cannot confirm Thomas Gee/Jay's status as a landowner or even his location prior to 1799. Perhaps, this family was living in Loudoun Co., VA; however, cursory Loudoun Co. research shows no Thomas Gee or Jay present.

In 1788, father-in-law Thomas Davis, penned his last will and testament stating he was "weak and in low condition." In this instrument, he names his daughters Elizabeth Gee and Sarah Davis as residual heirs to the disposition of his properties. This will was probated in Feb 1798.⁶ So, perhaps the elder Davis lingered for a while before his death.

1799

Colerain Township

Names	Dress	Lanc	Mant	Locals	Applic	Wages	Herd	Grain	New Mills	Dunelings	Horns	Hacks	Horns	Calculation		Total	
														Doll.	Cts	Doll.	Cts
Fletcher Philip	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	66	-	-	17
Francis Johns	-	100	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	298	-	-	45
Fletcher Jacob	-	200	-	200	2	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	444	-	1	11
Gordon Charles	-	100	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	748	-	1	87
Gee Thomas	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	8	-	-	8
William Thomas	-	100	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	106	-	-	27

The family of Thomas Gee/Jay and Elizabeth Davis has not been confirmed in any other Bedford Co. record between the years 1800 to 1815, although it seems likely they were residents. Perhaps, they lived on the Thomas Davis plantation, in the home of the widow and mother-in-law Mary Davis or another relative.

Death of Thomas Gee/Jay

On Apr 4, 1815, "William Jay, minor son of Thomas Jay, late of Southampton Township, deceased," selected William Davis, the brother of Elizabeth Davis Gee, as his guardian. This important document⁷ confirms that Thomas Gee/Jay died prior to that date. It also confirms that Thomas Gee/Jay had a son William who was not yet 21 years of age. It is the committee's opinion that he died in early 1815.

From this year date forward, most government documents reference the family surname as Jay.

Death of David Jay

On Jan 27, 1818, David Jay of Bedford, Co. wrote his last will and testament and died a short time later.⁸ In this instrument, he willed to Mary Bowers his estate. It is assumed by the committee that David Jay, a young War of 1812 veteran⁹, was not legally married to Miss Bowers although she did have a son named David who was subsequently taken to Ohio and Indiana before settling in Iowa. This child was the same David Jay who corresponded with Eli Jay in 1894, detailing his origins from Bedford Co. and passing along his mother's name as Mary Bowers. Recent DNA testing has confirmed the relationship between David Jay of Iowa and the Bedford Co. Jay family.

The Linchpin Documents

In October 1822, a series of deeds were executed by members of the Jay family that confirm and illustrate the family connections before Thomas Jay*. These deeds and releases are tantamount to an estate probate and identify the heirs of Thomas Davis by way of his daughter Elizabeth, who was married to Thomas Gee/Jay. It is assumed by the committee that Elizabeth Davis Jay died prior to this date and her landholdings were being sold to Robert Bennett. Each child of Elizabeth Davis Jay signed over their interests in roughly 100 acres of property "formerly the

plantation of Thomas Davis, deceased." Individuals executing these instruments included Thomas Jay, William Jay, Margaret Jay, Thomas Jadwin and his wife Ann, James Murphy and his wife Sally, and Peter Smith and his wife Mary.¹⁰ It should be noted, with a very few exceptions, this list of children is consistent with the traditional list of siblings of Thomas Jay* found in the Jay Family Index.

Summary

The JFA Research Committee feels that the list of the siblings of Thomas Jay* published in the 1963 Jay Family Index is fairly accurate. However, the ancestors of Thomas Jay* listed there is completely flawed and inaccurate. Thomas Jay* of Bedford Co., PA was the son of Thomas Gee/Jay (ca 1753-1815) and Elizabeth Davis (ca 1758-1821), who was the daughter of Thomas and Mary Davis of Bedford Co., PA. Whether they actually emanated from or lived in Loudoun Co., Virginia cannot be documented at this date. It should be noted that Thomas Jay* reported his birthplace as Virginia in the 1860 census, but reported PA in 1850.

Additional Information

John Jay, traditionally listed brother of Thomas Jay*, who "*went west and never heard from him*" has not been located and cannot be confirmed by any records, as yet.

Catherine Jay, traditionally listed sister of Thomas Jay* who is said to have married Isaac Smith, has not been found releasing the 1822 Thomas Davis plantation property and cannot be identified in any Bedford Co. records at this time.

A Davis plantation release has also been found from Lydia and Edward Frey.¹¹ The only Edward Frey found in Bedford Co. in the period is a free black man. A Lydia Frey (young woman) can be found enumerated as "mulatto" in the 1850 Bedford Co. census records. As of this date no relationship has been determined.

DNA test results from Bedford Co. Jay descendants show that they are remotely related to the Montgomery Co., MD Jay family who also had a Gee to Jay name transformation around 1810.

The confirmed family of Thomas Gee/Jay is:

THOMAS JAY born about 1753 and died about 1815 in Bedford Co., PA. He married **ELIZABETH DAVIS** about 1775, daughter of **THOMAS DAVIS** and **MARY UNKNOWN**. She was born about 1758 and died about 1821 in Bedford Co., PA.

Children of THOMAS JAY and ELIZABETH DAVIS are:

SARAH JAY, b. about 1776; d. Bet. 1851 - 1860, Bedford Co., PA.; m. **JAMES MURPHY**
THOMAS JAY, b. 29 Jan 1779; d. 19 Apr 1866, Bedford Co., PA.
MARY JAY, b. about 1781; d. about 1857 m. **PETER SMITH**.
ANN JAY, b. about 1783; m. **THOMAS JADWIN**; b. about 1780.
DAVID JAY, b. about 1788; d. 27 Feb 1818, Bedford Co., PA.
MARGARET JAY, b. about 1790; d. 07 Nov 1864, Bedford Co., PA.
WILLIAM JAY, b. about 1796, Bedford Co., PA; d. Aft. 1880, Bedford Co., PA.

Exhibit A
Illustrated Discrepancies and
Comments on Misinformation
published in the
Jay Family Index

3555

David Jay

(Son of John Jay 4426)

b. ca 1750 ? (this written in pencil)

Belonged to Friends Society. Came from Loudon Co. VA. Named as a "ranger on the frontier" in Bedford Co. in 1778-1783 (PA Archives, 3rd Series, Vol. XXIII, p. 265).

d.

m.

Ch ("at death of grandparents there were 5 ch left"):

Thomas Jay (3563)	b. 1777	<i>m. 1st Bathsheba Morse</i>	d. Apr 19 1866 Bedford Co. PA
		<i>m. 2nd Elizabeth Martin</i>	
David Jay (3553)	b. 1779	<i>m. Mary Bowers</i>	d.
John Jay (3628)	b. PA	<i>m. ---</i>	d. 1852 Toledo OH
William Jay	b.		d.
Sarah Jay	b.	<i>m. James Murphy (3715)</i>	d.
Margaret Jay	b.	unmarried	d. Jul 20 1864
Catherine Jay	b.	<i>m. Isaac Smith (3739)</i>	d.
Mary Jay	b.	<i>m. Peter Smith (3714)</i>	d.
Henrietta Jay	b.	<i>m. Thomas Wyatt</i>	d.

Color Key

Assumed, implied by publishing and incorrect

Cannot be confirmed as of this date

Tied to wrong family, existed but a daughter of the David Gee/Jay family of the Montgomery Co. MD

Exhibit B
The Last Will and Testament
of
Thomas Davis

Bedford County, PA: Estate #3 of 1798.

Last Will & Testament of Thomas Davis Decd.

Dated 6th Jany. 1788

Filed & Proved 24th Feby 1798

Registered Will Book 1, Page 80

In the Name of God Amen I Thomas Davis of Colerain Township Bedford County and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Farmer being sick and in a low condition of health But in perfect strength of mind and memory thanks be given to God for all his mercies: And Calling to mind the mortality of my Body and knowing that it is appointed for all Men once to Die Do make and Ordain this as my Last will and Testament in Manner and form following viz.

First I Recommend my soul into the Hand of Almighty God who gave it me: and my Body I Recommend to Earth to be buried at the discretion of my Executors in a Decent and Christian Manner And as touching such Worldly Estate it hath pleased God to bless me with: I Give Devise and Dispose of the same in Manor & Form following to wit:

Imprimis I Give and Bequeath unto my Dearly beloved wife Mary Davis all my Estate Both Real and personal to be at her Disposal and for her use During her life and after her Decease My Real Estate and What it hath pleased God to leave of my personal Estate to be sold and Equally Divided amongst my youngest Children **Elizabeth Gee** and Sarah Davis.

Item I Give and Bequeath unto my son William Davis the sum of five shillings to be paid him in one year after my Decease out of the Estate already Granted and Bequeathed to my wife Mary Davis by my Executors hereafter Named and I also Give unto my wife Mary Davis all the Debts Due to me by others Whom I also order to pay all my just Debts Funeral Charges and so forth.

And I do hereby Constitute appoint and ordain Mary Davis My wife and Thomas Stuart of the Township County and State aforesaid Farmer to be my Whole and Sole Executors of this my Last will and Testament and I Do utterly Disannul all Former Wills Testaments bequeaths & Executors heretofore made Ratifying and Confirming this and no other to be my last Will and Testament in witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this Sixth Day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty eight.

his
Thomas X Davis
mark

Exhibit C
Jay Heirs Sell and Release
the Thomas Davis Plantation

Bedford County, PA: Deed Book O, pp. 180-181
Jay et al. To Bennett

Know all men by these present that we Thomas Jay and William Jay and Thomas Jadwin husband of Any [Annie] and James Murphy husband of Saly [Sally] and Margaret Jay of Southampton township Bedford County State of Pennsylvania for and in consideration of the sum of eighty dollars to us in hand paid by Robert Bennett of the same place that is to say Sixteen dollars for each shear the same being five shears at and before the unsealing and delivery hereof the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged have granted bargained sold released and confirmed and by these presents do grant bargain sell release and confirm unto the said Robert Bennett his heirs and assigns all our Estate right title interest property claim and demand whatsoever of in to or out of a certain tract or parcel of land situate on the waters of Town Creek in Black Valley Southampton township Bedford County adjoining lands of John Perrin on the North the Warrior Ridge on the East and Joseph Bennett on the South and Tusseys mountain on the west **formerly the plantation of Thomas Davis decd.** containing one hundred acres more or less together with all and singular the rights members and appurtenances thereunto belonging and the reversions and remainders rents issues and profits thereof: To have and to hold one shears of said land and premises hereby bargained and sold or mentioned or intended so to be with the appurtenances unto the said Robert Bennett his heirs and assigns to the only proper use and benefit of the said Robert Bennett his heirs and assigns forever and we the said Thomas Jay and William Jay and Thomas Jadwin and James Murphy and Margaret Jay and our heirs the said hereby granted premises unto the said Robert Bennett his heirs and assigns against us the said Thomas Jay and William Jay and Thomas Jadwin and James Murphy and Margaret Jay and our heirs and against all and every other person and persons whatsoever Lawfully claiming or to claim by from or under us them or any of them shall and will warrant and forever defend by these presents. In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and affixed our seals the seventh day of October in year of our Lord Eighteen hundred and Twenty Two 1822.

Thomas Jay
William (his X mark) Jay
Thomas (his X mark) Jadwin
James Murphy
Saly (her X mark) Murphy
Margaret (her X mark) Jay

-
- ¹ History of Bedford, Somerset and Fulton Counties, Pennsylvania, Chapter XLVI p383; published 1884 by Waterman, Watkins & Co., Chicago, IL; online Ancestry.com
 - ² James Jay to Eli Jay; letter dated September 18, 1894, Robinsville, Bedford County Pennsylvania; copy of original in the JFA files
 - ³ Pennsylvania Archives, 3rd Series, Vol. XXIII, p. 265; published 1897
 - ⁴ 1799 PA Tax List: Bedford County, Colerain Township; copy of original in the JFA files
 - ⁵ Bedford Co., Colerain Township, *Pennsylvania, Septennial Census, 1779-1863* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: online Ancestry.com
 - ⁶ Bedford County, PA: Estate #3 of 1798; Registered Will Book 1, Page 80; copy of original in the JFA files
 - ⁷ Bedford Co. PA Orphans Court Docket 3, p. 25; copy of original in the JFA files
 - ⁸ Bedford County, PA Will Book 1, p. 515; copy of original in the JFA files
 - ⁹ U.S. Army, Register of Enlistments, 1798-1914, Records of Men Enlisted in the U.S. Army Prior to the Peace Establishment, May 17, 1815, p. 57; online Ancestry.com
 - ¹⁰ Bedford County, PA: Deed Book O, pp. 179-181; copy of original in the JFA files
 - ¹¹ Bedford County, PA Deed Book N, p. 108; copy of original in the JFA files