

MY JESSEE CLAN FROM TENNESSEE

by

Kenneth E. Wagner

Gr-Gr-Grandson of Jacob Jessee and Nancy Childs

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This summary represents my efforts to discover my maternal great-grandmother's Jessee family. For a long time I have known that she came to Indiana from Tennessee based on family tradition, a few bible entries, and some genealogy work done by my mother; however, I didn't know much more than that. Several years ago I came across an 1850 census listing when searching on my G-Grandmother's maiden name, Rebecca Jessee. At that time I was too involved in chasing my Wagner lineage from southern Indiana back to Rhineland, Germany, and did not follow up on the Jesses in the 1850 census listing from Tennessee.

Recently, I became interested in establishing my Jessee connection. I will begin by listing the Tennessee Jessee family from the 1850 Census that I believe to be my ancestors.

1850 Federal Census in the 15th Subdivision, Knox County, TN, dtd 27 Nov 1850:

19	1554	1563	Nancy Jessee	35	F					Pa		
20			Sarah	15	F					Sen		1
21			Martha	13	F					"		1
22			Maria	11	F					"		1
23			Samuel	9	M					"		1
24			John	7	M					"		
25			Rebecca	1	F					"		

Additionally, a couple years ago I came into possession of many family photographs and other memorabilia that had been passed on to my sister from my mother who had received them from my grandmother who had received some from my great grandmother Rebecca Jessee Weddle. Many of these photos had notations on the back of the names and relationship. These photos were critical to identifying family connections.

At this point I was mainly interested in chasing the Jessee lineage back in time, but I quickly realized that I would first have to determine if there was an actual connection between my Great Grandmother, Rebecca, and the 1 year old girl in the 1850 census. With the information at hand, it seemed that my best approach would be to see if I could find something in the post 1850 era that could identify them as being siblings and, if so, where were they and when did they arrive. Well, it turns out that I have found their mother, Nancy, and all of the siblings in Indiana beginning as early as 1854 and there is a good correlation between the names and ages in the 1850 census and later discoveries. There are too many things coming together for me to consider any of this to be a coincidence.

I will address each of the siblings, one at a time, later, but first I want to go further back in time to the 1840 Federal census. You probably noted that in the 1850 census above, no husband/father was listed. An online search for any Jessee in Tennessee at the time of the 1840 census produced only one hit... a "Jacob Jessee" in Knox County, Tennessee. The 1840 census form only lists the Head of Families by name and other members are simply enumerated by sex and age group, so the only name shown is

but with just his name and no "cousin" notation on the back. I know now that Hattie and Frank were children of John Jessee and Anna Danver. Since my grandmother and Hattie were cousins, then my great grandmother, Rebecca Jessee Weddle, and Hattie and Frank's father John Jessee, had to be siblings. I also have a photo of a man identified on the back as "John Jessee - Uncle" written in my grandmother's or her sister's writing. This is Rebecca's older brother.

Searching other online sources for other Jessees I came across a Samuel Jessee in the RootsWeb Jessee Genealogy Service database. [ID: 117210; Name: Samuel JESSEE; Sex: M; Birth ABT 1847 in ,, VA] The Note, which is sourced to William H. "Bill" Jessee via email, 11/20/1998, provided the descendants information for Samuel and David Augustus Jessee, as well as this note.

"David A. Jessee was raised in the Catholic Church, alter(sic) boy, had three cousins named Frank, Hattie, and Harry. He had an aunt named Maggie(?) who owned or ran a boarding house in Terre Haute, Indiana. His sisters were Nan, Nellie, and Mary. Nellie was born in 1873, Nannie in 1874, and Mary in 1887[1876?]. Birth record, file tape #0571727 Marion County, Indianapolis Indiana. Lists birth of Jessey(e), father named Samuel, born 6/16/1882. This has to be David A. Jessee."

David A. Jessee is the son of Samuel and Julia O'Herron Jessee.

Now, if David A. Jessee, son of Samuel and Julia Jessee, is a cousin of Frank, Hattie, and Harry Jessee, children of John and Anna Jessee, then he is also a cousin of my grandmother, Myrtle Rebecca Weddle Stringe, daughter of Rebecca Jessee Weddle. So now I have three of the siblings from Tennessee, Samuel, John, and Rebecca, identified in Indiana.

Now let's look for the other three siblings in the 1850 census... Sarah, Martha, and Maria. First, I have several old family photos of a Foster family and Foster children. The children are not specifically identified as "cousins" however; a couple photos say "For Aunt Beck" who is surely Aunt Rebecca. Also, I see no reason that the photographs would have been saved if there were no family connection. Using the advanced search capabilities of both Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org, I searched the marriage categories for marriages from 1850 to 1900 in Indiana where the female spouse surname was Jessee. It took a while, but I subsequently found the marriages of Sarah, Martha, and Maria.

Sarah Jessee - m. Noah Sullivan 23 July 1854 in Jennings County, Indiana

Martha Jessee - m. Joseph Keicher about 1864 in Madison County Indiana

Maria Jessee - m. Peter Lash 10 March 1868 in Jennings County, Indiana

I later determined that Martha Jessee's son Benton G. Keicher was a cousin of my grandmother. When I discovered these Jessees, I had pretty well linked them together as siblings at least in my own mind. I will now attempt to justify my conclusions. While admitting that the proofs are not as rigorous as is required for acceptance into, say, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, through deduction and reasonable assumptions, I am comfortable in my position. The linkage of the children in the 1850 Tennessee listing is all done by identification of cousins and their parents. If they are really cousins, then their parents must be siblings, which all lead back to the 1850 Knox, Tennessee census listing. The only child in the 1850 listing for which I have no "cousin linkage" to all the others is Maria Jessee who married Peter Lash. I have been unable to discover any further information about Maria Jessee Lash.

I will now address Jacob and Nancy and each of the children listed in the 1850 census of Knox, Tennessee, starting with Jacob Jessee and then Nancy Childs Jessee, age about 35, the mother of the Tennessee clan.

Jacob Jessee (1813 – 1848)

The only Jacob Jessee that I have found for this time period is one that I believe was born to David Jessee and Catherine “Katie” Banner in Russell County, Virginia, about 1813. He is the brother of Samuel “Boone County” Jessee. I have found no marriage records for Jacob and Nancy but it was before 1835 when their first child was born. As noted earlier Jacob Jessee is with his family in Knox County, Tennessee, during the 1840 Federal census.

I have received copies of the court record of the Administrative Settlement of the estate of Jacob Jessee, deceased, conducted beginning on the first Monday of October 1848 [02 Oct 1848] in family court in Knox County, Tennessee. This session appointed an Administrator to take possession of and collect information about the “goods and chattels, rights and credits” of said Jacob Jesse deceased who died intestate and make a report back to the court within 90 days. Pages 94 and 95 are the reports back to the court which is a list of property and possessions to be “laid off and set apart..., for the support of the widow and family of Jacob Jessee, deceased.” Based on the list of items reported to the court, I have concluded that Jacob was a farmer which is really no surprise. Unfortunately, there are no names for the widow and family. However, all things considered, I am very confident that this Jacob Jessee is the father of the children of Nancy Jessee appearing in the 1850 Federal census. His untimely death is possibly why they decided to head north after the 1850 census.

I have subsequently done an extensive search for any Jacob Jessee, born in Virginia, who would have been in his 20s during the 1840 Federal census. Once again, I found no one except the Jacob Jessee born to David and Catherine Jessee in Russell County, VA, in about 1813. This would make him about 27 in the 1840 census which correlates with the information in the 1840 census.

The Jessee Genealogy Service database, which I assume to be a reasonably credible source, has only one (1) Jacob Jessee among the almost 47,000 names included.

ID: I00470;

Name: Jacob JESSEE

Sex: M;

Birth: ABT 1813 in Russell Co., VA

Reference Number: 80+53.

Father: David Jessee b: 06 MAR 1783 in Cobbs Creek, Caswell Co., NC

Mother: Catherine “Katie” BANNER b: 1788/9 in, Grayson Co., VA

That is all the information I could find in that database about Jacob Jessee. I also have searched extensively elsewhere for a Jacob Jessee with any possible connection to the Knox County, TN, Jessee family and have come up with nothing else. My current feeling is that the Jacob Jessee in my family is the one cited immediately above who is the son of David Jessee and Catherine “Katie” Banner.

Nancy Childs Jessee (1815 – 1876)

The first location where I found Nancy Jessee is in the 1850 Federal Census, Subdivision 15, Knox, Tennessee. In this census her surname is spelled Jessey. She is 35 years old and has 6 children listed in the census as noted above. The census says she was born in Virginia and all of her children were born in Tennessee. I have found no other information about Nancy in Tennessee. However, I have found her and all of her children in Indiana beginning in 1854. I have not found Nancy in the 1860 Federal Census, however, the 1870 Federal Census shows her at age 54, born in Virginia in 1816 and now residing in Columbus, Bartholomew, Indiana. There are three children with her in the household... James Jessee, age 13; Henry Sullivan, age 15; and Bell Sullivan, age 10. I have not been able to pin down exactly who James Jessee is; however, I do have an old photo of a young man with "Jimmie Jessee" written on the back so I am pretty sure that he is in the family some place. The two Sullivan children are Nancy's grand children, whose parents, Noah and Sarah Jessee Sullivan, both died in the spring of 1861. The child named "Bell" in the census is Mary "Mabel" Sullivan.

The last record I have for Nancy Jessee is her death in May 1876 and burial in Fairview Cemetery, New Albany, Floyd, Indiana, in Plat 1, Range 4, Lot 6. Her Find-a-Grave Memorial number is 95065150. In the Find-a-Grave database she is listed as Nancy Jessie. I am confident that this is my Nancy because she is buried in the same Plat/Range/Lot as her daughter, Rebecca Jessee Weddle, and she was living at the residence of J. W. and Rebecca Weddle at the time of her death. The child on the stone, Janet L. Stringe, is Nancy's great-grand daughter, the daughter of Myrtle Rebecca Weddle Stringe, the daughter of Rebecca Jessee and James W. Weddle. *[Photo by Cheryl Jessee Merrill, daughter of Bill Jessee, my 3rd cousin.]*



Nancy's maiden name is CHILDS. Several Indiana death certificates of her children and some other documents list their parents as Jacob (or John) Jessee and Nancy Childs. Searches for her prior to the 1850 Census using her maiden name have produced nothing. An interesting observation, though, is that in the 1850 census, the surname of the two citizens immediately preceding Nancy Jessee in the listing is CHILDS! I was unable to make any connection between them.

Sarah Jessee (1836 – 1861)

Sarah appears in the 1850 Federal Census in Subdivision 15, Knox, Tennessee at age 15 implying a birth year of about 1835. Find-a-Grave (#20196902) shows her tombstone saying she was born on 25 Jan 1836. She married Noah Sullivan on 23 July 1854 in Jennings County, Indiana. The 1860 Federal census shows them in Spencer, Jennings, Indiana, with three children: Henry, age 6; Charles, age 4; and Mary, age 2. Noah Sullivan died on 8 Feb 1861 and Sarah died a couple of months later on 26 April 1861, both being buried in the Sullivan Cemetery, Vernon, Jennings County, Indiana. Find-a-Grave memorial number is 20196902. Sarah's daughter Mary "Mabel" "Bell" Sullivan married Albert R. Foster on 26 Oct 1880 in Jennings County, Indiana. It turns out that the photographs of the several Foster children that have been handed down are the children of Mary Sullivan and Albert Foster. I also have two photos of

Mary "Mabel" "Bell" Sullivan Foster; one photo of her husband Albert Foster b. about 1885; and photos of Amirt(sp?) Foster b 25 July 1887; Nettie (Jeanette A) Foster b 10 May 1889; Asa Foster b 13 Nov 1884. I also have photos of Myrtle Cleo Foster b. Aug 1882, her husband Hamilton King, and their child named Albert Foster King.

Maria Jessee (1839 – ????)

Maria was born about 1839 in Knox, Tennessee, and appears at age 11 in the 1850 Federal Census with her mother Nancy and her five brothers and sisters. She apparently accompanied the rest of her family to Indiana after the 1850 Census which is dated in November of 1850. On March 11, 1868, she married Peter Lash, who had emigrated from Bavaria. They were married in Jennings County, Indiana. During the 1870 Census, they were in Columbus, Bartholomew, Indiana where Peter worked in a saw mill and she is reported as born in Tennessee. They have a 4 month old girl named Mary C. Lash when the census was recorded in June 1870. In the 1870 census, Maria is listed as Mariah Lash. A preliminary search only found a couple of Civil War Registration entries showing Peter was enrolled and then discharged due to deafness. Nothing else has been found about Maria. This is the only sibling of the 1850 census bunch that I don't have corroborating information to actually tie her to the others.

Martha Jessee (1842 – 1883)

Martha first appears in the 1850 US Census in Knox, Tennessee, age 13. I found in the 1880 census a Martha Ann Jessee Keicher in Anderson, Indiana, b. 4 Mar 1842 in Tennessee, d. 3 Sep 1883 in Madison Co, Indiana, both parents born VA. I first thought that this Martha is probably the child of Samuel and Margaret Porter Jessee from Boone County, Indiana. In the 1850 census they have an 18 year old daughter Martha. The reason that I didn't drop her from consideration is that Martha Ann Jessee Keicher declared in the 1880 census that she was born in Tennessee and both parents born in Virginia. I am glad that I didn't drop her.

When taking what I thought was to be a final walk through all of the family pictures, I came across the photo of a young man in his 20s that I had previously passed over because I didn't recognize the surname. On the back in ink was the following, "Benton G. Keicher, Anderson, Ind. Aug. 24, 1900. To Mayme E. Weddle." Mayme is Mary Elnora Weddle, daughter of Rebecca Jessee Weddle and sister of my grandmother, Myrtle Rebecca Weddle Stringe. Looking closely I also found written in pencil by either my grandmother or my g-aunt Mayme, the word "cousin." With further research I learned that he was the son of Joseph and Martha Ann Jessee Keicher. Learning this I immediately concluded that Martha Ann Jessee had to be the sister of Rebecca Jessee Weddle... and Sarah, Maria, Samuel, and John Jessee. Martha's family settled in Richland township, Madison County, Indiana, just north of Anderson, Indiana and, like many others, were a farming family. They raised at least eleven children.

Up until I re-discovered that photo of Benton Keicher I had pretty much given up on finding Martha. I actually had concluded that she had died at some time after the 1850 census. It was rather a thrill to find her!

Samuel Jessee (1847 – 1892)

Samuel was born in Knox County, Tennessee. The 1850 census (dtd 27 Nov 1850) indicates that he was age 9 which implies he was born about 1841. Other later sources indicate that he was born as late as 1848 which is what is shown on his tombstone (Find-a-Grave #19694790). His sister, Rebecca, was born 31 Oct 1848, so I doubt that Samuel was born later than sometime in 1847. Do the math. I know that ages in the census enumerations can sometimes be, at best, estimates, but I think 1841 is not realistic. Samuel married Julia O'Herron on 22 Aug 1870 in Marion County, Indiana. The 1880 Federal Census has Samuel, age 33, b. about 1847, living in Indianapolis, Marion, Indiana; both Samuel and his parents born in Virginia, and his occupation is a "R.R. Engineer." Included with him in the 1880 census are his wife, Julia, age 33; Nellie, age 10, Nannie, age 7 and Charlie, age 1. Charlie died on 25 June 1881 at about 2 years of age. Death Certificate of Samuel's son David A Jessee says he (Samuel) was born in Tennessee.

No 1890 census information is available, but Samuel and Julia did have two(2) other children during that time; David A.(Augusta, Augustus, Augustine, ??) Jessee born on 16 June 1883 and Mary Julia Jessee born 03 Aug 1886.

Julia O'Herron Jessee died on 18 March 1891. I have a funeral memorial card indicating "Mrs. Samuel Jessee Died Mar. 18, 1891." Samuel Jessee died about a year later on 6 March 1892 in Indianapolis according to the state death record. Both are buried in Saint Joseph Cemetery (now known as Woodlawn Cemetery), in Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana, along with their son Charlie.

In the 1900 census, their children, Nellie (26), Nannie (25), David (16) and Mary (13) are under the guardianship of Mrs. Margaret Simpson living in Indianapolis. I believe that Margaret Simpson is the sister of Julia O'Herron Jesse which would explain why she was guardian of the children after Samuel died in 1892. The father's birthplace is listed as Tennessee for all four of the children. Mary is no longer a mystery. She is a child of Samuel and Julia. Her Indiana death certificate gives her name as Mary Julia Jessee Fox, born 3 Aug 1886, died 31 July 1936 in Indianapolis. Her father is listed as Samuel Jessee and mother as Julia O'Herron. Her husband was William Fox. She is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. She was with the family when Samuel died in 1892 and her name is included by their guardian in an acknowledgement of payment of an insurance benefit for their deceased father.

John Jessee (1846 – 1906)

John was born about 1843 in Knox, Tennessee, per the 1850 census. His tombstone says "1846 – 1906." His death certificate says he was born 15 April 1846 in Tennessee. The 1900 Census says he was born Aug 1846. On 31 October 1869 he married Anna A. Danver in Bartholomew County, Indiana. Both the 1870 and 1880 Federal census have them living in Columbus, Bartholomew County, Indiana. Both indicate that John was born in Tennessee and is now working on the RR. The 1880 census shows the following children: Harry, age 6; Hattie, age 4; and Frankie, age 2. The 1880 census also indicates that his mother and father were born in Tennessee.



John Jessee Uncle

The 1900 Federal Census has the family in Lawrence, Marion, Indiana. His record says he was born in Indiana and his parents were both born in Virginia. The records for the three children, Harry, Hattie, and Frank, all say that their father was born in Tennessee.

John Jessee died on 14 June 1906 at age 60 In Indianapolis, Marion, Indiana. His death certificate states his father is Jacob Jessee, born "unknown," and his mother is Nancie (sic) Childs, born Tennessee. The Informant is his wife Anna Jessee. John is buried in Columbus City Cemetery, Columbus, Bartholomew, Indiana. Find-a-Grave Memorial Number is 51311273. The 1910 Census shows John's widow, Anna A. Jessee, in Indianapolis, Marion, Indiana, age 63. Her children Harry Jessee and Hattie Jessee are living with her. Harry and Hattie's records both state that their father was born in Tennessee.

I have a photograph of a man and on the back of the photo is written "John Jessee Uncle." Since the only John that could fit that description is the son of Jacob and Nancy and brother of Rebecca, I am declaring that this is a picture of John Jessee, who is father of Harry, Hattie, and Frankie Jessee.

John Jessee's name appears in different places as John, John H, John M, and John W. I have not seen anywhere what name those initials might stand for so I am using just John.

Rebecca Jessee (1848 – 1920)

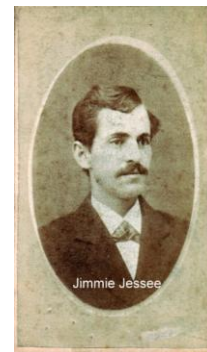
Rebecca Jessee was born in Knox, Tennessee about 1849 and is Nancy's youngest child in the 1850 census. Later records show her birthday to be 31 October 1848. She married James Walling Weddle on 29 Jan 1868 in Bartholomew County, Indiana. In the 1870 Federal census they lived in Columbus, Bartholomew, Indiana with their first child, Ida Weddle, age 1. This census record says Rebecca was born in Tennessee. The 1880 census has them in New Albany, Floyd, Indiana with 4 more children. It says she was born in Virginia as were both of her parents. The 1900 census has them in New Albany with 5 children still at home including my grandmother Myrtle Rebecca Weddle. It says Rebecca was born in Tennessee as were both parents. The 1910 Federal census had them living on East 11th St. in New Albany with 3 adult children living with them. It shows her being born in Tennessee as were both parents. The 1920 census has them still on E 11th Street in New Albany but with only 2 adult children living with them. It shows her birthplace as Tennessee as well as both of her parents. Rebecca died on 12 January 1920 in New Albany, Floyd County, Indiana, and is buried in Fairview Cemetery in New Albany, Indiana. Her Indiana Death Certificate says she was born in Tennessee and her father John Jessee and mother Nancy Childs were born in Tennessee. The Informant was her daughter, Jessee Blanche Weddle.

In various places and records, Rebecca is referred to as Rebecca Edna Jessee. Also, on the back of one photo of Rebecca, my mother wrote "Nancy Rebecca Jessee Weddle" and the Application for Marriage License, Floyd County, Indiana, for my Grandmother (Myrtle Rebecca Weddle) gives her mother's maiden name as Nancy R. Jessee from Knox County, Tennessee. However, since I have no source to verify either, I will continue to just call her Rebecca Jessee Weddle.

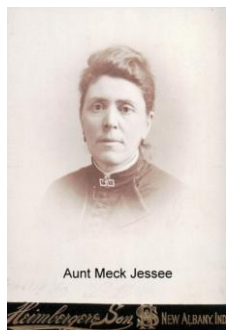
Unsolved Mysteries

James “Jimmie” Jessee [See ADDENDUM]

I have a photograph of a young man about 20 to 30 years old with the name “Jimmie Jessee” written on the back. In the 1870 census there is a James Jessee, age 13, living with Nancy Jessee and her two (2) grandchildren Henry and Mabel “Bell” Sullivan in Columbus, Indiana. James’ age in this census implies that he was born about 1857. Based on the information I have found, neither of Nancy’s sons (Samuel and John) had a child named James. Neither Samuel nor John married until at least ten years after James was born. He is not the son of Nancy. I suppose it is possible that he is the grandson of Boone County Samuel who is a brother of Jacob. It remains a mystery.



Aunt Meck Jessee



I have a photograph taken by Heimberger & Son in New Albany of a lady probably in her late 20s or 30s and on the back, clearly written in pencil is “Aunt Meck Jessee” in the same hand writing as on the back of the photo of Jimmie Jessee and the picture of John Jessee mentioned above. The only Jessee that I know of that settled in New Albany was Rebecca Jessee Weddle and her family. Elsewhere, there is photograph of one of the Foster children that clearly says “For Aunt Beck” on the back, which I interpret to be from a niece of Rebecca Jessee Weddle. I really don’t know who this is.

ADDENDUM: My Jessee Clan from Tennessee

[17 July 2017]

One of the “**Unsolved Mysteries**” may have been solved. I think I have found James “Jimmie” Jessee. I now believe that he is a 1st cousin, 1 generation removed, of Nancy Childs Jessee’s husband Jacob Jessee who died in 1848 in Tennessee.

A couple months ago I found a “James Jesse” in an 1860 US Census listing but did not pursue it at that time... perhaps because the location was in Muncie, Delaware Co, Indiana, and I had not previously noticed any connection to Muncie. This enumeration was dated 31 July 1860. There is a family listed with Elizabeth Jesse, age 32, as the first listing (Head of Household?) followed by five (5) children; Maria (10), Albert S. (8), Franklin (6), John (3), and James (1). Everyone is born in Virginia except for James who was born in Indiana. Now I must research Elizabeth.

I found Elizabeth in the 1850 Census at age 23, married within the year to John Jessee. Further research indicates that she is John’s third wife. He originally married Mary Gose (b: 14 Apr 1803 in Russell Co. VA) on 22 May 1823 in Russell Co, Va; after she died he then in 1826 married Mary Jane Hanson (b: 14 Jan 1797 in Hansonville, Russell Co, VA); after she died, he married in 1848 Elizabeth Munsey (b: abt 1827 in Russell Co, VA), and they produced the children mentioned previously. The Jessee Genealogy Service Rootsweb database says that this John Jessee died on 04 Dec 1856 in Russell Co., VA, which would explain why he is not present in the 1860 Census in Muncie, Delaware, Indiana with the rest of his family. Over his lifetime, he married three times and produced 12 children, the youngest being James Jessee, born about 1857.

Now... who was John Jessee and is he connected to our Jessee line? John was the son of Archer Jessee (b: 08 Aug 1776 in Cobbs Creek, Caswell, NC) and Nancy Browning (b: 27 Mar 1781 in Russell Co, VA). Archer Jessee is the son of John Jessee, Sr., and Frances “Frankie” Lee (Lea) and was the brother of David Jessee, the father of our Jacob Jessee. With all this information plus the magic of Family Tree Maker relationship calculator, I have determined that the James Jessee in the 1870 census living with Nancy Jessee is the 1st Cousin, 1 generation removed, of Nancy’s deceased husband, Jacob Jessee. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to learn more about Jimmie subsequent to the 1870 Census.

With this knowledge I have at least some understanding of how Jimmie fits in my Jessee family. However, I have no explanation as to why he was living with Nancy Jessee in Columbus, Bartholomew, Indiana during the 1870 Census. This provides further reinforcement to the idea that this work is never done as there is always something else to look for!

Ken Wagner
2nd Cousin, 3x Removed, of James “Jimmie” Jessee
Portsmouth, RI