

Jessee Family Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 1 January 1993

Dear Cousin,

This letter represents the second effort to establish a *Jessee Family Newsletter*, a Jessee family genealogist's mailing list and information exchange. In the first newsletter, I provided information about my long-time interest and work on the family genealogy. I am volunteering to maintain a central mailing list, and to facilitate the exchange of information between us to the extent my time and means will allow. I'll admit that I intended to have two issues last year, but the year and the response to the first newsletter were sufficiently sobering, that I may be content with only an annual issue.

I am again providing the newsletter to all of you on the enclosed mailing list. Most of you responded sometime during the year to the first newsletter. For that I thank you. I really look forward to your response, I enjoy your letters and appreciate the questions and information provided. I have indeed incorporated any and all genealogy information provided to me this year into my Jessee Family Data Base and continue to add Jessees as I get more information. I have quite complete information on several of your families, and I am quite willing to key in more data or print charts for you.

Some of you I know, have met or have corresponded with previous to this effort. Some of you I have learned about from others or from copies of your letters, inquiries, or work shared with me by others. I am asking all of you to continue to verify your interest by responding to this newsletter, and to help me identify additional Jessee Family Genealogists. If you are not interested, please give this newsletter to a member of your family that may be. If I do not hear from you this time, I will remove you from the mailing list.

Please feel free to correct any information I may have in error or ideas wrongheaded. I have seldom met a Jessee without a definite opinion nor afraid to share it. Provide me additional names, addresses and telephone numbers of family members who may be specifically interested in this effort. I am not looking for a huge list, not every family member, just serious genealogists who are willing to exchange Jessee family information and represent their own branch of the Jessee clan or their area of the country.

I would appreciate your help in defraying the cost of printing and postage. I am planning to include copies of various source documents of mutual interest and importance, and genealogies of our members as those are further developed. I will of course look for means to condense this material to keep copying costs within bounds, but it still exceeds \$.05 per page, and postage is as you see. I will take responsibility for these costs up front, but wouldn't mind your help with them when and where

appropriate.

I am organizing our mailing list by the original 15 family lines descended from John Jessee. I would like to trace all the 15 family descendants of John Jessee and Frances Lea, and organize that information into a single data base. I do my own work with an IBM compatible computer and *Personal Ancestry File*, PAF software developed by the Mormon Church. I am able to both provide and receive genealogy information using the GEDCOM data protocol on IBM or Mac diskettes and by modem too. If you have not yet bought a computer and software, the cheapest and probably best way to begin would be with the PAF and a cheap IBM clone computer. I would be willing to help you get established.

In the last issue I enclosed a report of my efforts at developing the Jessee family data base. I entered all the information that I have regarding the first three generations and more of the original John Jessee's family. With that material and your continuing effort to provide me individual genealogies, I am able to trace several of these families to modern day. This is admittedly a monumental chore; I am giving myself the rest of my life to accomplish it, and may he live so long!

I propose some lines of research in which I think we all have common interest and which may give our exchange of information structure and direction.

1. When did the Jessee Family arrive in America? There is much to suggest that the Jesse(e)s were in this country for several generations before our John Jessee (1750-1815), suggesting that there may be several Jesse(e) families. I cite the Maryland Early Settlers records, where Thomas Jessee is shown to have "transported" in 1671; the Maryland Calendar of Wills where a John Jesse is listed as a witness in 1704; references to a Wm. Jesse, born in 1736 in King and Queen County, VA; and Kentucky Ancestors reference to the Bible of John B. Jesse where the birth of John B. Jesse is June 10, 1783 in Essex County, VA. This year, Margaret Jessee Young reports that there is a Jane Jessee in the 1790 Census (head of household, 5 whites, Middlesex Co., VA). This suggests that there was at least a John B., Jane, and a William Jesse that were contemporaries of our John Jessee. All of these leads need exploration.

2. Can we extend the lineage of John Jessee and Frances Lea? I have speculated that John Jessee's father may have been Henry Jessee. I based this on the Will of Henry Jessee recorded in Caswell County, NC in 1781 in which John Jessee and Frankie Jessee are shown as witnesses. Henry could have been a father or brother, uncle or cousin.

There appeared to be a growing consensus that Frances (Frankie) Lea spelled her name LEA. This could tie her into the Lea family of Caswell County, NC, rather than the Robert E. Lee family of Virginia. This Caswell Co. Lea family may also be the progenitors of *Roots* author Alex Haley too. However, the research of Janice Rodby and Fay Osborne into the NC archives could not link our Frankie Lea to the Caswell County Lea Family. Rather it suggests she may have come from a Virginia Lea or Lee family, of which there are several branches long established by 1750. There may be more to learn from research into both Virginia Lea and Lee families to find our Frankie.

3. When and why did the spelling of the name change from Jesse to Jessee? I have speculated that it might have to do somehow with the spelling of Tennessee, a name which would have been prominent at the time of John Jessee. But then who is Jessee Vermillion?

July 12, 1992

The 1992 Report

The Jessee Family newsmakers this year are our cousins Janice Rodby and Faynola Osborn. They spent a week last May researching the North Carolina archives for any and all information to be found on John Jessee, Frankie Lea and other related families. On a subsequent visit to Chico to visit her daughter and grandchildren, Janice provided me her copy of researched materials and ask me to help verify her findings. They felt very discouraged and disappointed in not being able to find a link for our Frankie Lea to the Caswell County Leas. However, I think they did us all a great service by finding new lines of research to follow, and helping several of us avoid wasted hours in the North Carolina archives.

I am providing this year a descendants chart for Jessee Vermillion (abt 1725-1785). He is a progenitor of several branches of the Jessee Clan and well illustrates the intermarriage between the Jessee, Vermillion and Browning Families. In the following letters (some edited), I offer a summary of Janice and Fay's work and provide additional information from other newsletter correspondents. These letters well illustrate why it is so much fun to work and correspond with such nice people as you.

James Wilson (Jim) Jessee

Dear Janice

Thank you so much for sharing all this material with me. I am happy to have the opportunity to study it. I have reviewed it carefully several times now, and I think you are right about the Leas of Caswell County, NC, as detailed in these records; this is not Frankie Lea's immediate family. I could not make any of these families fit with what we know about her. However, there are many clues here about possible Virginia roots for the Leas, which may yet uncover Frankie's family line. I am also persuaded that she could just as well have spelled her name Lee as Lea, so I think this material leaves that consideration wide open too. I found the study of this Lea Family of Caswell County, N.C., to be beneficial nevertheless, but I certainly can understand your dismay after finding, reading and copying so many documents and coming up with nothing positive on Frankie.

I am very happy to have a transcription of the original Jessee Family Deed which outlines all of John Jessee's family. I am pleased that you shared with me the Browning and Vermillion information too, as these families are so intermarried with the Jessees over several generations. I would like to print this material in the next newsletter.

In my research, I have recently run across a reference to a Archibald Jessee, who in 1848 was a

lieutenant under Captain John C. Fremont during the war to gain California's independence from Mexico. So there were Jessees in California from the earliest days, and long preceding my own family which came here from Illinois in 1908.

Jim

Editor's Note: If anyone knows more about this Archibald Jessee and where he fits into the family, please write.....

Editor's Note:

I attempted to trace both references to Jessee families provided by Faynola in her correspondence and the obituary, and although all the intermarriage surnames and given names would indicate they are closely related, I could not make a direct connection to my data files. There must be a generation or two missing between these families and the original John Jessee and Frankie Lea. Any help in completing these lines would be appreciated.

The comments and inquiries in these letters about the collateral families with which the Jessees have intermarried are also welcome grist for the newsletter mill. You keep on commenting and inquiring and I'll keep on printing.

Jim