

Jessee Family Newsletter

Number 7 August 1995

Dear Cousin,

This work has proven to me that we are all cousins; we just need to discover how. Interest in the newsletter is steadily growing. I ask you to forgive the late date on this Newsletter, it has been a very busy year. In the January 1995 Newsletter, I posed several inquiries, puzzles, and problems. In response to that Newsletter, I have received a tremendous amount of new information and references, some of which I will share in this newsletter as follow-ups, and the rest in subsequent newsletters.

I thank all of you for your help and generosity with sharing copies of materials and other information. I continue to receive many well wishes and some money to help me do these mailings, but your continued support is needed.

I have visited Russell County three times in 25 years, each time for only one or two days. This only whetted my appetite for exploring, even living in that beautiful country. My many years of research into the family history of Russell County make me feel at home there. I research my immediate ancestors: the Bickley, Armstrong, Smyth/ Smith, Porter, Duncan, Richman/Richmond, and Barrick families; and other families who have intermarried with the Jessees and come from this area of the country including: the Banner, Browning, Burk(e), Counts, Fuller, Gose, Kiser, Stone, and Vermillion families. I have an abiding interest in Russell County.

I am traveling to Russell Co. the first week of October 1995. I will stay in Lebanon and hope to make the Russell County Library my research base camp. I hope to visit the Jessee Cemetery, the site of John and Frankey's proposed memorial, now on the Jimmy Herndon Farm near Mill Creek in Reeds Valley. I would appreciate any specific leads for other Jessee sites to visit, research questions or leads, and would welcome meeting any of you with whom I have corresponded. If you would like to meet or help me, please let me know how we may rendezvous there.

This Newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is to facilitate the exchange of information and significant documents relative to the genealogy of the Jessee and related families whose roots may be found in Southwest Virginia. I will edit , print and mail this newsletter, as well as enter all genealogy information provided me into a Jessee Family Data Base. Upon request, I will share the mailing list, charts, or data files with you, at reasonable compensation for costs. The Newsletter is sustained by donations.

Many Jessees in America are descended from

John Jessee (1750-1815), and Frankey Lea (1752/61-1836)

of Cobb's Creek, Caswell County, North Carolina (possibly Mecklenburg Co., VA before that) and Carr's Creek (today Mill Creek) in Reed's Valley, Russell County, Virginia. All of us living at this time who are their descendants are about fifth or sixth cousins, or even closer kin. Other Jessee families in America are most likely more distant cousins, with

whom we share the desire to find our common ancestors.

I would like to discover and record all of the descendants of the 15 children of John Jessee and Frankey Lea, and assist other Jesse and Jessee family members in America. This is admittedly a monumental and sometimes costly chore. I am giving myself the rest of my life to accomplish it, and may he live so long! The fun is in the learning and the friendships I develop along the way. I am rewarded all the time by the visits, conversations, and correspondence I have with you.

I am asking, if you haven't done so already, to verify your continuing interest by responding to this newsletter with responses to questions, your own contributing materials, and, of course, information about your own branch of the family. If you are not interested or do not have the time, please make copies or give this newsletter to someone who does.

Please feel free to correct anything I may have wrong. My goal is an accurate, well documented and supported data base to give to our posterity. Please provide me additional names and addresses of others who may be specifically interested in this effort. I am looking for those who are willing to help exchange information and/or represent their branch of the family or area of the country, not every Jessee.

I do most of my work with *Personal Ancestry File* on a DOS computer. I can provide and receive genealogy information using the GEDCOM format on IBM or Mac diskettes and by electronic mail via Internet. I am available on Internet and welcome correspondence via this medium at **JJESSEE@OAVAX.CSUCHICO.EDU**

I need and very much appreciate your donations in defraying the considerable cost of research, printing and postage of this Newsletter and the other materials I send out. \$10 a year for two editions will sustain the newsletter; more will help support the effort. I do not want to exclude anyone with real interest who can't afford to contribute at this level. Please share what you can. Those who have been especially generous are helping those who can't. Please see the annual Thank You Honors List which appears in the January issue.

James Wilson "Jim " Jessee

John Jessee Research

The John Jessee research heroes of this newsletter are Tom Rudder of Carmichael, CA and Dean Jessee of Salt Lake City, UT. Tom, Dean and I have been on the trail of some exciting new information about a John Jessee who lived in Mecklenburg Co., VA and then "removed himself from the county" only a few years before we have evidence of our John Jessee in Caswell Co. NC, about 40 miles away. Tom and Shirley Rudder found and shared with Dean and me an article in *The Virginia Genealogist*, Vol. 15, "**British Mercantile Claims 1775-1803**" with significant information and a vital new research lead for all of us.

We find on pgs. 282 and 290, John Jessee listed as owing 29.9.3 pounds, 1 Sept. 1772, to the Dinwiddie, Crawford and Company Store in Mecklenburg, Co. VA, indicating he "never was able" and "Removed from this county before the peace, insolvent." Mecklenburg is about 40 miles north of Caswell Co., NC. Tom believes this was very likely our John Jessee, who would have moved from Mecklenburg after 1772, and is next recorded in Caswell Co. in 1777, Richmond District Tax Roll. Tom has compiled a very detailed record of John Jessee on the various public land or tax records in Caswell and Russell Co. from 1777 through 1800, which I have included as an attachment to this newsletter. Tom discovered some additional leads regarding sources for Mecklenburg Co., VA, and we enlisted Dean's help at the Family History Library. Attached is some of Dean Jessee's correspondence including those references.

Dean discovered additional evidence of a John Jesse, John Jesse Jr., and John Jessee (who may all be the same) in

Mecklenburg County, Virginia Deeds, 1765-1771. John signs as a witness on four documents for land in Mecklenburg and St. James Parish in 1770 and 1771 . He thrice signs his name with one "e", and once with two "ees". Dean states, "The closeness of the dates in the two sources (the deeds and *The Virginia Genealogist*) is good evidence that they refer to the same John Jessee. And the reference to John Jr. in the deeds strengthens that possibility that it is our John." Dean provided copies of both the deed book references and copies of the documents with the signatures.

I owe Dean special thanks for also sharing with me copies of pages from a Jessee Family Bible, which his parents had copied many years ago. At that time the Bible was in the possession of Mrs. Ruth Jessee of Abingdon, Virginia who may have given it to Carl Jefferson Jessee. Dean believe she may now be dead, and hopes it is in the hands of her heirs. This Bible, or at least these copies (of copies) are very difficult to read, but some text is very clear. Written on the front page is "Born 1750 John Jessee his book". Dean believes this could be in John's own handwriting. And yes he does sign it with two "ees". "Archibald Jessee his testament" also appears on the front pages although I don't know who this is.

This Bible was passed down for many generations, and appears to have passed through the hands of John Jessee Jr. and Joseph Jessee, my own line. It contains the birth, marriage and death records of these two families, and has given me the first definitive information on some of these children and their descendants, where I only had names and guesses at birthdates before. It is a special treasure for my line of Jessees, and if it establishes John Jessees birth as 1750, it is valuable for the whole family. I wish we knew where this Bible is today to get better copies with today's technology, and I hope this article helps us find it.

Betty Yates asks: "Concerning the residence of John Jessee Sr.--Are people concluding that Elihu K. Counts house was the actual residence of John? Then to whose residence does one give the log house that formerly sat in the hollow behind the Counts house? Also, another thing that I have not personally been satisfied with--My father, Barclay Campbell (1905-1989) told me that the old log house that sat above the road over the hill from the Counts house (as you go toward Cleveland) was always referred to as the 'Old John Jessee house.' Do you know of another John Jessee who lived in that house?"

Frankey Lea Research

In the last two newsletters, I asked, *Will the Real Frankey Lea Please Stand Up*, then had to follow that with *Will Some of You Frankey Leas Please Sit Down?* I have met new researchers and been privileged to receive extensive documentation, thanks to the generosity of Col. Howard G. Jessee and others. I received a great deal of additional information on the Lea and Lee Families, read and studied all of it, but feel no closer to the answer.

There are at least seven "Frankey" Leas/Lees identified in the research, family lore, or speculation, and it is still possible that she is none of the above. Most of these were discussed more completely in the last two newsletters.

Your choices are:

1. Frances "Frankie" Lee, (b. 1752)

Some unknown relation of Robert E. Lee or other Virginia Lees. If true, we may also be descendants of Pochahontas

2. Frances "Frankey" Lea (b. 1755)

da. of John Lea of Country Line Creek and Winneyfred. This would be the

royal families of Europe connection.

3. Francis Lea (b. after 1752)

da. of Henry Lea

and Elizabeth Lea of Caswell Co., NC

4. Frankey Lea (b. after 1752)

da. of James Lea of Cobb's Creek

and Elizabeth Lea.

5. Frances "Frank" Lea (b. 12/ 2/ 1761)

da. of George Lea and Lucy Tolbert.

She would have been a mighty young mother.

6. Frankey Lea, (b. abt 1752)

unknown da. of William Lea of Cobb's Creek

and an assumed Mary (Archer?). Pure speculation.

7. Frances "Frankie" Lee (b. aft 1750)

da. of Richard Lee, b. 1725 and

Lillie, b. 1727, of Edgecombe Co., NC.

The first four choices are doubtful, based on the information, my own opinion and that of others. #2 is the most widely reported choice and much adhered to by several, but the evidence does not support it at this time. #3 and #4 may be the same person. I have seen nothing to disprove #5, and therefore it remains an option. #6 is the speculation of Tom Rudder and, I believe, deserves serious investigation (See attached materials).

The latest information comes from Harlan Stanley of Lexington, KY, who identifies a more specific #7, Frances Lee, daughter of a Richard and Lillie Lee of Edgecombe Co., NC. The county name and the specific birthdates for Richard and Lillie are new information for me that also deserves investigation.

The new leads regarding the fact that John Jessee may have lived in Mecklenburg County, VA leads us to speculate that Frankey was a daughter of a Virginia Lea or Lee family who may have lived in Mecklenburg Co. It appears there were many with daughters with that ever popular name, Frances, Frankey, and Frankie, so the "game is still afoot."

I put a lot of store in the traditions of naming children after close kin and other loved ones. These generations in particular deliberately named their children after their ancestors, and often honored the mother's family with first names. Many such first names exist in the Jessee, Lea and related families, such as Archer, Armstrong, Fleming, Browning, Fuller, Herndon, Wilson, Lea and Jessee too. The fact that neither names Richard or Lillie appear in any of John and Frankey's children or grandchildren casts doubt for me of a Richard or a Lillie being in their pedigree. I would look for a Henry, John, Archer, William, David, Francis, James or a George Lea for a brother, father, grandfather, or uncle, and a Boedicea, Mary, Frances, Sarah, Elizabeth or Rebecca for a sister, mother, grandmother, or aunt of our John Jessee and Frankey Lea. Please see the list of the first three generations of the John and Frankey Jessee Family names provided by Tom Rudder.

Retired Colonel and former Chaplain Ben L. Rose has made a most significant contribution to the Lea and Jessee families with the publication of his latest book, *Lea Families in Caswell and Person Counties, North Carolina, and Virginia Before 1800*. I admire the thoroughness of his research and the care he takes with documentation. He has included a chapter "Which Frankey Lea married John Jessee" which is the most comprehensive assembly of the research on this question now available. This is an interesting and valuable book for both Lea and Jessee Family researchers. You may order by writing to Ben L. Rose, 1221 Rennie Ave., Richmond, VA 23227. Include a check for \$8.50 per copy, postpaid.

I invite your continued research, analysis, critique, and correction of the Lea Family information. We still have much to do to establish Who is our Frankey Lea?

John Jessee and Frankey Lea Memorial

Part of the reason for the delay of this Newsletter was my hope that if I waited a little longer we could have more positive news. We were pleased to receive the help of Betty Yates, in Russell County, who made several inquiries for us this spring, including getting a quotation for a modest memorial with a bronze plaque, and she looked into the cost and work that would need to be done to clear the site and to place a fence around the cemetery. We are now estimating that the cost of the memorial stone and a plaque would be about \$2500 or less installed on the site by Phillip Ketron of Lebanon, VA. Fencing and any other arrangements would be an additional expense. Betty got as far as she could before getting specific permission from the current owner to proceed. She has asked me to get that permission.

I have written to Mr. Jimmy Herndon, the current owner of the former John Jessee farm where we wish to place the memorial, to request his permission to do so. As of this time, I have had no response. We need help from individuals in Russell County, or others who may know Mr. Herndon, to encourage him to respond positively to our request.

Mr. Herndon is rightfully concerned about liability for visitors to this memorial, who would have to cross his property. In this litigious society, who can blame him? Through the wonderful power of the Internet, including correspondence with a member of the Virginia Court of Appeals, I have learned that many states have laws that permit visitors to cemeteries on private land, but they "hold harmless" the landowner for any liability and assure the landowner he can collect for any damages to his property, crops, or animals caused by such visitors. Virginia apparently does not have such laws, although Virginia law prohibits destruction of such cemeteries, you still need permission from the land owner to visit them. Perhaps some of you can help establish a law in Virginia that would help us and others in the same situation get appropriate access and protect the land owners too.

In the meantime, we have established an account at Bank of America in Sacramento, CA dedicated to establishing a John Jessee and Frankey Lea Memorial at the site of their burial in Reeds Valley. Tom and I are the first trustees of this account, and will add others as they join us. Any contribution you designate for this fund will be deposited in this account and a full accounting made of all expenditures when appropriate. We will take no money for administration.

Howard Jessee of Hondo, Texas has agreed to look into designation of this site with an appropriate marker by the Sons of the American Revolution.

Some have expressed continued concern about the site. If anyone has evidence, opinion, or just a family story to share to help us confirm or refute this site, please let us know. Tom Rudder has recorded some 18 or more Jessee Family cemeteries in Russell County on a map provided in the May 1994 Newsletter, along with other evidence about this burial location. The last two newsletters included several testimonials as to the location of this grave, and we feel certain we have the right location. It is definitely on the site of the original John Jessee farm on Carr's now Mill Creek in Reeds Valley. Even if we cannot locate the exact grave, this is meant to be a memorial to John and Frankey and their descendants in Russell County, not necessarily a grave marker. I propose the following wording for this memorial and welcome your comments

JOHN JESSEE 1750-1816
FRANKEY LEA JESSEE 1752-1836

A Soldier of the American Revolution and Pioneer Russell County Family.

They moved from Caswell Co., NC to establish this farm about 1790. They, their son George Lea, and other descendants are buried here. This memorial is established by the descendants of their 15 children:

[Here we will list the names of their 15 children and their husbands or wives similar to what I have shown in the January Newsletter]

Jesse(e) Families in America and The World

I once believed that all of the Jessees in America, certainly in Russell County, were descended from John Jessee and Frankey Lea. My research and correspondence have proven otherwise. There are many Jesse and Jessee families in America, even in Russell County, who are not descendants of John and Frankey Jessee. There are Jesse families in England, France, and Germany, and perhaps Poland and Moravia, if not more countries in the world. There are "Jesse" families who are descended from John and Frankey, as well as Canadian "Jessee" descendants. There are "Jessee" families who are not descended from John and Frankey. I believe we are all related through common ancestors. I hope this newsletter will inspire the research we all need to discover the missing links. I am providing here, as an ongoing feature, information I have regarding other Jesse and Jessee Families in America and the world.

1. THE DESCENDANTS OF "OLD" PHILLIP AND GABRIEL JESSEE OF RUSSELL CO.

Thanks to new correspondence with Gabriel Jessee descendant, Jim Dye (7125 Ridge Trail, Fort Worth, TX 76133), who is descended from two of Gabriel's children, Lethie Jessee who married Gillespie Smith, and Sally F. Jessee who was the second wife of Alexander Duncan, I have learned more about this family and perhaps about the origins of "Old Phillip" Jessee, who researchers have oft encountered in census and cemetery records and marveled at his advanced age of 108 in the 1850 Census. Gabriel Jessee is believed to be his son and many of his descendants remained in Russell Co. in the Honaker area. They have further intermarried with the same Russell Co. families as did our John Jessees, perhaps even with John Jessee's own descendants. See "Old Phillip's Descendants Chart" in Newsletter 6. Those with specific interest can request refreshed charts or updated GEDCOM files.

Gabriel Jessee family lore indicates that Phillip lived to be at least 116, was believed to be a brother of our John and perhaps Henry Jessee too. They believe there is a Jessee family Bible somewhere that proves this. Irene agrees to keep on the lookout for that item, as it would be an important document for all of us.

Tom Rudder has provided important new information about Old Phillip and questions both his reported advanced age and paternity. Tom is our resident "Hum Bug", and his standards of research, requirement for proof, and incisive analysis are excellent, if not demanding. You would think he is from Missouri, not Russell Co., with his Show Me approach. He and his wife Shirley are excellent researchers, and their constant work is always providing new tidbits of information. Please see his letter and materials attached.

2. OTHER JESSEE TRACKS AND TRAILS

The 1830 Russell Co. Census information (attached) that Tom Rudder provides in regard to Gabriel, Phillip, and Frances, also lists a Thomas Jessee as head of household with 19 Free Colored. I would welcome an explanation of that entry. Is

this a large black Jessee family?

I continue to discover more information about other families not descended from John and Frankey, and I will discuss more about these Jesse and Jessee families in future newsletters.

Missing Links

While I have had great success in linking many Jessee family members who have called, written or even Emailed me questions about their heritage, I have not been able to do so for all. In the January Newsletter the following subscribers asked for our help in establishing the missing links to show how they are related to the Jessee family. In this newsletter I will provide the follow-up to these inquiries. I will provide new missing link inquiries in future newsletters.

1) Robin Kimzey and Mitchel Wade Jessee want to know how they are related to the Jessees of Russell Co. Mitch's Jessee pedigree is as follows. He is the son of Jimey Jack Jessee, who is son of Woodrow Wilson Jessee, son of William Albert Jessee, son of a Miss Jessee, who never married William's father, believed to be a Mr. Smith. They believe these roots go back to Russell Co. and all those names are certainly Jessee family names. In essence, we are looking for a Jessee daughter born about 1851, who had a son William Albert Jessee.

The attached letter to Robin, Mitch, and our research hero, Sandra Hall, indicates what we have found so far. I still await a response from Robin and Mitch.

2) James Sherman III wants to know how Archer Catron Jessee is related to the Jessees?

Jim Sherman provided very interesting information on his gr-gr-gr-grandfather Archer Catron Jessee. He was b. December 25, 1821 in Russell Co. He moved to Missouri with his parents, and remained with them until 1842, when he married in Atchison Co., MO, Mary Harbin, a native of Tennessee. A. C. Jessee farmed in Missouri until 1846, when he and his wife joined a party going to California. First settling at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento, CA, he soon enlisted under John C. Fremont as a first lieutenant, took part in the battle on the Salinas plains and a skirmish at San Fernando. He was a member of the Bear Flag Party and served through the Mexican War, discharged in 1847. He figured prominently in the early history of the State.

Archer Catron is of the generation which would make him a possible grandson of John and Frankey Jessee. Their only son who moved from Virginia was Lea Jessee who married Barbara Gose and moved to Missouri about 1840. Lea Jessee's sister, Frances, who married William Stone also moved to Missouri about this time, as did many Russell Co. families. I previously did not show an Archer Catron as one of Lea's children, but it is very possible by virtue of his birthdate; he fits comfortably between their known children. Archer is clearly a family name and the mother of Barbara Gose is named Barbara Ketron or Catron. Sandra Hall provides evidence that Lea Gose had a son, Archer, according to Jackson Co. MO probate records for Lee, Bk. G, 1st Sec.:345, p. 163, Independence MO Courthouse. This information has been provided to James Sherman. I would appreciate getting additional documentation on all this from whomever is willing to provide me copies of appropriate records and materials.

3) Alan Selig asked how these Jessees are related?

S. Jessee (female, age 29) listed in 1875 Kansas census for Nemaha County. Information says she migrated there between 1869 and 1871 apparently from Virginia.

Robert Jessee, Buchanan County, Mo. County Judge 1850-52 and a ferry operator 1855.

A benefactor, who wishes to remain anonymous, provides specific information and reports that "S. Jessee who was 29 in the 1875 census of Nemaha Co., KS was probably Sabrina Buckles Jessee, b. 1845, Russell Co. VA, wife of David Lee Jessee," son of Vincent Jessee of the Archer Jessee line. They further indicate that "Robert Jessee of Buchanan Co., MO was b. 1813 in VA, son of William Jessee and Mary Vermillion.

I want to thank our anonymous benefactor for the special help with these missing links and most valuable family research and contributions to this Newsletter. This helper has provided me very detailed commentary, questions, and additional information on many items.

4) Margaret Jessee of San Luis Obispo, CA indicates she ran across a notation of a Margaret Jessee, in the South Carolina Census Index for 1800 in Edgefield County. Is this a new County and State to look for the origins of John and Frankey Jessee?

Research Opportunities

Several of you have expressed willingness to do research if we could give you a specific opportunity or lead. Others have provided specific problems or conundrums discovered in their research with which they need help. As a regular feature of the Newsletter, I would like to share those and request your help with research, opinion, or documentation on the issues.

Several of John and Frankey's children require additional research. In particular, we need to discover the descendants of:

a) Lea Jessee and Barbara Gose who may have moved to Missouri, and who is the subject of speculation in the Missing Links article above.

b) Boedicea Jessee and Stephen Gose Jr.

c) Frances Jessee and William Stone, who had five children and moved to Browning, Missouri. We need research in Browning and Jackson Co., MO. for these and other Jessees.

d) Sarah Jessee and Wilson Vermillion

e) James Jessee and Jane Burk

f) Elizabeth Jessee and George Gose

g) Rebecca Jessee and William Burk(e)

h) Jane Jessee and Henry Fuller

Several of these deserve research into the Gose, Burk(e), Stone, Vermillion, and Fuller families of Russell County.

Tom and Shirley Rudder have been making a systematic effort to research the above families through exhaustive search of Census and other records of nearby counties, states, and other likely destinations for migrating pioneers. They have already provided me several bits of information and additional research leads that will be reported in future newsletters.

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