

**GILLESPIE-SWEET Connections**  
**In Susquehanna County, PA**  
**1840-1865**

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## Introduction

Last fall, I started to learn about a Gillespie family group which I believe are connected to other Ulster/Orange Gillespies and which I now call the Rensselaer Gillespies. Research is ongoing about this family group, but given some details reported in a family history source,<sup>1</sup> and comparing those to extant records, I believe there is evidence enough to say this:

James Gillespie b abt 1740 m. Mary Brown Bannerman (widow) around 1777. Their children included William Gillespie 1778-1849 who removed to Bethel, Sullivan, NY around 1812, and Susanna Gillespie ~1786-1829. Susanna married John Foster in Troy in 1805, and the Fosters are said to have had seven children, including Caroline Foster, 1822-1909, who will be a subject of this article. Both John and Susannah Foster died within a short time of each other before 1830 and we have not yet found any death or probate records that help us determine what became of their children.

In addition, another local history source<sup>2</sup> informs us that Almon C. Sweet of Gibson, Susquehanna, PA married Caroline Foster in 1841. This source identified Caroline as the daughter of John Foster and Susanna Gillespie, the latter having been a native of Orange county, NY and the daughter of James Gillespie.

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As part of my recent mapping project,<sup>3</sup> I'm starting to learn about Gillespies who lived near Scotchtown, NY in what was once Walkill Precinct in Ulster county but later became Montgomery Precinct in Orange county.<sup>4</sup> At this point, I can identify two Gillespies who lived in or near Scotchtown, one of whom has been a long-time mystery, Robert Gillespie 1774-1857<sup>5</sup> who married Lea Crans.

It turns out that Robert Gillespie spent some time in the Gibson area of Susquehanna. He even acquired some property there that he bequeathed to his daughter, Mary, and his son-in-law, Andrew Van Buskirk. Further study tells us that several of Robert's descendants, besides the Van Buskirks, ended up living in that area, most notably Robert's sons Jonathan 1794-1840 and to a lesser extent, Andrew, 1796-1852.

In going through Susquehanna deeds, I found that Joseph W. Gillespie and wife Amanda sold one acre of land in Gibson to Gilbert O. Sweet in 1865.<sup>6</sup> So now we have a second occurrence where it appears that Gillespie-Sweet families connect in the same place: Gibson, Susquehanna, PA. This article will explore those connections.

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1 *Royce and Gillespie Family Book*, by Mary Royce Patton, published privately 1962.

2 *Commemorative Biographical Record of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Including the Counties of Susquehanna, Wayne, Pike and Monroe*; J H Beers, 1900, p. 484

NOTE: This book was apparently published in four volumes containing over 1800 pages total. However, the volumes do not appear to have been marked as such, and every rendition I find on the internet contains a different series pages from the book. Where I originally thought I had the whole book, I absolutely did not. So beware, be very beware.

3 [NY Gillespys](#)

4 [Gillespys in Walkill Precinct](#), Ulster/Orange, NY, 1790-1800; MA Schaefer; 5 May 2020.

5 [Updated Case Studies of Gillespy/Gillespie Families in Early Ulster/Orange/Dutchess, NY](#), Revision 1; MA Schaefer, 3 April 2020; Section C.3.1, pp. 24-25.

6 Susquehanna County Deeds, 34-495.

## Nine Partners

In 1790, nine families from Attleboro, Massachusetts acquired a tract of 2560 acres which they divided into 16 lots and subsequently settled to build their homes and businesses.<sup>7</sup> The settlement was originally known as Nine Partners, and in 1808 it was granted township status and was then named Harford.

The names of the nine partners were: Ezekiel Titus, Robert Follett, Hosea Tiffany, Samuel Thatcher,<sup>8</sup> Moses Thatcher, John Carpenter, Josiah Carpenter, Daniel Carpenter, and Caleb Richardson.

It turns out that the origin of Attleboro is significant for our research. Both the SWEET and FOSTER families connecting to Caroline Foster Sweet had their origins in Attleboro. In fact, it seems that several SWEET families became early settlers of the Nine Partners settlement:

- Thomas Sweet III (1767-1849) became one of the earliest settlers of the Nine Partners settlement. The parents of Thomas III were Thomas Sweet II and Margaret FOSTER. Margaret Foster Sweet 1742-1800 was the grand-aunt of Caroline Foster, which is to say Margaret Foster was the sister of Caroline's grandfather, Joseph Foster of Attleboro, Massachusetts.
- Another early settler was Amos Elias Sweet 1735-1801, who, at 61, brought his family from Attleboro in 1795 to Nine Partners. The children he brought with him included Olney Sweet, father of Almon C. Sweet. Amos Sweet was a first cousin of Thomas Sweet II, and thus was a first cousin once removed from Thomas Sweet III who also settled in Nine Partners.

Now we fast-forward to 1839 when the Van Buskirks and Gillespies of Montgomery, NY came to Harford, PA.

“Andrew Van Buskirk purchased the Samuel Thatcher homestead for \$1200. In July, same year, he made a transfer with Thomas Sweet, who owned the Robert Follet farm, and here they lived until 1852. Robert Gillespie had previously purchased 70 acres of Samuel Guile (originally belonging to John Carpenter), on which stood the old Columbian school house, and had given the place to his daughter Mary, and thither they removed.”<sup>9</sup>

And now we have a third piece of evidence that connects Sweets with Gillespies in Susquehanna, PA.

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7 [An Early History of Harford Township](#)  
About [Laban Capron \(1768-1824\)](#)

8 It's been asserted that the original spelling was correctly THACHER, and the additional T was added by later descendants.

9 *Commemorative Biographical Record of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Including the Counties of Susquehanna, Wayne, Pike and Monroe*; J H Beers, 1900, pp. 1203-1205.

## Identifications

Let's see if we can identify the players named in the 1865 Susquehanna deed:

Joseph W. Gillespie and wife Amanda sold one acre of land in Gibson to Gilbert O. Sweet in 1865.

1. Who was Gilbert O. Sweet? He was a son of Raymond Sweet, Raymond having been a brother of Almon Sweet.
2. Who was Joseph W. Gillespie? I think Joseph was most likely the son of Andrew Gillespie and Elsie Crans, and grandson of Robert Gillespie and Leah Crans.<sup>10</sup> Robert's sons, Jonathan and Andrew, appear to have gone to the Susquehanna area by 1839.

The documentation tells us:

- Robert Gillespie did have a son Joseph (no middle initial stated) who was living in Scranton at the time of Robert's death in 1857 (noted in Robert's probate papers).
  - Joseph W. was a carpenter living in Gibson in 1863 (Civil War draft).
  - Joseph W. and Amanda first appear in a census together in 1870 in the area of Gibson. By 1900, they had moved to Hornell, Steuben, NY, and according to that census, they had married around 1858 (just after Robert's death).
3. Who was Amanda? Unfortunately, we have two different identifications of Amanda's maiden name:
    - The death certificate (DC) of Joseph's and Amanda's oldest child (Ida E.) identified Amanda as Amanda Sweet, reported by Amanda's grandson who had known Amanda himself for over 20 years.
    - The DC of Amanda's youngest child (Helen M) named her mother as Amanda Thatcher. I don't have much faith in this information as the informant was a grand-nephew of Helen's who supplied this information four decades after Amanda died, and he certainly never knew her.

Even though the report of a maiden name of Thatcher seems less credible to me based on the informant, Thatchers were definitely among the original Nine Partners. Whether the Sweets intermarried with Thatchers is unknown to me, but it seems possible if not even likely. If Amanda was born a Sweet, based on Amanda's birth year (1832) and some preliminary research of Sweets living in the area in 1840, I think she could have been a daughter of Thomas Sweet IV. Even so, pending more research on this question, I must still say that Amanda's origins remain, at this point, unconfirmed.

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted there was a Gillespie family from Scotland who lived in the Great Bend area early on. I haven't determined if they had a son named Joseph, but possibly. More investigation is necessary.

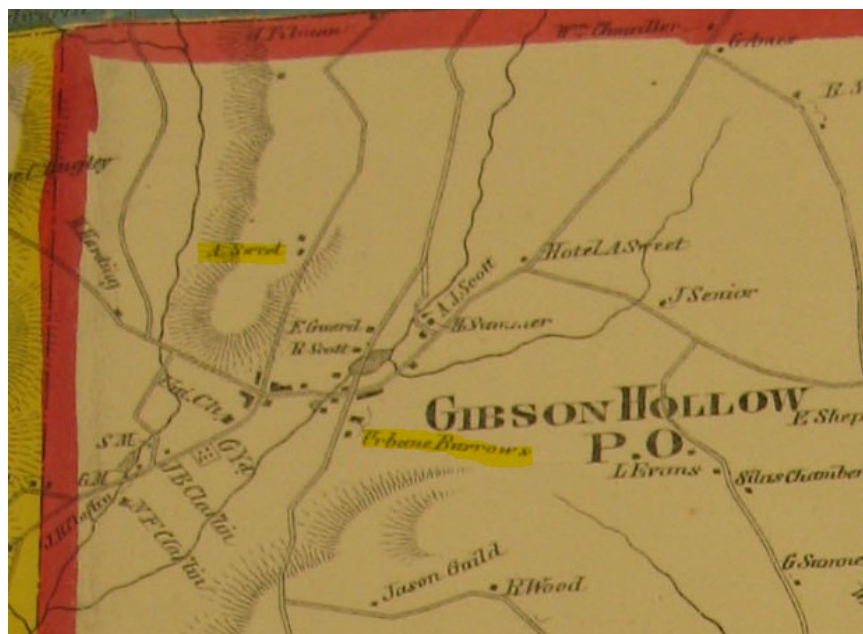
## The Timeline of the Journey

- 1790s: Settlers from Attleboro, MA came to the Harford area of what was then Luzerne County, PA. Attleboro families who followed the “Nine Partners” included Thomas Sweet III, who was Foster-related (the same Foster family whose grandson would later marry Susanna Gillespie in Troy, NY), as well as Amos Sweet, a relation of Thomas Sweet, and the father of Almon Sweet who would later marry Susanna Gillespie Foster's daughter, Caroline Foster.
- 1805: John Foster married Susanna Gillespie in Troy, NY. John's parents, Joseph and Abigail, were of Attleboro, MA. Susanna was of Orange county, NY, and her father was James Gillespie.
- ~1812: William Gillespie, older brother of Susanna Gillespie Foster, moved to Bethel, Sullivan, New York. He was residing in NYC before the relocation.
- 1827: John Foster died, presumably in Rensselaer, NY.
- 1829: Susanna Gillespie Foster died, also presumably in Rensselaer, NY
- ~1837: Julia Foster, daughter of John Foster and Susanna Gillespie, married George G. DeWitt in Sullivan County, NY. She is mentioned as “Aunt Jule” in the family history of William Gillespie of Bethel.<sup>11</sup>
- 1839: Gillespies from Montgomery, NY arrived in Harford, then Susquehanna county, PA. They included the families of Andrew Van Buskirk and Jonathan Gillespie, and Andrew Gillespie and possibly some of his family soon followed. The Van Buskirks immediately conducted a land transaction with Thomas Sweet.
- 1841: Almon Sweet married Caroline Foster. She was noted as having been of Sullivan county, NY.

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<sup>11</sup> *Royce and Gillespie Family Book*, by Mary Royce Patton, published privately 1962.

- 1865: Joseph W. Gillespie and wife Amanda sold property to Gilbert O. Sweet. The following map<sup>12</sup> shows the location of A. (Almon) Sweet in Gibson Hollow. The deed noted that Urbane Burrows had adjoining property to the one-acre property sold by Joseph W. Gillespie and wife Amanda in 1865.



## 1840 Census

According to the death certificate of Caroline Foster Sweet,<sup>13</sup> she was born in 1822, though other accounts have stated 1821. Since we do not have an actual birth record, we can only speculate that by the time she married Almon Sweet in 1841, she was around 19 or 20 years old. Even though the 1840 census tells us only the names of heads of each household, we still see the age group and gender of those enumerated in the household. Maybe we can find where Caroline was living before she married, noting that Caroline would have been 18 or 19 years old in 1840.

First, Caroline might have come to the Harford area some time by 1830 or after with a Foster relation. If that is so, the only Foster I found in Gibson in 1840 was Peter S. Foster and he did have two females in his household in the 20-30 age group. However, further research says that Peter Striker Foster 1815-1880 was from New Jersey. One of the older females in his household was likely his wife, and given his place of origin, there doesn't seem to be a connection with Peter Foster's family and that of the Fosters of Attleboro, MA.

Second, Caroline might have met Almon Sweet in Sullivan county, NY, which is where she was supposedly from. The only Sullivan county connection who jumps to mind at the moment is William Gillespie of Bethel, Sullivan, NY. Gibson, PA is 45 miles west of Bethel, NY along the Old Newburgh

<sup>12</sup> [Map of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania](#). From Actual Survey by G. M. Hopkins, C. E. (Philadelphia: Lee & Marsh Publishers, 1858)

<sup>13</sup> Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death, File No. 32488, Registered No. 30, Caroline A. Sweet, Gibson, Susquehanna, PA, 24 March 1909.

Turnpike. William was the older brother of Susan Gillespie Foster, so maybe William took in Susanna's children after the Fosters died? We know that Caroline's sister, Julia, did marry in Sullivan county, so this fact gives some supporting evidence to the idea.

The 1840 household of William Gillespie does show an extra female 20-29 who I can't account for. Though the age group is not exact, maybe Caroline?

Third, Caroline might have already been living in Gibson since she was married there. Were there any other Gillespies in the Gibson area in 1840? I haven't found that Robert Gillespie was enumerated in 1840, nor do I find his son, Andrew, enumerated. But Robert's son, Jonathan, and his son-in-law, Andrew Van Burskirk, were in Susquehanna.

- In Van Buskirk's household, there is one female 10-14 who I can't account for.
- In Jonathan's household, there is one female 20-29 who I can't account for. Jonathan's oldest daughter, Sarah, would fit in this age category, but she had married in 1836 and settled in New Jersey. Again, the age group is not exact, but maybe this extra female was Caroline Foster?

Fourth, we have to consider that Caroline was not accounted for in any 1840 enumeration, or maybe she was enumerated in a household other than the ones mentioned here.

## Discussion

From this much evidence, here are my ideas about Gillespie connections in Susquehanna, PA:

- Born in Lansingburgh, Rensselaer, NY, Caroline Foster became an orphan by 1829 at the age of 9 years old. We don't know how old Caroline's brothers were at that time, but her older sister, Julia, would have been about 17 – still not old enough to care for her younger siblings. We know that Julia married George G. DeWitt – the marriage date is not sure, but based on the birth year of their first child, probably around 1836. The DeWitts lived in several places in Sullivan County, including Bethel, the home of William Gillespie. It seems reasonable to think that William Gillespie took in the orphan children of his sister, Susanna, after her death. So let's say that Bethel was where Caroline Foster did the rest of her growing up. This would explain the reference in Almon Sweet's obit<sup>14</sup> that said his wife Caroline was of Sullivan County, NY.
- But then what? I think either of these scenarios is possible:
  - Almon Sweet traveled to or through Bethel and made the acquaintance of Caroline Foster. He soon married her, and they lived their lives in Gibson where Almon had an inn and a tavern, a stop along the Old Newburgh Turnpike.
  - The Scotchtown Gillespies came down the turnpike on their way west – and maybe they had the Nine Partners settlement in Susquehanna PA in mind as a destination. Maybe they knew about this place because of the Foster connection? Regardless of why they were traveling west at all, perhaps they stopped in Bethel to visit William Gillespie from the Rensselaer Gillespies, and perhaps by the time they left, they also had young Caroline Foster who wanted to go with them. She would have met Almon as soon as she arrived in Gibson.

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<sup>14</sup> "Death's Doings, Almon Sweet," The Montrose Democrat (Montrose, Pennsylvania), 11 Oct 1900, Thu, Page 2.



Of these two options, the second one seems plausible because Caroline Foster supposedly married Almon Sweet *in Gibson* in 1841, which implies to me that Caroline was living in the area at the time, and she was probably not there by herself.

- Irregardless of how and when Caroline Foster got to Susquehanna, Caroline did marry Almon Sweet in 1841, and she spent the next 68 years in Gibson. She was known affectionately by all as “Aunt Caroline.”
- 24 years after Caroline Foster, a Rensselaer Gillespie relation, moved to Gibson as Mrs. Almon Sweet, Joseph W. Gillespie, a Scotchtown Gillespie relation, who may have been married to a Sweet, made a land transaction with a Sweet for one acre in the area of Gibson Hollow, property that adjoined Urbane Burrows, and which was very close to where Almon and Caroline lived. Joseph W. Gillespie was a grandson of Robert Gillespie and lived in the area where the Scotchtown Gillespies had migrated to back in 1839. The question is whether this occurrence – a Rensselaer Gillespie (Caroline) and a Scotchtown Gillespie (Joseph) being in the same place (Gibson, Susquehanna, PA) at the same time (1865) – was merely and purely coincidence.

## Conclusion

I have introduced a good deal of speculation here.

- We can't prove who Amanda was, only that she was the wife of Joseph W. Gillespie, who represents the Scotchtown Gillespies in this story. Maybe Amanda was born a Sweet or a Thatcher or somebody else. We only know that she and Joseph W. Gillespie somehow owned one acre in Gibson which they sold to Gilbert O. Sweet in 1865.
- We can't prove that Caroline Foster who represents the Rensselaer Gillespies in this story, lived with her uncle, William Gillespie of Bethel after her parents died – but we do know that her sister, Julia Foster DeWitt, lived most of her life in Sullivan County, NY and was widely mentioned in the family history of William Gillespie of Bethel.
- We can't prove that Caroline Foster Sweet knew the Scotchtown Gillespies at all, though it seems unlikely given the 1865 deed transaction for property that was within a mile or so Almon Sweet's home.
- Finally, we can't prove or know if the Foster family of Attleboro had anything to do with the Gillespies and the Sweets being introduced. Were Foster relations in touch with the Foster-Gillespie grandchildren who had probably been relocated to Bethel, Sullivan, NY after 1830? Did William Gillespie of Bethel advise Gillespies of Scotchtown that Foster relations had started a new settlement in Susquehanna, and there might be great opportunity for land and jobs in that area? Is that what inspired some of the Scotchtown Gillespies to migrate in 1839, and they just happened to pick up Caroline Foster in Bethel along the way there?



More evidence is needed to prove any case here. But I think we have a growing reason to consider ties between Rensselaer Gillespies and other Gillespie family groups. We already know that Andrew Gillespie of Lansingburgh knew William Gillespie of Newburgh,<sup>15</sup> and we're just beginning to explore who the Scotchtown Gillespies were and how they connect. In this case, several Scotchtown Gillespie descendants lived in Susquehanna in the very area where a Rensselaer Gillespie, Aunt Caroline Foster Sweet, also lived her life. We certainly have ourselves quite a Gillespie web!

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15 "[The Road to Sterling](#)," Gillespie Roots blog; MA Schaefer; 9 Dec 2019.  
*Updated Case Studies of Gillespy/Gillespie Families in Early Ulster/Orange/Dutchess, NY*, Revision 1; MA Schaefer, 3 April 2020; Section C.3.2, p 25.



R. (Robert) Gillespie in New Milford:



Given the date of the map, this was probably the son of Jonathan Gillespie, Robert.