

**Summary of  
Two Gillespy/Gillespie Family Groups  
Serving Ulster/Orange, New York  
in the American Revolution**

By M.A. Schaefer  
2 November 2019  
Boulder, Colorado

Revision 1  
12 December 2019  
Revision 2  
4 April 2020

*Please do not copy or redistribute without permission.*

## **Introduction**

I have covered a lot of research ground in the last two months pertaining to Gillespy/Gillespie families in early Ulster/Orange counties, New York. I have reported parts of that research in other recent articles,<sup>1</sup> but here I want to pull together various details from those articles to summarize two Gillespie family groups which I have identified as having served in the American Revolution.

The root of this story can be found in the record of bounty lands that were awarded in the [Central New York Military Tract](#). But when bounty lands were divided among the heirs of a deceased soldier, we have to try to understand the inheritance laws when attempting to understand family relationships to the soldier. Here is the only information I could find on the topic:

"The Estates of all Persons dying intestate who have Neither the Relations of Children Brothers or Sisters or their Children Uncles or Aunts or their Children for want of such heires shall, Elapse to the King Provided always that Such Elapsing shall not hinder the Lawful Clayme of any such Relations afore mentioned, if it be made appeare upon Oath to the Court within one Year and Six weeks."<sup>2</sup>

Aside from the fun capitalization, spelling, and punctuation, I think this excerpt is telling us that if a soldier died without children, his brothers and sisters or their children were considered next of kin, and then uncles and aunts or their children. This understanding of mine might be incorrect, but it is the assumption I'm using in writing this article.

## **Sources**

Here are some basic sources used in this summary article:

[The Basics of Researching New York's Revolutionary War Land Grants](#) by Michael Brewster, 2016; access 2019. Very informative, contains some source links.

*Revolutionary War Bounty Land Grants: Awarded by State Governments*, L.W. Brockstruck, 1996, p 200.

*The Balloting Book and Other Documents relating to Military Bounty Lands in the state of NY*, Albany, 1825, p 28, 70, 79, 162

---

1 See the library of [My Gillespie Articles](#).

2 *The colonial laws of New York from the year 1664 to ...* v.1. New York (State), p 9

## ***Family Group One – Relations of James Gillespy of the 4<sup>th</sup> NY Regiment***

- James Galasby (or Glasby and other spellings) served in the 4<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment under Capt. Benjamin Walker from Feb. 1777 until Feb. 1780 when James died.
- On 26 May 1783, Judge Landon issued letters of administration to William Gillespy, a sergeant in the 1<sup>st</sup> NY Regiment upon the estate of James Gillespy, private in the old 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment.<sup>3</sup>
- In September 1790, 600 acres of bounty land were granted to the heirs of James Gillespie. The land was in Marcellus, Onondaga, New York, Lot #34. It was delivered to [C. C. Schoonmaker](#) for Wm. Gillespie, administrator.
- 20 November 1785, Onondaga Deed E-51. Margaret Gillespie, and William Wallace and wife Elizabeth (Gillespie) of Ulster County, sold 2/5ths interest in Lot #34 which had been granted to James Gillespie, deceased.
- 1798, Onondaga Deed B-224. John Gillespie and wife Sarah, and Adam Libolt and wife Hanna (Gillespie) of Montgomery, Orange County sold 2/5ths interest in Lot #34 which had been granted to James Gillespie, deceased. Witnesses were William Hunter and Ann Gillespie.
- 1801 tax lists show that David Gillespie was living in Marcellus. Subsequent deeds and mortgages confirm that he and his family were living on Lot #34.

My conclusion from this evidence is that we can identify four Gillespie siblings with some degree of confidence: James (d 1780), John (~1746-1821) m. Sarah McCreery & served in the Revolution, David (~1754-1831) m. Abigail Mapes, also served in the Revolution and occupied the Marcellus land, and Margaret, probably an unmarried sister. Because Elizabeth Wallace and Hannah Libolt appear to have been from a younger generation, I am speculating they were the daughters of another Gillespie brother who had died prior to 1790. My feeling is that George Gillespie was that fifth sibling in this family group.

The idea that James, John, David, and George were siblings is further supported by the *History of Ulster County* which said the Articles of Association were signed by these Gillaspys who lived in the [Mamakating](#) precinct in 1775: James, John, David, and George.

---

<sup>3</sup> *New York Genealogy and Biographical Records*, Vol 1, p 187-88. Note that the source of this information is from a memorandum book of Judge Jared Landon who conducted probate in Rondout and Kingston while the British were occupying NYC.

## **Family Group Two – Relations of Robert Gillespy of the 5<sup>th</sup> NY Regiment**

- In October, 1777, Private Robert Gillespy of the NY 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment was captured in a battle won by the British at [Ft. Montgomery](#). He subsequently died in British prison.
- On 28 February 1805, the representatives of Robert Gillespie petitioned the NY Legislature asking that Robert's heirs be granted some bounty land. The heirs were named as James, John, William, Matthew, Samuel, Barbara, Ann, Jane, Polly, Olive, Burr, and James Jr – all Gillespie's.
- The act to grant bounty lands to the heirs of Robert Gillespie was passed 7 April 1806, and apparently granted 16 August 1807. The land was in Sterling, Cayuga, NY, 200 acres on Lot #51.<sup>4</sup>
- On 6 Sep 1807, William Gillespie of Newburgh, Orange, NY and his wife, Mary, sold their one-fourth undivided interest in Sterling lot #51 which had been granted to the representatives of Robert Gillespie, deceased. For \$1, they sold to Andrew Gillespie of Lansingburgh, Renselaer, NY. Andrew is thought to have been a son of James Gillespie; research on this point is ongoing.
- On 20 December 1809, Andrew Gillespie and his wife Sally sold the property they had purchased from William to Josiah Shippey of NYC.

So far, I have been unable to locate any records referring to the other heirs of Robert Gillespie's bounty land, although research is under way to locate the “letters patent” which will hopefully provide more insight.

As pertains to the other heirs of Robert Gillespie, I was reminded of other recent Gillespie research<sup>5</sup> court evidence listed the children of Matthew Gillespie ~1740-1797 and Jane Neely, ~1742-1788 as Barbara, John, James, Matthew, Mary, Ann, and Jane.

Matthew Gillespie Sr. did not leave a will, but a reading of William's will named children of both his brother Samuel and his deceased brother Matthew. So this leads me to the conclusion that William, Samuel, and Matthew were brothers.

Now we circle back to the list of Robert Gillespie's heirs who I presume were all alive when the petition for bounty land was made in 1805. Of the 12 names listed as Robert's representatives, seven of them appear as children of Matthew. So it looks to me like this family group might be shaping up like this (red highlight indicates speculation):

- Robert, d 1778
- Matthew, 1740-1797 (his heirs were James, John, Matthew, Jane, Ann, Mary (Polly), and Barbara)
- William, 1737-1813 (it looks like he sold his interest in Sterling #51 right away)
- Samuel, 1742-1815
- James, dates unk, possibly served in the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment, same regiment as Robert. From what I can tell, this James might have been the longest-serving Gillespie from these family groups, serving with Capt. James Stewart starting in 1777 and going through at least 1782 with Capt. Henry Dubois. This James could have been the one who brought the petition to the NY Legislature, and he might have been the one who died in Montgomery in 1810.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sterling lot #51 was actually part of Seneca county in 1807. Today, that lot is located in Wolcott, Wayne, NY.

<sup>5</sup> [The Question of Two Gillespy Brothers Reported in a NY Supreme Court Case 1814](#); MA Schaefer; 3 April 2020.

So now we have accounted for 10 of the 12 names listed as Robert's representatives, leaving only Olive and Burr. The identities of these last two Gillespie's is a topic of more research.

## **Conclusion**

The award of bounty lands to the heirs of these particular two Gillespie men, James and Robert, who died in American Revolution gives invaluable insight into two Gillespie family groups who lived in the Ulster/Orange county area of NY. At first, I was curious to see if the two family groups might actually be one, but instead I think these groups are separate by virtue of names associated with each land grant, and the fact that they did not appear to cross over. For example, Samuel, who was an heir of Robert Gillespie, was not an heir of James. Likewise, David, who was an heir of James Gillespie, was not an heir of Robert.

The question does, of course, present itself whether the two family groups were related. I suggest that they were. The fact that William Gillespie, presumably the William of Shawangunk, was the administrator of the estate of James Gillespie, while not being an heir, suggests he was otherwise related – probably a first cousin.

But who were the heads of each of these family groups? The records tell us there was at least one man named James Gillespie who was older, exempt from service, and provided ammunition to the Americans.<sup>6</sup> That James Gillespie was likely the head of one of these two groups, but which group is not sure. However, given the undocumented story that Samuel Gillespie who married Esther Rainey had a father also named Samuel suggests there was a different family head for whom we have no record.

So what might this big picture look like? The following table shows the two family groups with proposed members based on my latest research. The groupings of names under precinct areas are only for general reference because, after all, these areas are relatively close to one another, and people moved around. The names in bold are the possible heads of each family group. In my opinion, whoever the family heads were, it seems very likely that they were related to each other, possibly brothers. I suppose tracking DNA matches between these family groups, if they occur, will be useful toward supporting any conclusion.

---

<sup>6</sup> *A Study of Men Named James Gillespie, Early Ulster & Later Orange/Sullivan Counties, NY, 1730-1800*, Revision 2; MA Schaefer, 12 December 2019.

<i>Mamakating Precinct Walkill/Shawangunk</i>	<i>Hanover Precinct Montgomery/New Windsor/Newburgh</i>
<b>James Gillespie Sr.?</b>	<b>Samuel Gillespie Sr.? John Gillespie m Mary Graham?</b>
James Gillespie, served 4 <sup>th</sup> Regt, d 1780, bounty land in Marcellus	Robert Gillespie, served 5 <sup>th</sup> Regt, d 1778, bounty land in Sterling
John Gillespie, 1742-1821, m Sarah McCreery	James Gillespie, served 5 <sup>th</sup> Reg, dates unk, poss died 1810 in Montgomery
David Gillespie, 1755-1831, m Abigail Mapes	William Gillespie, 1737-1813
Margaret Gillespie, dates unk	Matthew Gillespie, 1740-1797
Possibly George Gillespie, heirs Elizabeth (Wallace) and Hanna (Lebolt)	Samuel Gillespie, 1742-1815