

# **Gillespie's in Early Sullivan County, New York**

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11 October 2019  
Boulder, CO

Revision 3  
19 April 2020

## Revision History:

1. minor additions & corrections
2. revised conclusion

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## Introduction

This article is about expanding my research horizons. Not that I did it on purpose, of course not. I follow my nose from one place to the next, and then find myself always surprised to be somewhere new and different. So it is with my Gillespie research in New York. All this long time, my focus has been limited to the New York counties of Orange, Dutchess, and Ulster. Of course the ancestors also followed their noses across arbitrary jurisdictional lines that were made and re-made in a blink. Indeed, they wandered into what would later become another NY county which I have never considered: Sullivan.

There are a couple of reasons why I fell across this county line now, but the main one has to do with a recent DNA match that connects my Michigan Gillespie family with the pre-Revolution Gillespie's of early New York. I realize that before now I never looked back that far because I had concluded that my Gillespie and Greer families, those who migrated to Michigan in the 1830s, arrived in America in the 1810s, well after the Revolution. From that conclusion, I reasoned that it was only a coincidence that many, many, many Gillespie families had resided in the Orange/Ulster area for decades before my family arrived. Ha.

So now that I recognize the reality that I indeed have a DNA connection, remote as it is, to the old NY Gillespie families, I want to know more about them, which has lead me into a new wave of research covering ground that countless Gillespie researchers have covered before me. But that's ok – I have my own nose to follow.

I like to start with earliest records I can find, which I think is a record of Thomas, James, and Patrick Gillespy in the Walkill militia in 1738.<sup>1</sup> After that, the next record I can find is for “the Revolutionary Pledge,” formally called the Articles of Association, in 1775. Three sources name these Gillespy's in Mamakating Precinct:<sup>2</sup> David, George, John, and either Thomas or James.<sup>3 4 5 6</sup> The thing that wrinkled my brow was the *place* where the Gillespie pledges were given: Mamakating Precinct. Tell me more.

The town of [Mamakating](#) is roughly 20 miles west of Shawangunk. The first county seat of the Mamakating area was Bloomingburg, which is even closer to Shawangunk: 17 miles if you go by way of Pine Bush, and 18 miles if you go by way of Montgomery. Unbelievable that this locale has not reached my consciousness before now. Such are the hazards of not knowing the local geography more first-hand. In any case, Mamakating is today part of [Sullivan](#) county, which was split from Ulster county in 1809. Who knew.

This article is a brief excursion across the county line. One might assume that any very early records of my Gillespie families in the Mamakating area would still be found in Ulster county records. But now I

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1 *History of Orange County, New York*, Russell Headly, Middletown, NY, 1908, pp 54-55. For my purposes, I am not considering the name of Patrick, as that given name has not appeared in my Gillespie family line for generations.

2 It should be noted that the signers of the pledge in the precincts of Hanover, Walkill, and Shawangunk “are not of record.” I'm not sure what that means – either never recorded or lost, either way, we don't know.

3 I would have to see the actual document, but I tend to think it's at least possible that the name of Thomas could have been mistranscribed, especially knowing the old handwriting. Because the name Thomas might look like James, depending how it was written and/or the condition of the original, and because the name of James shows up so many times in the Revolutionary rolls, and not that of Thomas, I tend to think that James was the one who signed the Pledge.

4 *History of Sullivan County*, James Eldridge Quinlan, Liberty, NY 1873, pp 411-413

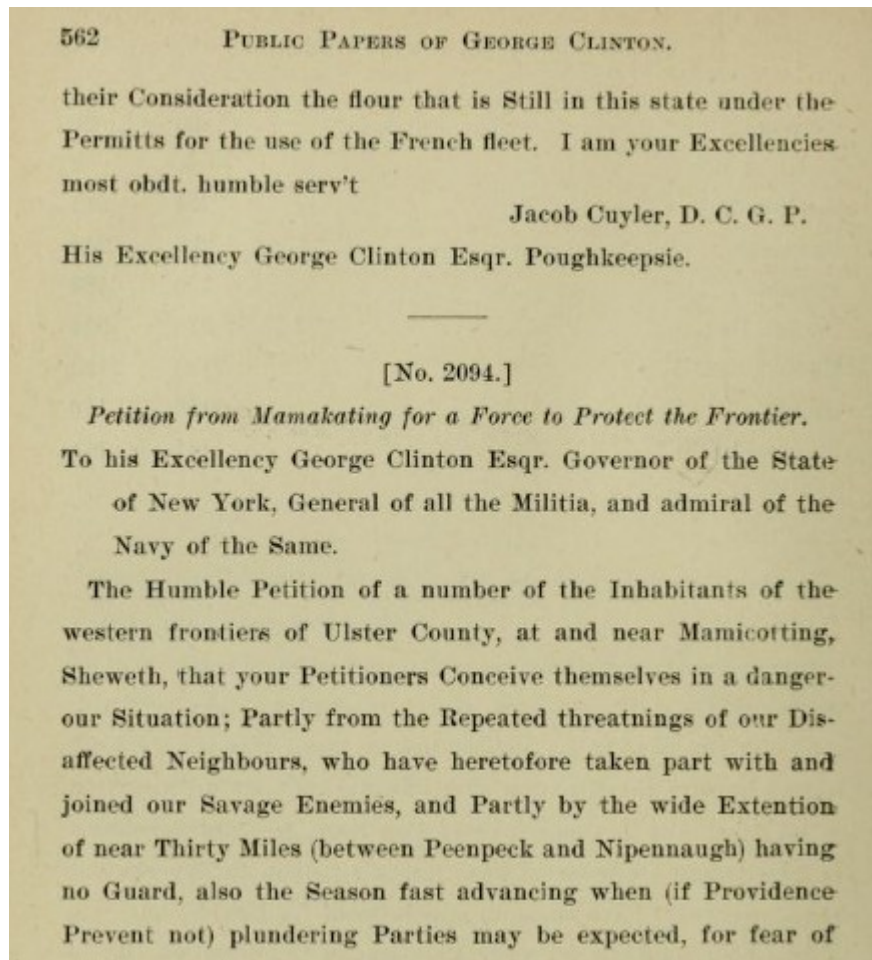
5 *History of Ulster County, New York*, ed Alphonso T. Clearwater, Kingston, NY, 1907, pp 140-141

6 *History of Ulster County, New York with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches*, Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, 1880, p 75.

can more readily recognize property descriptions and realize which families favored which areas. Every little bit helps.

## **Early Records**

Besides the Pledges taken by Gillespy men in the Mamakating Precinct in 1775, there was also a petition sent to the governor in 1779 asking for militia protection for Mamakating.<sup>7</sup> It was signed by James, John, and David Gillespy.



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<sup>7</sup> *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795, 1801-1804*, Vol. IV, Albany, NY, 1900, [pp. 562-563.](#)

of near thirty miles (between Cooper and Apponaug) having  
no Guard, also the Season fast advancing when (if Providence  
Prevent not) plundering Parties may be expected, for fear of  
which, great Numbers are Preparing to remove their Families  
and Effects, which Removal if once begun (we Conceive) will be  
of Fatal Consequences. We therefore make no Doubt, but your  
Excellency upon Consideration of our Situation (If it appears  
Consistant with the Public good) will grant us some Speedy Re-  
lief, and your Petitioners as in Duty Bound, will ever Pray.

John Crage, James Huey, Manuel Gunsales, Jun'r, Jacobus  
Devins, Isaac Roosa, Joseph Crawford, Johannes Masten, John  
McCreery, Thos. Oliver, David Oliver, James Gillespy, Robert  
Milliken, John Gillespy, David Gillespy, Adam Ritenbergh,

PUBLIC PAPERS OF GEORGE CLINTON.

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Abraham Calwall, Thomas Shaw, William Bell, James Tucker,  
Robert McCreery, Abraham Swart, John Swart, Hendricus Rosa-  
crans, William Cross, John Coulter, Donald Ross, Peter Simpson,  
Tomkins Odell, William Harlow, Daniel Woodworth, William  
Stephens, Solomon Wheat, Samuel Patterson, Archibald Mc-  
Bride, Jeremiah Fitzgerald, John Newkirk, Jacob Roosa, Philip  
Vankuren, Stephen Hoakham, Solomon Terwilliger.

Feb 13th 1779.

## Tax Lists

This records set is usually very helpful, but so far, I have not located any. More research is needed.

## Census

Whoever was living in what became the Sullivan county area in 1809 must have been enumerated in Ulster county (maybe Walkill?) because the 1810 census does not show any residents of Sullivan county. By the 1820 census, I found these Gillespie's in Sullivan county:

- Mamakating: Joseph and Abraham
- Bethel: William

## Deeds

Sullivan county deeds start in 1809 when Sullivan was split from Ulster county. The Gillespie names found in the early Sullivan deeds are, in order of the number of deeds in each name, from least to most:

- Matthew
- Abraham
- Joseph S.
- William

Here are my observations of each:

- 1813, Matthew of New Windsor from Thomas Payne, 84 acres in town of Mamakating. (SC Deed 4-393)

This Matthew is presumed to be Matthew Gillespy 1775-1857, the man who indeed lived in New Windsor during this time and would later move to KY. He was the father of John Gillespy of Shawangunk, and the son of William Gillespy 1737-1813 and Jane Neely.<sup>8</sup>

- I find no Grantee deeds for Abraham, but I do find two Grantor deeds:
  - 1820 Abraham of Mamakating and wife Mary to Cornelius Wood, land in the village of Bloomingburg, on the north edge of Newburgh and Cohecton Turnpike, linked to lands of Alpheus Dimmick.<sup>9</sup> (SC Deed 6-194)
  - 1839 Abraham of Montgomery and wife Mary to John Hayes, land in the town of Mamakating (SC Deed 15-59)

Note that we don't yet find any evidence as to how Abraham came to own those lands.

This Abraham is believed to have been the son of Samuel Gillespy and Esther Rainey, married Mary Crawford.

- Several Grantee/Grantor deeds for Joseph S.
  - The earliest deed, 1813, Joseph S. of Montgomery from Andrew Smith of Walkill, land in Bloomingburg, town of Mamakating. (SC Deed 1-839).
  - The latest deeds, 1816, are sales by Joseph S. of Montgomery and wife Martha. Joseph and Martha subsequently moved to Ohio. (SC deed 5-394 and 5-396).

This Joseph is also believed to have been the son of Samuel Gillespy and Esther Rainey, married Martha Nye, and later Mary Wilson.

- Finally, there is William. Given that Abraham and Joseph S. were the sons of Samuel Gillespy and Esther Rainey, I suspected this William must be their oldest son. But given that William, son of Samuel and Esther, was living in Montgomery until his death in 1849, it appears we have stumbled upon a new William Gillespie! Here are the deeds pertaining to him that interest me:

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<sup>8</sup> [\*Connecting to Early Gillespie's, Introducing John Gillespy/Gillespie of Shawangunk, Ulster, NY, Circa 1806-1880\*](#), MA Schaefer, Oct. 2019

<sup>9</sup> Let us recall that Alpheus Dimmick was one of the administrators, along with the widow, Sarah, of the estate of John Gillespie of Montgomery who died in 1821. That John Gillespie was of the right generation to possibly have been an uncle of Abraham Gillespie.

- 1811, Philip Livingston of Westchester and William Livingston of NYC, merchant to Josiah C Hook of NYC, merchant and William Gillespie of NYC, grocer. There's a long description of the will of John Livingston in 1786 and the various trustees, coming down finally to the sale of two lots in Bethel, part of the Hardenburgh Patent. (SC Deed 1-365).
- 1827, Campbell Sweney (?) of Montreal and Samuel Greg of Manchester, UK sold for \$1K to William Gillespie of Bethel and John Moffat,<sup>10</sup> along with Ann Brown, administrators of the estate of William Brown, lots in the Great Hardenburgh Patent. (SC Deed 6-158).
- 1841, William Gillespie to Ann Brown for \$1, 80 acres in Bethel, in trust for her and her six children named as Mary, Matthew, John R, Lydia Jane Gillespie, James A and Ann Eliza. (SC Deed 17-359)

There are several things going on in these deeds that make my eyeballs spin a bit:

- Ann Gillespie Brown was named in the will of her uncle, William Gillespie, 1737-1813. Ann married William Brown in Pine Bush in 1807. It would seem the Brown's subsequently moved their family to Bethel.
- Meanwhile, William Gillespie, 1778-1849, moved to Bethel in 1811, probably as a result of the first deed mentioned. He married Mary Van Riper,<sup>11</sup> but it's not clear to me when and where he married her. William might have had a different marriage that produced Alfred A Gillespie, born abt 1808. This Alfred (also known as A A Gillespie) would later marry one of Ann Gillespie Brown's daughters, Lydia Jane Brown.
- Clearly the families of William Brown and William Gillespie were close, especially if William Gillespie was named executor of William Brown's estate.<sup>12</sup> Even more to this point, William Gillespie's wife, Mary Van Riper, died in 1840. In 1841 William Gillespie signed over some Bethel land to Ann Brown and her children, and then in 1842, he married her. Wow.

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10 In my latest research, I have surmised that Ann had a brother James Gillespie 1774-1817 who was married to Mary Moffat and they lived in Goshen.

11 Mary had previous marriage to Jacob Morris. There were two NYC deeds where Mary, now wife of William Gillespie of Sullivan county, sold her property: New York Deeds 216-330 and 265-383.

12 I have not yet found a will or any probate records, but more research is required.



## **Conclusion**

So what do we have after this analysis?

- One Gillespy group lived in Mamakating Precinct in/around Bloomingburgh. Abraham and Joseph S. were sons of Samuel Gillespy of Hanover/Montgomery, and Matthew was the son of Samuel's brother, so we can conclude that Abraham, Joseph S. and Matthew were related.
- One Gillespy group moved farther west in Sullivan County to the area of Bethel. The marriage of William Gillespy of Bethel, widower, to the widow Ann Gillespy Brown, previously of Hanover/Montgomery is suspicious. Subsequent research has produced evidence that highlights the parents of William Gillespie of Bethel as the son of James Gillespie Jr. and Mary Brown Bannerman. That same research further suggests that James Gillespie Jr. was likely the son of James Gillespie Sr., believed to be a brother of Samuel, William, Matthew, and Robert Gillespy.<sup>13</sup> If these connections can be further proved, then indeed, all these Gillespy's of Sullivan County were related.

Research continues.

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<sup>13</sup> [One James Gillespie or Two?](#) Troy, New York 1799-1803 and A Possible Brother of Robert Gillespie, MA Schaefer, October 2019.