

**One James Gillespie or Two?**

**Troy, New York**

**1799-1803**

**and**

**A Possible Brother**

**of Robert Gillespie**

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14 December 2019

Boulder, CO

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## **Introduction**

In the last several months, a great deal of my research has gone into this topic: Who were the various men named James Gillespie in early New York?<sup>1</sup> What started as an inquiry focused almost exclusively in Ulster/Orange counties has widened to include Rensselaer and New York counties, thanks to meeting another Gillespie researcher<sup>2</sup> whom I will call D-Hart. D-Hart traces his Gillespie family back to Joseph Gillespie who was a riverboat captain residing in Troy, Rensselaer, NY as early as 1800. The pension application of a related riverboat captain, Andrew Gillespie, said that Andrew had been born in Shawangunk in 1763. That's more than enough incentive to investigate a little into a possible connection between our Gillespie family groups.

D-Hart also shared a very interesting source that he located during his extensive research:

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

Pages 46- 47 of this source, which I refer to in this article as “The Royce Book,” give the early history of William Gillespie who had moved to Bethel, Sullivan, New York from New York City in 1811. It describes the parents of William as being **James Gillespie** and Mary Brown Bannerman. The book further describes that James was the son of Joseph Gillespie who came to New York in 1752 when James was 12 (born in 1740). James lived in New York and married the widow Mary Bannerman when he was 37 (1777). This James Gillespie reportedly died in 1825, but the author speculates that James probably died before 1812 when the William Gillespie family (including his mother, Mary) moved from New York City to Sullivan county

Even though this family group is not the one that D-Hart descends from, there is mention of a brother of James Gillespie named Joseph, who lived in Troy. After years of research, D-Hart has developed a working theory that could explain how his Joseph Gillespie related to James Gillespie and Mary Bannerman. This article will later explain more of that theory.

Meanwhile, I have come along wanting to know anything and everything about any James Gillespie around Revolutionary New York. Why? Because my recent research<sup>3</sup> has been focused on the bounty lands that were granted to Gillespie's who served for New York in the Revolution. One of those land grants involved a soldier named Robert Gillespie (5<sup>th</sup> Regmt) whose representatives included a James Gillespie. That land grant occurred in 1807, and so I presumed I would find James Gillespie, Robert's Representative, somewhere in the 1800 census. But no, no James Gillespie was enumerated in Ulster/Orange in 1800. Curiously, however, there were *two* men named James Gillespie enumerated in Troy, Rensselaer in 1800. OK, I'm in. Let the research games begin.

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1 [A Study of Men Named James Gillespie, Early Ulster & Orange Counties, NY 1730-1820](#), Revision 2, MA Schaefer, Dec. 2019.

2 Many thanks to D. Hart for sharing his long-time research experience and insight into New York Gillespie's. Our correspondence has contributed to my own research in countless ways.

3 Gillespie Roots, [NY Bounty Lands](#), posted 23 Oct 2019.

## **The James Characters**

Based on my recent research, let me list the individuals named James Gillespie for whom records exist to prove their existence, and who could have been alive in 1800. These were real people.

1. Elder James. This James was born between 1734-1739 in Ireland. I think the 24-year-old in a 1763 record and the 42-year-old in a 1776 record could well have been the same person.<sup>4</sup> He was probably also the person referred to in a 1779 pay roll as James Jr. as having provided ammunition. Potentially this James was still alive in 1790, and if so, he was probably in his mid- or late-50's.
2. Soldier James. This James served in the NY 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment (organized from companies in Southern New York<sup>5</sup>) We know of one James Gillespie who served in the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment and died in 1780. There could well have been other individuals of this name who served, but I have not differentiated them enough in the military records to list them here as separate characters. James of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regmt served for many years in the same company, and so was distinct enough to recognize.
3. James and Mary Brown Bannerman (MBB)
  - Royce Book. This source has proved incorrect statements. However, it is the thing used to name their children: William, Josiah, Susannah, James & John (twins?), and Elizabeth (Betsey).
  - 1788 Orange County deeds & mortgage – involves James Gillespie and wife Mary; mentions that he was a farmer in New Windsor.

I should note that placing these characters in the 1790 census has been challenging because no fewer than four men named James Gillespie were enumerated then in these places: Walkill, Montgomery, New Windsor, and NYC South Ward. We can probably place James #3 as the one in New Windsor, but the identities of the other three 1790 James Gillespie's is still in question.

## **A Theory About James #3**

Now to elaborate on the D-Hart theory, which is based on the Royce Book. By interweaving some convincing yet circumstantial evidence with clues from the Royce Book, the D-Hart theory emerged to suggest that James Gillespie whose genealogy is recited in the Royce Book had two wives rather than just one:

- first Jennie Gillespie, possible sister of Major John: children from 1759-1773 were Abigail, Andrew, Jennie, Matthew, Joseph, and Josiah. Note that the names of these children were thought to be James' siblings in the Royce book.
- second Mary Brown Bannerman (widow): children from 1777-1786 were William, Elizabeth, Susannah, Josiah, John/James (died young).

We don't have any direct evidence that James Gillespie who married Mary Brown had a first marriage, but here are points to support considering the possibility of this theory:

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4 [A Study of Men Named James Gillespie, Early Ulster & Orange Counties, NY 1730-1820](#), Revision 2, MA Schaefer, Dec. 2019; "Pre-Revolution Records" and "Revolution Records", p. 6.

5 "[5<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment](#)," wikipedia, access 14 Dec 2019.

- We think James was old enough to have had a first marriage, and given that his second marriage was to a widow, then it's not unreasonable to think James might have been a widower himself when he married a second time.
- The birth years of the two sets of children don't appear to overlap.
- There was definitely a man named James Gillespie associated with three Gillespie boatmen, Andrew, Matthew, and Joseph, around 1800 in Troy.
- Even though there is no direct evidence, neither is there any negative evidence to say that James Gillespie of the Royce Book did not have two wives and two sets of children.

Especially because my own Gillespie progenitor had two wives and two sets of children, I see this scenario as entirely plausible. It is certainly worth considering during this investigation.

### ***The Troy Record Problem***

Then we arrive at the 1800 census of Troy, which just plain troubles me. It shows *two* men named James Gillaspie, enumerated on the same census sheet, no less:

- 1 M > 45; no other household members, enumerated next to Andrew Gillespy
- 1 M > 45, 1 F > 45, 1 F 10-15, 1 F 16-25

For both these men to be over 45, they were both born some time before 1755.

I couple this census conundrum with tax records. The following Gillespie names were found in Troy from 1799-1803 followed by valuations of their real estate/personal property.

- 1799:
  - Joseph 200/12
  - James 300/32
- 1800:
  - Joseph 150/50
  - James 300/30
  - Matthew 100/0
- 1801:
  - Joseph 250/50
  - James 150/50
    - also taxed in Petersburg 40/0, noted "in Troy"
    - Petersburg is about 25 miles east of Troy, probably less than 5 miles from Vermont border, 15 miles to Bennington, Vermont
  - Matthew 150/25

- 1802:
  - Joseph 200/25
  - James 750/50
  - Matthew 125/25
- 1803:
  - Joseph 200/25
  - James Jr 150/50
  - Matthew 125/25
  - James Sr 7.5/0

Here again we can see that by 1803 there were two men named James Gillespie in the same place at the same time. The Sr/Jr designation tells us, naturally, that one James was older than the other, but in this era, that was usually all it meant. In other words, the two men might have been father and son, but they could just as easily have been uncle and nephew, or related in some other way altogether, or even not related at all. One man was simply older than the other, and by how many years, we cannot say. But we can say in this case that both men named James Gillespie living in Troy in 1800 were over 45 years old, and so born before 1755.

This problem presents contrary evidence to narrative presented in the Royce Book and the D-Hart working theory:

- On the one hand, we have government records of the time that clearly show us two men named James Gillespie, both over 45 years, who lived in Troy, New York in 1800. In 1803, James Sr. was taxed very little, and James Jr. was taxed more or less the same as he had been taxed in Troy since 1799. Other Gillespie names that appear in the same census and tax records are Joseph, Matthew, and Andrew.
- On the other hand, we have a family history written in the 1960s that tells us about only one James Gillespie who married Mary Brown, and then the subsequent story of their family. The D-Hart theory modifies the Royce Book history slightly by postulating that the same James Gillespie had a previous marriage which included the names of those previously described as James' siblings. Even with this shift of the narrative, there was still only one James Gillespie.

Houston, we have a problem – was there one man named James Gillespie or two?

### ***Possible Solutions – Scenario 1***

One James Gillespie, Two Wives, Eleven Children

Possible Timeline

- The pension application of Andrew Gillespie in 1832 indicated that he was born in Shawangunk, Ulster, NY in 1763. The application did not name any family. If Andrew was a son of James, then we can also presume that James Gillespie lived in Shawangunk around that time.

- John Gillespie (Captain, later Major) purchased property in Shawangunk in 1765 and then married Magdalena Smedes in Shawangunk in 1766. He ran a grist mill there until 1783 when he sold the property and presumably moved to New Windsor. If John Gillespie indeed had a sister named Jennie, she very likely was in the same area as her brother, John, and she very well could have met and married James Gillespie, supposedly unrelated, also living in Shawangunk at the time. The story about John's sister, Jennie, is that she married a Taylor. The suggestion has come up that perhaps that was the occupation of her husband, he was a tailor. The extended suggestion now is that James Gillespie was a tailor.
- The first wife of James Gillespie died some time between 1773-1778.
- According to Orange County deeds, James Gillespie and his wife Mary bought property in Little Britain, Orange, NY in 1788. We are following the theory that Mary was Mary Brown Bannerman, and their marriage was a second marriage for them both.
- James Gillespie and his wife Mary were probably the ones enumerated in New Windsor in 1790, notably the same location where Major John Gillespie was also enumerated that year. The household of James had one male over 16, 3 males under 16, and 3 females. Given what we are told from the Royce-Gillespie book, the children in this 1790 New Windsor census could have been William, Josiah, James or John, Betsey, and Susannah.
- James and Mary lived in Troy in 1800 with two younger females (maybe Elizabeth and Susannah?). James was also taxed there from 1799-1803 for both real and personal property.
- James died in Montgomery, Orange in 1810. In July of that year, his son Matthew was made administrator of his estate.
- Shortly after James' death, Mary moved with her son William to Sullivan county.

The problem with this scenario is that it completely ignores the fact that there were two men named James Gillespie recorded in Troy in both the 1800 census and the 1803 tax list. There is nothing in the D-Hart theory that explains who the second James Gillespie might have been, especially given that he was enumerated alone and living next to Andrew Gillespie. In my opinion, the appearance of a second James Gillespie in the same place at the same time has to be explained.

## ***Possible Solutions – Scenario 2***

Two James Gillespie's, both over 45 in 1800; one with 5 children, one with 6 children

Let's just try this on for size:

<b>James-1 aka Sr</b>	<b>James-2 aka Jr</b>
Birth year unknown, before 1755. Based on earlier date range of children, he was probably a older than James-2	Born abt 1745 or earlier, based on estimated birth year of Mary (reported age on her gravestone)
MY NOTE: I propose this James had brothers Samuel, William, Matthew (d 1797), and Robert.	

<b>James-1 aka Sr</b>	<b>James-2 aka Jr</b>
Not the guy who gave the oath at Mamakating, but more study needed on this detail. <sup>6</sup>	
Possibly served in the 5 <sup>th</sup> NY Regmt, same Regmt as Robert Gillespie who died 1777. This regiment rolled over to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> NY Regmt in 1781 and was disbanded in 1783 after the Treaty of Paris.	Possibly served in the Ulster militia. Some militia service records do record James Gillespie JR.
Married Unknown, possibly Jennie Gillespie, sister of Major John. The name of Caroline Wilson has also come up. The mg place was probably Shawangunk based on reported birth place of Andrew.	Married Mary Brown Bannerman, date/place unk
Date range of children: 1759-1773 <sup>7</sup> Abigail, Jennie, Andrew, Matthew, Joseph, and Josiah	Date range of children: 1778-1786 <sup>8</sup> William, Susan, Josiah, James, John, Elizabeth (Betsey)
	Bought land in Little Britain in 1788; this same property was mortgaged in Jul 1790 – James was noted as a farmer living in New Windsor. Acc to Court of Common Pleas notes in 1794, the mort was paid by John McMickle in Jul 1791 (presumably he took over the property) <sup>9</sup>
Enumerated in Montgomery, Orange in 1790 (next to Saml Crawford); 2 males > 16, 4 females. My Note: Possibly he was the one enumerated in Walkill – still not sure on this one.	Enumerated in New Windsor, Orange in 1790. Males < 16 in his household could have been William, Josiah, and James/John.
	1799-1802 taxed in Troy, also Joseph; also Matthew (always taxed together with James) 1799 mention of Alexander Bannerman as a creditor to estate of Matthew Gillespie; AB was James' step-son.
1800 Troy, enumerated as single older James > 45, next to Andrew. Note that neither this James nor Andrew were taxed in 1800, so presume they had no real property.	1800 Troy, enumerated as the James > 45 with younger F's. He was also taxed during this year.
Possible that he was the merchant in NYC who became insolvent in 1801.	1801 tax in Troy and in Petersburg? Leant \$\$\$ in Lansingburgh in 1801, sold property there in 1803.

6 Xref my paper, "[A Study of Men Name James Gillespie](#), Early Ulster & Later Orange, NY 1730-1800", Schaefer, October, 2019.

7 These names come from the Royce book, but presumably from the generation before, children of Joseph. Note that the name of Joseph's son James is not included here because the D-Hart theory is suggesting that James himself was the father of the other six.

8 The names also come from the Royce book; all dates are speculative and unconfirmed.

9 These records are on familysearch, but not indexed. Really hard....

<b>James-1 aka Sr</b>	<b>James-2 aka Jr</b>
The Sr. James in 1803 Troy. He had little of value to be taxed.	The Jr. James in 1803 Troy. He was doing pretty well for himself by valuations.
	Maybe a post rider in 1803?
Named as a representative in a petition to NY Legislature as heirs of Robert Gillespie <sup>10</sup> Bounty land in Sterling granted in 1807, at which time James' presumed brother William of Newburgh sold his ¼ interest to Andrew Gillespie of Lansingburgh.	
Died in Montgomery, 1810, son Matt was adm.	Fate Unknown. Bcs he was likely the younger of the two James' found in Troy, maybe he did captain the vessels that traveled abroad, but at that time, I think he would have been in his 60s. Still the timing of the Hummingbird scuttle & subsequent lawsuit could play in. On the other hand, there was a James Gillespie living 58 Pearl St. in NYC who published an ad asking for an apprentice in the tailor business. This ties into Taylor theory & AB. He might have died in 1825 as per the Royce book but no records found to that effect.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

In my mind, the Royce book weighs heavily, maybe more so than it should given the absence of so many actual records, which may or may not have ever existed. The narrative is rich and the details interspersed throughout are tempting as evidence. But the Royce Book is unsourced and it contains proved errors. One example is the claim that the brother of James, namely Joseph, moved to Troy, which is true. But the only Joseph who can be placed in Troy was Joseph Gillespie 1773-1843 who married Sarah Dunlap. If James Gillespie is reported as being born in the 1740s, then Joseph of Troy was not his brother.

We must keep in mind that the Royce book was published in 1962. Its author clearly interviewed every relative that she could find as far back as possible. The information she recorded is invaluable, AND it almost goes without saying that second-hand, third-hand, or farther-back oral accounting can reflect confusion and mix-up of story and facts.

The things that we can note from the Royce Book, however, are:

1. only one set of children is discussed in detail; those who migrated to Sullivan county, those directly related to the author
2. but awareness of an older set of children was there. The logical explanation in the story is that the older children were siblings of James. But what if there were two James? It's easy to see how one of them would get lost in the family story.

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<sup>10</sup> If this is right, it's fair to conclude that James was the brother of Samuel, William, and Matthew who died in 1797.



But in the end, nothing in the story of one James Gillespie in the Royce Book provides any possible explanation for the 1800 census of Troy as well as the 1799-1803 tax lists of Troy where two men named James Gillespie appear. For me, the census and tax records carry more weight than the Royce Book, and they indicate there must have been *two* men named James, who clearly knew of each other. How then to say who these James characters were and how to make sense of each of their lives?

## ***A Late-Breaking Revelation***

Some exciting documentation came to light this week with regard to my quest to find out what happened to Robert Gillespie's bounty land. Two Seneca county deeds tell us:

In 1807, William Gillespie of Newburgh, Orange, NY sold his  $\frac{1}{4}$  interest in the Sterling Lot #51 which had been devised to the representatives of Robert Gillespie. William soon after sold his interest to Andrew Gillespie of Lansingburgh Rensselaer, NY. In 1809, Andrew sold the Sterling lot to Josiah Shippey of NYC. I'm still holding some research hope that more can be learned about the other  $\frac{3}{4}$  interest in Robert's bounty land, and how the other representatives, or their descendants, were involved.

Exciting as that find is, does this new evidence have any bearing on the question of One James or Two as presented in this article? I wonder. Like D-Hart, I find myself returning to the Royce Book to look for clues. Doing so reminded me of previous research experience with family histories. Even in those histories written barely 50 years after the death of the "first ancestor," the name of that first ancestor was wrong more times than not. So with that thought, I wondered if the first ancestor named in the Royce Book was not really named Joseph? Pause. More wondering. Wait for it. What would it look like if the first ancestor was named James? That would mean that James Sr. was the father of James Jr., Joseph, Matthew, Andrew, Josiah, Abigail, and Jennie.

Obviously I am adding a whole new working theory to this mix, a variation of the D-Hart theory, but one worth considering. Remember how I said on page 5 that the Sr./Jr. designation was not necessarily and often was not an indication of father and son? It hadn't occurred to me that in this case, it might actually be true that James Sr. and James Jr. *were* father and son, as now I think they were!

With this one adjustment, everything in [Possible Solutions – Scenario 2](#) is true, except now the list of James Sr's children includes James Jr., the one who married Mary Brown Bannerman. This scenario explains all the Troy records. In 1800, James Sr, older, evidently alone, was living in Troy to be near his sons, James Jr., Joseph, Matthew, and Andrew.

But now why do I think that James Sr. of 1800 Troy, and not some other on the James Characters list was the one involved in Robert's bounty land? Because of the appearance of Andrew Gillespie in the 1807 Seneca deed. This new documentation is the first source suggesting a genealogical connection between Ulster Gillespie's and Rensselaer Gillespie's. Furthermore, I think that the Ulster-Rensselaer Gillespie connection is a strong indication that the older James, aka James Sr. of 1800 Troy, was part of the petition to the New York Legislature for the bounty lands of Robert Gillespie. We know from the list of representatives for Robert, that William, Samuel, and Matthew – known to be brothers – were on that list. We also know now that Robert's land was divided into fourths, and since William, Samuel, and Matthew were brothers, it seems likely that James Sr. was also a brother of Robert Gillespie.

If this new theory stands up, then Andrew was almost certainly a son of James Sr., and Andrew's uncle, William Gillespie, gifted Andrew some land in Sterling for \$1. But what about James Sr? It's not hard to speculate that James Sr. was likely ill or failing by the time that Robert's bounty land was finally

delivered. I further speculate that he was indeed the one who died in Montgomery in 1810 when his son, Matthew, was later assigned administrator.

As for the younger James, aka James Jr., he was the one who married Mary Brown Bannerman. We know it was her second marriage, but we don't know if it was his, especially given that we can't pinpoint ages very well. But I feel that this James and Mary also started out in Orange County, given that Alexander Bannerman was married at Goodwill Church and was known to have been in New Windsor before he appeared as a tailor in NYC in 1797. This James Jr. was, I believe, a little more enterprising. He went from New Windsor in 1790 to Troy from 1799-1803, where it appears from his tax valuations that he consistently owned property. Indeed, he lent money to a Lansingburgh property owner, and subsequently sold that property when the borrower defaulted. He may have been the one who was also taxed for property in Petersburg.

So there we have it: A new theory, based in part on the family history of one James Gillespie (Royce Book) and then supported by census and tax records, which proposes *two* men named James Gillespie in 1800 Troy, father and son. Said theory further incorporates deeds pertaining to the bounty land of Robert Gillespie to surmise that the same James Sr. of 1800 Troy was a brother of Robert, William, Samuel, and Matthew Gillespie. By virtue of pursuing two apparently unrelated research questions: One James or Two in Troy? and Robert Gillespie's Representatives?, we now have a rather astonishing new picture of five Gillespie brothers who lived through Revolutionary times in and around Ulster/Orange, NY, two of whom are new to our understanding. Welcome home, Robert and James.

More research is already under way to locate any additional evidence to support or contradict this new working theory about James Sr. being the father of James Jr. and the other Gillespie boatmen while also being the brother of Ulster Gillespie's William, Samuel, Matthew, and Robert. Until then, I'm more than happy with the forward progress all this research has taken in recent months, and eternally grateful for the contributing efforts of other researchers who love this stuff as much as I do.