

**A Study of Two Men  
Named Jacob Summers  
in Macomb and Oakland Counties, Michigan  
1830-1865**

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**Draft 3**

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## **Introduction**

My maternal ancestors, Ernst Christian Menge (later Ernest Mann) and Maria Magdalena Sommer (later Mary Summers), arrived in Philadelphia from Germany before the Revolution in the 1750s. Members of both Mann and Summers families migrated to Sussex County, New Jersey in the 1770s before migrating again to the Michigan Territory in the early 1830s. These families had properties in both Oakland and Macomb counties, sometimes near or nearly on the county line. Thus, this discussion mentions families found in both counties.

This particular article focuses on individuals with the name Jacob Summers, both born in New Jersey, and both living around the county line of Oakland/Macomb, Michigan from 1830-1864:

- Jacob Summers (1787-1864). This individual had three wives: Mary Hiles, Polly Decker (she divorced him), and Charlotte Bronson. He was involved in banking and agriculture, and served in the Michigan state legislature for several terms. I will refer to this Jacob in this article as Jacob Sr. (even though that suffix was never used by him or others in his lifetime, that I know of).
- Jacob Summers (1808-1885). This individual was married to Jane Davidson and was a farmer in Shelby Twp, Macomb county. I will refer to this Jacob in this article as Jacob 2d, and in this case, this suffix was used by the younger Jacob.

The aim of this article is to:

- address previously published misinformation
- differentiate the two individuals with the name Jacob Summers
- establish what relationship existed between the two individuals

## **About Previously Published Sources**

Part of the necessity to record this article stems from the confusion that exists from narratives appearing in previously published historical sources, which is a subject I have written about on my research blog.<sup>1</sup> Those sources include, but are not limited to:

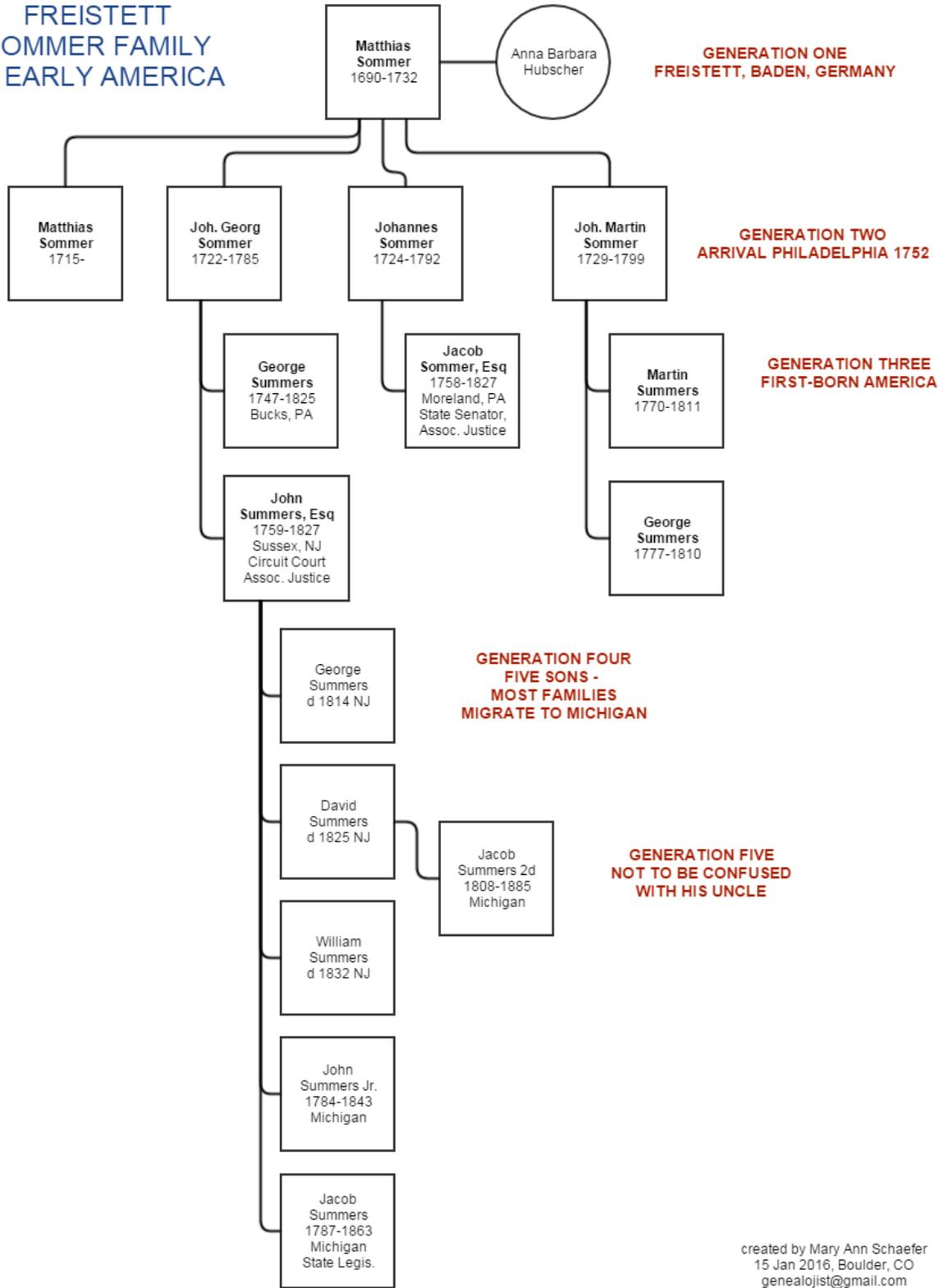
1. *History of Macomb County, Michigan: containing an account of its settlement, growth, development and resources, etc.*, published 1882, pg 738; available on ancestry.com
2. *Early History of Michigan with Biographies of State Officers, Members of Congress, Judges and Legislators*, published Lansing, 1888, pg 623; available on google books

In the following sections of this article about the two individuals named Jacob Summers, I will attempt to list the specific statements from each source which I believe to be incorrect, and fill in information which I believe is instead correct. I also include here a simple diagram of the Sommer/Summers family, which should be used for reference during the discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mann Hunt & Summer Search*, M.A. Schaefer, <http://mann-genealogist.blogspot.com/2015/09/addressing-misinformation-michigan.html>

**FREISTETT  
SOMMER FAMILY  
IN EARLY AMERICA**



## A Word About Naming Suffixes

When looking at Michigan records (deeds and probate), we find the name of Jacob Summers as:

- Jacob Summers, with no suffix. We cannot assume which person the Jacob Summers name refers to without other identifiers.
  - If the name is associated with a wife Polly or Charlotte, I surmise the reference is to Jacob Sr, and if the name is associated with a wife Jane, I surmise the reference is to Jacob 2d.
  - If the name is associated with Oakland County, I tend to believe the reference is to Jacob Sr, but if the name is associated with Macomb County, it's not clear which Jacob is referenced since they both had property in Macomb.
- Jacob Summers, Jr. This reference only shows up in two places I have found: a land patent in 1835 in Macomb county, and in the 1840 census of Sterling Twp.
- Jacob Summers, 2d. The earliest record I can find with the 2d identifier is an 1847 deed in Macomb county where the witnesses were Jane Summers and Jacob Summers 2d, the latter being (apparently) a justice of the peace at the time the deed was executed.

Regarding the Junior suffix, most genealogists know,

“Genealogists cannot assume that persons designated Senior and Junior were father and son. In colonial times, and for most of the nineteenth century, the use of Senior and Junior did not imply any relationship at all.

Whenever two persons of the same name lived in the same jurisdiction, some means was needed to differentiate them from one another. The use of Senior and Junior was the most common means of doing so – meaning merely that one person was older than the other. Two persons in the same area with the same name were likely to be related to one another, and often that relationship was one of father and son. But we should not confuse the cause with the effect. The use of Senior and Junior was merely a means of differentiating two people with the same name, whether related or not. If there was a relationship between the two persons, its nature must be discovered by other means.”<sup>2</sup>

Use of the numerical suffix is interesting:

“Alternatively, Jr's are sometimes referred to as "II". However, the original name carrier relative of a "II" is generally an uncle, cousin, or ancestor (including grandfather).”<sup>3</sup>

Also see Rules 8-10 in the very entertaining and informative article, *How to Use Jr, Sr, II, III, etc. (with Cartoons)*.<sup>4</sup>

I will point out that the suffixes, where used, were used only as a convenience for the time and place to distinguish a person. We can think of it as a nickname. Even though I don't have a birth certificate for either individual (such things did not exist at this early time period), it seems certain that the legal name of each man was simply, “Jacob Summers.”

<sup>2</sup> *Bob's Genealogy Filing Cabinet*, <http://www.genfiles.com/articles/senior-junior/>

<sup>3</sup> *Suffix (Name)*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffix\\_%28name%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffix_%28name%29)

<sup>4</sup> *How to Use Jr, Sr, II, III, etc. (with Cartoons)*, Josiah Schmidt, 20 Oct 2013; <http://schmidtgen.com/wordpress/2013/10/20/how-to-use-jr-sr-ii-iii-etc-with-cartoons/>

## **Jacob Sr. aka “Uncle Jake”**

Now is as good a time as any to introduce that Jacob Summers, presumably the older one, was also called “Uncle Jake.” Here are the references where I find Uncle Jake mentioned:

- *Early History of Michigan with Biographies of State Officers, Members of Congress, Judges and Legislators*, published Lansing, 1888, pg 623 says “He was familiarly known as “Uncle Jake.””
- *History of Oakland County, Michigan with Illustrations...* preface by Samuel Durant, published Philadelphia, PA, 1877, pgs 46-47; refers to Jacob Summers as Uncle Jake.
- 1848 news article announcing the veteran senator known as Uncle Jake will run for office.
- 1850 article in Detroit Free Press refers to Senator Jacob Summers as Uncle Jake.

As mentioned in the introduction, Jacob Sr. had three wives, but his children were with his first wife, Mary Hiles, who died shortly after arriving in Michigan and giving birth to their youngest child. The children of the Jacob Sr. and Mary Hiles were thought to be:

1. Phebe, b 1811 NJ, m Samuel Axford, d 1883 Oxford, Oakland, MI
2. Ann, b abt 1813, NJ, d unk, m Jacob Price
3. George, b abt 1814 NJ, d unk, not married
4. Barbara, b 1818 NJ, d 1860 Shelby, Macomb, MI
5. Rebecca, b 1821 NJ, m1 Morgan Axford, m2 Willam Henry Beach, d 1892 Detroit
6. John, b 1826 NJ, m Delia Bronson, d 1896, IL
7. Margaret, b 1829 NJ, m Levi Lee, d 1906 Coldwater
8. David H, b 1831 NJ, m Caroline Aldrich, d 1887 Macomb county
9. William F, b abt 1832 MI, m unk, d unk, last resided Sonoma, CA

See my accompanying article, *Jacob Summers of Macomb, Michigan – A Study of Occupations*,<sup>5</sup> for details about activities associated with Jacob Sr., which included banking, farming, politics, and civil service.

There was an 1832 land patent to a Jacob Summers of Oakland County for 80 acres in Avon Twp. It's not clear to me what became of this property; research is ongoing.

A preliminary study of deeds indicates that Jacob Sr. had properties in the following places:

- Avon twp, Oakland
- Orion twp, Oakland
- Oxford twp, Oakland
- possibly Oakland twp, Oakland (in possession of Polly Summers in 1863)
- Shelby twp, Macomb

Jacob Sr. was enumerated in Sterling twp in 1840, and in Shelby twp in 1850 and 1860. It appears that Shelby was considered his primary residence.

Jacob Sr. was involved in a legal case with Charles W. Chapel in the early 1850s. In 1846, C. W. Chapel and D. M. Price<sup>6</sup> built the Canal Mills in Utica, which produced flour.<sup>7</sup> Note that the Canal

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<sup>5</sup> Available on request.

<sup>6</sup> D. M. Price may have been related to Jacob Price who married the daughter of Jacob Sr., Ann Summers.

<sup>7</sup> *History of Macomb, Michigan* (Chicago: M.A. Leeson & Co., 1882 ), p. 720.

Mills were apparently destroyed by fire around 1851 – see the legal case mentioned for Jacob 2d. Chapel also built and ran a distillery on the canal.

It's not entirely clear to me what the legal case was about, but Jacob Sr. lost the case, and Chapel petitioned the court to seize assets of Jacob Sr. At that point, the following names were listed as those who were prohibited from receiving assets from Jacob Sr: John, David, Jacob 2d, and even Charlotte.

Jacob Sr. died in either 1863 or 1864 and was buried at Mt. Avon Cemetery in Oakland County, MI. The Summers obelisk also shows the burials of Jacob Sr.'s first wife Mary Hiles, his second wife Charlotte Bronson, and his daughter Barbara. It's bothersome to me that I've not yet found any other record of his death, neither in newspapers nor in probate. It's understandable that if he no longer owned any properties at the time of his death, there would be nothing to probate. But given his apparent personal and political reputation in the area, it seems there must have been a newspaper account. Nevertheless, I've not yet been able to find a surviving Michigan newspaper for the years 1863 – 1864 which reported his death.

As for information previously published which pertains specifically to Jacob Sr., the following table shows my analysis. Note that the numbers for the sources correspond with the list numbers of the sources given in the introduction of this article.

Source	Published Statement	My Research
1	Jacob Summers was the father of David Summers who married Caroline Aldrich.	True.
1	Jacob Summers was the youngest son of five....	Thought to be true. Jacob Summers was one of five brothers and his calculated birth date would make him the youngest of the five.
1	Jacob Summers was born to Judge Jacob Summers and Mary Hiles.	False. Jacob Sr. was the son of John Summers, Esq., who served in a judicial capacity in NJ. Jacob Sr. was the husband of Mary Hiles.
1	References to Jacob Sr's legislative and judicial service	Mostly true; he was not elected senator for 3 consecutive terms, but for 2 consecutive terms and then later another term. Also it's not entirely clear which Jacob served as associate judge, and perhaps they both did.
2	Birth date of 7 Jan 1787 in NJ.	Not certain. His grave marker seems to indicate a birth date around Dec 1786. <sup>8</sup>
2	The father of Jacob Sr. became a judge of records in Philadelphia.	False. The father of Jacob Sr. served in a judicial capacity in New Jersey. Jacob Sr.'s first cousin once removed, Jacob Sommer, Esq. 1758-1827, was, among other things, as associate justice in Philadelphia County.
2	References to Jacob Sr's legislative and judicial service	Mostly true; see previous.
2	Death date of 25 Jul 1863.	Not certain. His grave marker indicates the death year of 1864, but that doesn't make it so.

<sup>8</sup> Note that when I visited the cemetery in August, 2015, the old grave markers were in the process of being restored! The year on the gravestone of Jacob Summers definitely says 1864.

## **Jacob 2d aka “Lame Jake”**

The one and only reference I have seen for Jacob 2d as “Lame Jake” was in a death notice published in the Mt. Clemens Monitor in 1885. Whether Jacob 2d was lame his whole life, or he suffered an injury of some kind is unknown. It does not appear that he served in the Civil War.

Jacob 2d married Jane Davidson<sup>9</sup> around 1833<sup>10</sup> in Warren county, New Jersey. Their children were:

1. James Dekalb, b 1834 NJ, m Amelia Orcutt, d 1899 Shelby
2. Mary Elizabeth, b 1838 Macomb, m Edward Bromley, d 1918 Rochester
3. Elliot Perry, b 1845 MI, m Cora Depuy, d 1909 Detroit

Again, see my accompanying article, *Jacob Summers of Macomb, Michigan – A Study of Occupations*, for details about activities associated with Jacob 2d., which included farming and civil service. It also seems possible that he might have served as an associate justice in Macomb.

A land patent was granted to Jacob Summers Jr.<sup>11</sup> of Macomb County for property in Sterling Twp. The 1840 census of Sterling is the only other reference I have seen that uses the suffix Junior.

A preliminary study of deeds indicates that Jacob 2d only had properties in Macomb county. His property ownership started in Sterling twp, then to properties near his uncles in Shelby twp (on Shelby/Avon county line), and finally north to settle on properties on or near the Clinton River.

Jacob 2d also had some kind of legal problems from 1851-1858 in a case that eventually went to the Michigan Supreme Court.<sup>12</sup> The crime seems to have involved the burning of a building called the Canal Mills in Utica in 1851, but of the several defendants named, it's not at all clear what part Jacob 2d played in it all. He was, however, somehow equally responsible for paying the state a sum of \$4000! The case also included at some point the names of David and William Summers, again with no mention of relationships. We should note, additionally, that the Canal Mills were built by C.W. Chapel, who was involved in litigation against Jacob Sr. A daughter of Jacob Sr, Maria Summers, was briefly married to Francis R. Chapel (relationship to C.W. Chapel unknown) before she died early in 1847.

As for the death of Jacob 2d, and for that matter, also his wife Jane, the bothersome thing in this case is where he/they were buried. Unlike Jacob Sr. where I found a gravestone but no other documentation of his death, for Jacob 2d, we find both probate records and two newspaper accounts, but only vague references to a burial location. Here are the different details given in each newspaper, one in the Mt. Clemens Monitor and the other in the Utica Sentinel (October, 1885):

- MCM: “buried in our cemetery”, officiated by Rev. Thrush, the Congregationalist pastor
- US: “funeral services were conducted at the house,” by Rev. Mills of Rochester (of Oakland County)

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9 The death certificate of Jane Summers' daughter, Mary Bromley, listed the name of Jane Davidson, born in Warren, NJ as her mother.

10 This is an estimate based on birth of oldest child; I have not yet found a marriage record.

11 I have so far no evidence that there was a third person in this story named Jacob Summers who might have been called Jacob Summers Junior, so I am going with the assumption that Jacob Summers Jr. and Jacob Summers 2d were the same person.

12 W.H. Michael and William Mack, ed., *Encyclopedia of Forms and Precedents for Pleading and Practice, at Common Law, In Equity, and Under the Various Codes and Practice Acts*, Volume III, (Northport, LI, NY, 1897), accessed on mocavo, Sept. 2015.

The sons of Jacob 2d and Jane, namely James D. and Elliot P., were buried at Utica Cemetery, and their daughter, Mary E. Bromley, was buried at Rochester Cemetery. One reference has surfaced which indicates that Jacob 2d was probably buried at Utica Cemetery in an unmarked grave.<sup>13</sup>

## ***The Question of Relationships***

There is not much question that Jacob Summers Sr. was the son of John Summers, Esquire of Sussex, New Jersey. But there has been a long-standing question about the parents of Jacob Summers 2d. The record of Jacob 2d's death in 1885 names the parents of Jacob 2d as Jacob and Mary Summers,<sup>14</sup> which naturally points to Jacob Sr. and his first wife, Mary Hiles. The rub has always been that Jacob Sr. and Mary Hiles were married in 1811, and Jacob 2d was born in 1808.

In an effort to check the death record of Jacob 2d, I looked at a microfilm of the death register at the Michigan State Archives, and talked to an archivist about the information in these registers. There is, apparently, not a record of who reported the death information, or even at what point in time the information was recorded in the particular death register book I was reviewed. Unless there is more related information to be found associated with this source, my assessment is that the information about Jacob's parents from this source is indeed questionable.

After extended research to differentiate which records belong with which Jacob Summers, I arrived at a hypothesis that the familiar title used for Jacob Sr, "Uncle Jake," could well be an obvious clue about relationships. I had been taking the familiar title to mean that the public somehow saw Jacob Sr. as an older and wiser gentleman, which when I think about it, seems completely contrary to all other accounts of his reputation. No, no, no. I think the "uncle" reference could well have been literal: of the two Jacob Summers in the area, the older man was the younger man's uncle!

If we move forward on that premise, Jacob Sr. had four brothers: George, David, and William who died in New Jersey, and John Jr. who died in Macomb county in 1843. The results of ongoing research and debates with other Summers researchers can be found in my article, "*The Question of Jacob Summers 2d 1808-1885.*" The short answer, for today, is that David Summers and Mary Horn were the parents of Jacob Summers 2d.

Combined with the evidence on hand, I like the utter simplicity of this conclusion. Uncle Jake and his nephew, Jacob 2d, though a generation apart, both came from the same German ancestors who had arrived in Philadelphia 20 years before the American Revolution. A generation later, the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 then gave the Summers family an avenue to the west. So it was that members from the family groups of five Summers brothers made the trek from New Jersey to Michigan Territory becoming early pioneers of Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties. And certainly both men named Jacob Summers played their part in helping to shape a place that soon after their arrival became the 26<sup>th</sup> state admitted to the Union.

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13 Email from Ann F. (Macomb County Genealogical Group), "Summers Research in Michigan", dated 20 Aug 2015; "Utica Cemetery Walk" booklets.

14 Michigan Secretary of State, *Death records, 1867-1897*, Macomb: 10 (176 stamped), 199, Jacob Summers, 1 Oct. 1885; Department of Vital Records, Lansing, Michigan; "Michigan Deaths, 1867-1897," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-267-11843-163526-80?cc=1452402> : accessed 7 October 2015), 004209079 - image 1376 of 1511; citing Department of Vital Records, Lansing.