

I've omitted the surnames for Levi's patrilineal ancestors, in part because they are spelled variously in the records. However, the spelling gravitated throughout around "Den[n]iston" (with a "t") going back to the earliest known ancestor, James1. As always, when I do indicate a surname in conjunction with a particular record I will spell it exactly as it appears in that record. Otherwise, I will refer to the surname generically as DENNISON, or occasionally as the more restrictive DENNISTON.

- 1-James (say 1745 - abt 1812 YorkCoPA)
 - m. say 1770 Margaret -?-
 - 2-James (say 1771- by 1812 PrebleCoOH?)
 - m. say 1795 Sarah -?-
 - 3-James (abt 1796 -Feb1863) [supposedly b.VA in 1850 USCensus; PA in 1860]
 - m. abt 1818 Legis -?-
 - 3-William (abt 1798 KY - [1854?])
 - m. abt 1818 Catherine -?-
 - 4-Levi H (abt 1819 - 29Nov1896 CO) [death date from Findagrave]
 - m. say 1840 Milly -?-
 - 5-John Ireland (Jun1841 OH -)
 - m. abt 1872 Mary A -?-
 - 6-Dal (Apr1897 CO - [1947])
 - m. -?- -?-
 - 7-Norman D
 - 8-Norman B
 - 9-Levi James Deniston
 - 5-Franklin (Jan1857 -) [though Jan1860 in the 1900 USCensus]
 - 5-Solomon (Jul1860 -)
 - 4-Benjamin (abt 1829 -)
 - 4-Isaac (abt 1836 -)
 - 4-William H H (abt 1842 -)
 - 3-Michael (abt 1800 - aft 1830)
 - 3-David (abt 1801 OH - aft 21Aug1850); m.Ellinor [REDDING?]
 - 3-Thomas (abt 1803 OH - aft 7Jun1880); m. Sarah REDDING
 - 3-John (say 1806 -)
 - 3-Joseph (say 1808 -)
 - 3-Margaret (say 1811 -)
 - 2-<daughter>(say 1772 - bef 1800, but most likely in infancy)
 - 2-William (say 1774 - aft 1812)
 - 2-Michael (abt 1775 - aft 1819); m. say 1799 [1 kid by 1800, 5 by 1810]
 - 2-Mary (say 1775 - aft 1812) [a twin of Michael?]
 - 2-Catharine (say 1776 - aft 1812); m.say 1797 Michael PENTZ [2 kids by 1800, 6 by 1810]
 - 2-Elizabeth (say 1778 - aft 1812); m.say 1799 Jacob COMFORT [1 kid by 1800, 6 by 1810]
 - 2-Margaret (say 1780 - aft 1812), m.say 1798 John REESE [2 kids by 1800]
 - 2-Jean (say 1786 - aft 1832)
 - 2-Martha (say 1790 - aft 1832)

Table of Contents

[William3 of Auglaize County, Ohio](#)

[James1 of YorkCoPA and his conjugal family](#)

[What Became of James2 \(James1 of YorkCoPA\) and his brother William2?](#)

[Searching for James2 and William2 of YorkCoPA on the Western Frontiers](#)

[James2 of PrebleCoOH and his conjugal family](#)

[Onomastic \(Child-Naming\) Considerations](#)

[Final Considerations and Additional Suggested Research](#)

[My Principal Evidential Sources](#)

[Appendix A: An Alternate Theory of Levi's Ancestry Disproved by yDNA Testing](#)

[Appendix B: Revolutionary War records for James DENNISONs](#)

William³ of Auglaize County, Ohio

My USCensus abstracts and other evidence collected by Levi Deniston and his grandfather Norman D. Deniston, sufficiently identify the William Dennison who headed a household in AuglaizeCoOH as their ancestor. I've placed this William in the indented tree above and I identify him in what follows as "William³". The questions are: where did William³ come from and who was his father?

The 1850 household of William³ (aged 52,b.KY) includes his presumptive wife Catharine (51), and a presumptive oldest resident son Benjamin (21,b.OH). However, the next listed household (which is presumably proximate on the ground) is headed by Levi Dennison (32,b.OH), who figures to be William³'s oldest son, period, given that Catharine would have been about 19 when Levi was born. If this Levi was indeed a son of William, most likely William was therefore a resident and head of household in Ohio for the earlier censuses of 1840, 1830, and 1820 as well.

AuglaizeCo was created in 1848 from the adjacent counties of Mercer, Allen, and Shelby, but there were no households in the 1840 census for Ohio headed by William DENNISONs in any of these counties. The only DENNISON households in these predecessor counties were the one headed by James Dennison (aged 40-49) in AuglaizeTwp of AllenCo, and another headed by Eli Denison in MercerCo containing 34 males aged 20-40 and no females or children: an annotation to this latter record indicates that this all-male-"household" was a "canal" enterprise.

From the 1840 USCensus I've abstracted all the households headed by William DENNISONs in Ohio, but a scan down the age 40-49 column shows that only one of these Williams matches the age bracket for William³. That would be the senior of the Williams in MuskingumCoOH (aged 40-49), and there's thus a *prima facie* chance that he might be William³. However, there are also William Dennisons Sr and Jr in the 1850 census for MuskingumCo, with Sr born in Massachusetts (while William³ of AuglaizeCo was born in KY) which rules this line out. Most likely, since William³ had a good sized family of his own by 1840, his household was simply overlooked in the 1840 census.^[1]

For the 1830 census I've again abstracted all the Ohio households headed by William DENNISONs. A scan of the aged 30-39 column shows that there were only three Williams of an age to match William³ of AuglaizeCo. One of these, the 1830 William of Muskingum, I've traced in MuskingumCo to the 1850 census, and thus dismissed. The other two are William of PerryCo and William of PrebleCo, and their 1830 households are at least roughly consistent with the partial 1850 family of William of AuglaizeCo. I've abstracted all the DENNISONs in these two counties for 1830.

The PerryCo William can be definitively ruled out because the same man is apparently still present in PerryCo for the 1850 census, while the 1830 William of PrebleCo is not—presumably because the PrebleCo William is the William DENNISON who moved on to AuglaizeCo. I note also that PrebleCo is much closer to AuglaizeCo (about 100 miles due north), and that the DENNISONs of PrebleCo spelled their name "Deniston" (like our subject Levi), while the PerryCo ones spelled theirs "Dennison" (by 1830 or so, the spellings of surnames had mostly crystallized).

The next piece needed to complete this circumstantial puzzle is to show that William of PrebleCo was a son or brother of other DENNISONs of the county. I will return to this proposition anon.

¹ Since, I am working toward a conclusion here that William³'s father was born in PA, I've abstracted all the William DENNISONs who headed households in PA for 1840, on the slim chance that he might have been one of the rare westward migrants who ever backtracked to their place of origin—but none of the PA Williams fit the parameters. And since William³ was supposedly born in KY about 1798 I looked for Williams in KY as well, but there was only a single household there headed by a William Denison in GraysonCo (not a border county), and he was in his 50s.

Finally, my census abstract for Williams of Ohio also include all the other DENNISON households in the counties that I abstracted, but none of these other households appear to be have included a second family that might be William³'s.

James1 of YorkCoPA and his conjugal family

In genealogy, it's conventional to work backwards ancestrally a generation at a time, but in this case, the key evidence for the link between William3 of AuglaizeCoOH in the 1850 census, and his father and grandfather, James2 and James1 of YorkCoPA, resides in YorkCo records pursuant to the probate estate of the latter, which I've abstracted in full [here](#).

The complete conjugal family of James1 DENNISON of WarringtonTwp, YorkCoPA at the time of his death, intestate, is laid out in a petition filed 4Nov1812 in the county Orphans Court by his legal heirs to facilitate the disposition of his 103.5a tract of land in Warrington jointly inherited by them all. These heirs, his widow Margaret, and his children (and in one case a set of grandchildren, the children of his deceased son, James2) are all named in this petition, presumably in the order of their birth—except for the lead petitioner, his son Michael, and the final listing of James1's grandchildren by his deceased son James2.

The following crucial passage of this heirs petition is transcribed according to [my RMM rules](#)):

“...that the said **James Dennison** left a widow named **Margaret**, also the petitioner [**Michael Dennison**]; also the petitioner **Mary Dennison**; **Catharine** [née **Dennison**], intermarried with **Michael Pentz**; **William Dennison**; and **Elizabeth Comfort**, intermarried with **Jacob Comfort**; **Margaret Reese**, intermarried with **John Reese**; **Jean Dennison**; and **Martha Dennison**; also the children of **James Dennison**, one of the sons of the said intestate, who died in the lifetime of his father, viz. **John, Thomas, James, Joseph, Michael, and William, Margaret, and David Dennison**, all lawful issue to survive him.”

My reconstruction of James1's conjugal family has largely been guided by the presumption that the usual legal conventions were followed here—namely that the lead petitioner would be the oldest surviving (and present) son of the deceased, and that the widow (if any) would be named next, followed by the remaining children of the deceased, in birth order. Thus, I presume that Michael was the only son remaining in YorkCo, but that he might fit in anywhere in the birth order—at least as far as the evidence of the petition is concerned.

The same may be said for the deceased brother James2, who is represented in the petition by his list of children, who jointly inherited their father's interest in the property; it's likely that this long list of James2's eight children was assembled, and added last to avoid the awkwardness of interpolating it into the list of his siblings.

The other evidence that has guided my reconstruction of this family are the early YorkCo census records, of which I've made a detailed analysis below. These records include the households of James1's three sons-in-law, who were named in the petition because as husbands they were the legal inheritors of their wives' portions, namely: Michael Pentz, Jacob Comfort, and John Reese:

1790 USCensus for YORK County, PENNSYLVANIA

	FreeWhite			Other		TOTAL
	M:16+	M:<16	F:All	Free	Slave	
PENNSYLVANIA, YORK County, Warrington Twp						
James Deniston	3	1	8	0	0	0
1 YorkPA-----: 372-56						

Assuming what was most often the case, that this initial record for James1, tabulates only members of his conjugal family, it is consistent with the three sons named in the petition of 1812, and indicates that one of them, either James2 or William2, was born after 1774. Given that James2 had at least 8 children and that the oldest of these (according to [my reconstruction of James2's conjugal family](#)), James3, was born about 1796, I've made James2 the eldest son. And since it appears that Michael was the only son who remained behind in YorkCo, where he was probably still living with his father in the 1800 census, aged 16-25, I've made Michael the third son, and postulated that he was born about 1775.

Since the tally of James's womenfolk is 8, rather than the 7 who were named in the heirs petition of 1812, I've postulated an additional daughter who probably died in infancy.

1800 USCensus for YORK County, PENNSYLVANIA

	Free Whites					Other		
	M:	0	10	16	26	45	Free	Slave
	F:	9	-15	-25	44	+		
PENNSYLVANIA, YORK County, DOVER Twp								
Jacob Comfort	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	
12 YorkPA-York:1328-09	1	0	1	0	0			
PENNSYLVANIA, YORK County, WARRINGTON Twp								
James Denison	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	
3 YorkPA-Warr:1400-09	1	1	2	1	0			
Michael Pentz	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
3 YorkPA-Warr:1401-03	1	0	1	0	0			
John Reese	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	
5 YorkPA-Warr:1404-01	1	0	0	1	0			

This census indicates that three of James1's daughters, Catharine, Elizabeth, and Margaret, are already married to their respective spouses, Michael Pentz, Jacob Comfort, and John Reese, and this conclusion is strengthened in the case of Pentz and Comfort by their 1810 households which each comprise six children (I haven't been able to track John Reese further).

The only daughters remaining in his household, presumably still unmarried (since all three still have their maiden names in the 1812 heirs petition) are Mary, Jean, and Martha, and their age categories in this census have guided my guesstimation of their birth dates.

However, that leaves several anomalies to account for in James1's household. Since his son Michael is not to be found elsewhere in the 1800 census, but heads his own YorkCo household in 1810, with, apparently, a wife and five children, I think that he was already married by 1800 and living in his father's household with his wife (he and she both aged 16-25), and one son under 10 (probably born within the census year).

The other anomaly in James's household is that his wife in 1810 is aged 44. According to my reconstruction of James1 and Margaret's family, they had children born between 1770 and 1790, which is by itself a reasonable time span for an adult woman's child-bearing years, but if Margaret was, say, 44 in 1800, she would have been born about 1756 and aged 14 at the time of her marriage, which is hardly credible. Most brides during the colonial and early American periods were at least aged 21, and hardly any were under 18. It is true that James's widow, Margaret, survived him by 20 years, making her will and dying in YorkCo in 1832, but I think nonetheless that the wrong column was checked for Margaret in the 1800 census.

1810 USCensus for YORK County, PENNSYLVANIA

	Free Whites					Other		
	M:	0	10	16	26	45	Free	Slave
	F:	9	-15	-25	44	+		
PENNSYLVANIA, YORK County, WARRINGTON Twp								
James Denniston	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	
1 YorkPA-Warr:1081-32	0	0	2	1	1			
Michael Denniston	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	
1 YorkPA-Warr:1081-33	4	0	0	1	1			
Jacob Comfort	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	
2 YorkPA-Warr:1082-45	1	1	2	1	0			
Michael Pentz	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	
2 YorkPA-Warr:1083-15	3	2	0	1	0			

Michael now heads his own household, comprising five children, but not, probably, including that putative first son born by 1800, who apparently continued to live in his grandfather, James's, household.

James's household, meanwhile, seems to have devolved to just himself, his wife Margaret, and their three remaining, still unmarried daughters, all still surnamed in the 4Nov1812 heirs' petition quoted above.

There's an 1850 USCensus record for Martha Denison (aged 50,b.PA) living single in YorkCoPA, still apparently unmarried. Although her age, 50, is discrepant with her age categories in the 1800 and 1810 USCensus, I suspect that she was really 60, and the discrepancy could be explained either by a transcription error, or by the predilection of some aging females to fudge their age.

What Became of James2 (James1 of YorkCoPA) and his brother William2?

The classic and most common problem in American genealogy is to be able show that a John Jones who's found in the records of PlaceA, is the same John Jones who later appears in the records of PlaceB, especially when the places are widely separated geographically, as were the places of origin and areas of settlement for so many of the footloose post-Revolution generation. Nearly always, direct evidence is lacking for such claims and the best one can do is to research all the Joneses in the likely places of origin as well as the Joneses in the area of settlement, in the hope of accumulating enough circumstantial evidence at both ends to be able to make a strong case for just one of them.

The USCensus, particularly from 1850 on when every person was covered, is a great comprehensive resource, but unfortunately it was only taken decennially.

Occasionally, the head of a migrating family will retain his land in PlaceA until he has settled in PlaceB and then deed it away as a resident of PlaceB, and such deeds may show up in the books of PlaceA.

More usually, though, the best one can do is to research the records of the various PlaceAs exhaustively enough to determine the last date on which the migrant appears in the records of PlaceA, and the first that he appears in PlaceB, and use these correspondences to rule out certain PlaceA candidates, while making a circumstantial argument for one of them based on a short gap between the disappearance from PlaceA, and first appearance at B. Provided other circumstantial evidence can be found at both ends, indicative of an intention to migrate (such as selling his only land at Place A), quite a strong case for identification can often be made by such means.

There may also be an entirely different sort of genealogical resource that may provide evidence of migration histories across the post-Revolution US, although the books I have in mind are secondary sources and need to be treated with caution and verified where possible in the primary records.

The Postwar Westward Migration from PA

A large proportion of the post-Revolutionary War generation migrated westward in pursuit of the cheap lands on the western frontiers, as these were gradually, over the 1790s, cleared of predatory Indians. Initially, many central and eastern Pennsylvanians migrated to the new Commonwealth's western counties, but by 1800 most of the best land had been taken up by earlier settlers and/or land speculators, and many land titles in Pennsylvania's SW portion were clouded by contesting land grants issued by Virginia.

By 1800, the most popular destination for Pennsylvanians was Ohio, with its fertile, well-watered but flat or rolling lands, displacing the mountainous and relatively remote Valley of Virginia and Appalachia beyond. A few also tried their luck in northern Kentucky, on the southern banks of the Ohio River, but while the land in this area of KY was also of high quality, it was rendered even more problematic than the land of western PA by thickets of confused land titles that had sprung up over the previous two decades; the Virginia authorities who had been the stewards of the western lands that split off as Kentucky in 1792 had made a hopeless mess of its settlement.

Searching for James² and William² of YorkCoPA on the Western Frontiers Pre-1812 DENNISONs of Western Pennsylvania

As for western PA, there was a William Dennison in the 1810 USCensus for AlleghenyCo, but he was too old (aged 45+) to be the son of James¹ of YorkCo. There were also two Williams of the right age bracket (26-44) in MercerCoPA, and either could theoretically have been the second son of James¹ of YorkCo, but these western PA Williams appear to have been members of a large extended family of DENNISONs who acquired land in the 1790s in the so-called “Last Purchase [of 1784]” area beyond the mountains, and then many of them appear in the land grant records for AlleghenyCo and finally MercerCo after 1800, when Mercer was carved out of Allegheny. These DENNISONs were probably related to James¹ of YorkCo because their surname was generally spelled with a “t”, but while I haven’t researched these western PA DENNISONs in the relevant county records, I doubt that either of these western Williams was James¹’s son William². I’ve abstracted [all the DENNISONs referenced in the PA land grant records](#) (including warrants, surveys, and patents).

There were also two sets of records for James DENNISONs in the land grant records for the western counties of PA. On 23Oct1785 a warrant and survey was granted to Private James Denniston, for 200a in Donation Land District 3 in the Griffth Evans tract, in return for his service in the Pennsylvania line during the Revolutionary War. Although this land appears to have been in an area west of the mountains that later devolved to MercerCo, there is no record that James ever patented this land, or that any DENNISON patented a 200a tract of land in Pennsylvania (and unlike the typical irregularly shaped PA tract this acreage was exact because these Donation Land plots were perfect rectangles). Like most veterans, James presumably sold this land informally by signing over the survey to another—though not to any other DENNISONs or they would have shown up in the patent registers (included in the above abstracts). I address the question of military records for James DENNISONs, below.

The only other record of a James DENNISON who participated in the land grant process was a James Denniston who warranted and surveyed 375a in MercerCo, in 1814 and 1815 respectively, but both James¹ of YorkCo and his son James² were dead by then. This other James of MercerCo appears to have died shortly after [James of MercerCo’s land was surveyed on 13Nov1815](#), because the survey was “returned” (i.e. recorded) in 1838 by one William Denniston and another tract [warranted by a William Denniston in 1816 but surveyed for John Stephenson in 1837](#) that evidently lay adjacent to the James’s tract (both survey diagrams show these tracts of William and James adjoining) indicates that the adjoining tract in 1816 was owned by “the heirs of Ja[me]s Denneston.

In addition to abstracting all the land grant records for DENNISON in PA, I’ve also compiled all the township tax records for DENNISONs that were originally abstracted and published back in the 1890 in the Pennsylvania Archives, Series 3, and no stray western James or William DENNISONs turn up there. However, these PAA abstracts are radically incomplete and generally cover just the years around the time of the Revolution; and besides that a large proportion of these tax records are missing. In particular, the AlleghenyCo township tax records were discarded at one point, and it doesn’t appear that the MercerCo records have survived either. Many, if not most of the YorkCo tax records *have* survived, but they are jumbled across many films (and now online databases); still, it would be highly desirable to plow through these, abstracting any DENNISONs that appear.

I’ve also abstracted all the DENNISONs in the 1798 Pennsylvania Direct Tax records that were supposed to have covered every adult male resident in that year, though these records are also somewhat disorganized and I believe there are a bit gappy. Be that as it may, there are likewise no signs of a James² or a William², sons of James¹, in the Direct Tax records either.

On the other hand, William, Alexander, Archibald, and John Den[n]iston of WestmorelandCo, are names that appear as warrantees of many large tracts of land in AlleghenyCo in the early 1790, all most likely of the same extended family. It appears that they were initially poised in WestmorelandCo waiting out the Indian pacification program before attempting to make anything of their frontier PA lands west of the mountains.

In the absence of any census, tax, or land records evidence that these first two sons of James1 of YorkCoPA, James2 and William2, ever settled in PA, it's therefore on to the preferred migratory destinations of 1800, Ohio, or possibly Virginia or Kentucky, that we must turn.

Pre-1812 DENNISONs of Virginia

Until the Revolution, there was always a strong and steady flow of settlers south from western Pennsylvania into the Valley of Virginia beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains, comprised primarily of two ethnic groups: Germanics who came over mostly in religious groupings, and who gravitated toward the best farmland and away from the raw, mountainous and most Indian-infested frontiers; and those of Scotch-Irish or Scottish origin, with a sprinkling of Irish-Irish, who were mainly pasturers of an entrepreneurial and speculative cast, who were positively attracted to the most remote frontiers where the most and cheapest land was to be had—damn the Indians. Thus, the Germans generally settled in the northernmost, lower, portions of the Valley of Virginia, or, if they did continue south, stuck to the broad, well-watered main Valley, while the indomitable Scots settled in the wilder lower Valley, and on into the raw frontiers of the Virginia panhandle, NE Tennessee, and ultimately (by the early 1780s) up through the Cumberland Gap into central and northern KY. A few also trickled west into into the even wilder and more mountainous Appalachian range with its narrow mountain valleys that produced lush grazing land along the rivers and streams (in what is now West Virginia), but there were no decent roads into these mountains, only a few Indian and bridle trails, and the preferred route to north-central KY was the long one down through the Virginia panhandle.

As noted above, the preferred westward migration routes for those north of the Mason-Dixon Line changed in consequence of the Revolution and its aftermath, shifting northward. It was always and everywhere the case during the settlement of America for the frontiersmen to head as due west as possible so that they could rely on familiar climates and growing seasons. But it took over a decade after Yorktown before the predatory western Indians were sufficiently pacified that family men were prepared to lead their families more directly west to their preferred destinations of OH and northern KY.

By 1795 the area west of the PA mountains had been freed of the Indian menace, and with it the wilder and more mountainous portions of NW Virginia, and these areas in turn became migratory conduits to Ohio and the Ohio River with its access to northern KY, supplanting the Virginia panhandle. There was still heavy migration through the panhandle into TN and KY, but these settlers mostly came from the Virginia piedmont and even the tidewater, and from the western Carolinas.

Residence in Virginia is best tracked through the annual county tax records, which began in 1782 and continued on deep into the 1800s, and which have largely survived intact, but since only a smattering of these have been abstracted from the original manuscript records, indexed and published, and there is no comprehensive index, except for the year 1787, it's impossible to definitively rule out the possibility that James1's son(s) James2 and/or William2, spent some time in certain Virginia counties—most probably counties of the NW near Pennsylvania, their starting point.

I've exhaustively plowed through and abstracted all the DENNISONs in the tax records of many of the Virginia counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and coupled this with extensive other research that identifies these Virginia DENNISONs with known families who emanated from the VA

counties of Augusta (and derivative counties), Pittsylvania, and Fauquier (east of the Blue Ridge), and there are in my abstracts no really good candidates to be James² or William². However, the area I've most neglected are just those NW Virginia counties where these two are most likely to have settled, or sojourned, perhaps on their way to KY or OH. Of particular interest is the fact that the two USCensus records we have for the oldest son of James², James³, place his birth either in PA or VA.

[My Virginia county tax list abstracts](#), like the many other evidential compilations I've made, can be accessed through the upper left navigation panel of [the DENNISON Surname page](#) I maintain, and I revise and add to these from time to time.

Pre-1812 DENNISONs of Kentucky

Kentucky is of particular interest in the search for the roots of William³ of AuglaizeCo because, according to his 1850 USCensus record, he was born there about 1798.

The pre-1810 USCensuses for KY are lost, but as my KY tax list abstracts show (bundled with [my USCensus abstracts](#)), there were a number of DENNISONs in KY by 1800. However, all but one of these can be identified as sons of Daniel² (Daniel¹) DENNISON of AugustaCoVA, and nearly the same thing can be said for the DENNISONs in the first extant USCensus for KY of 1810. For 1810, only the two John Denneson's of MasonCoKY whose households are reasonably proximate both to each other, and to the Ohio River, and who look like father and son, don't fit into one of these known families; neither of these households, though, harbors any supernumerary males who might be James² or William², the sons of James¹ of YorkCoPA.

The absence of a good KY candidate to be the father of William³ of AuglaizeCoOH is a bit surprising. If William³ was indeed born in KY about 1798 (as his 1850 census record claims), we would expect to find his father listed in one of the 1800 county tax records for KY, which are largely complete. Of course, there are always a few gaps and omissions even in complete sets of records, and other possible explanations—e.g. the father was away from home and the wife and young children were harboring with another family—but that this is an anomaly cannot be denied. In genealogy, it's not, strictly speaking necessary, to track every move of one's subjects, but it's nonetheless reassuring to be able to do so, and making the effort can either significantly strengthen whatever circumstantial case one can otherwise build, or turn up loose thread anomalies that need to be accounted for lest they unravel the whole tapestry.

Pre-1812 DENNISONs of Ohio

In the wake of the Revolution, much of Ohio land had been reserved by the claiming states (Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Connecticut) as bounty land to reward the soldiers of those states for participating in the Revolution, and beyond that, in an act of 1796 the federal legislature mandated that the new territory (which became a state only in 1803) be surveyed in a unique grid system, that was thereafter applied to all newly settled territorial lands. The first Ohio land offices opened in 1800 and 1801, and from that point on, the land rush was on.

Unfortunately for researchers, except for one or two counties, the first USCensuses for Ohio (of 1810 and 1820) are lost, and unlike Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky, the sporadically settled and lightly administered Ohio counties don't seem to have kept annual tax records. Thus, the land records, federal and otherwise, are the closest thing to comprehensive records we have for the pioneer Ohioans who began trickling into the territory as early as the 1790s.

There is one such land record that quite likely pertains to the James² (James¹) DENNISON we seek: an Ohio patent record for James Denniston dated 20Dec1808 for a half section of land in the SW corner of the state, in HamiltonCo within the Cincinnati Land Office District.

James2 of PrebleCoOH and his Conjugal Family

Although James2, putative father of William3, has thus been up to now a completely shadowy figure, there is, fortunately, evidence beyond the mere circumstance that James2 (James1) of YorkCoPA had a son named William, that places James2 in western and southwestern Ohio, where we also pick up the trail of William3 of Preble and Auglaize counties.

The Ohio “Mug Book” Evidence

During the interwar period, 1875-1915, a whole genre of “mug book”^[2] literature emerged across America (though more sparsely in the impoverished post-war South) when the aging generations of Americans of that period for the first time looked back with family pride, but also curiosity, on their ancestral past, and in response to this interest were offered the means to publish their family stories for posterity. A number of enterprising big city publishing firms sent out agents into the rural hinterlands knocking on the doors of upstanding farmers, to solicit narratives of their family history to be published in historical and biographical compendiums of their county in return for a subscription to the intended volume.

Just such a resource was found by Levi’s grandfather Norman Deniston (in fact there were two, though I shall consider just one of these here in detail. In *History of Preble County, Ohio* (Chicago:H.Z.Williams, 1881), he found this one paragraph on page 277, which I will quote in full:

James Dennison, Sr., and family came [to PrebleCoOH] from Pennsylvania about the year 1807 or 1808, and settled where the Gregg mill now is, which mill his son James, erected. The father died in the early settlement of the township, and his widow became the wife of William Swisher, one of the early settlers, who afterwards moved on to Four Mile Creek in Dixon Township. Thomas Dennison now living in Niles, Indiana, is the only survivor of nine children. James resided at the mill, which he erected, until a few years before his death, when he removed to Eaton. He died in February, 1863, aged 62 or 63 years. His wife was a daughter of William Eidson.

There were no DENNISONs in PrebleCoOh for the 1880 USCensus, but this account likely came from an old timer who had known James Jr (James3) well and probably at least met his sole surviving brother, Thomas3 of Niles—but it was Niles, Michigan, not Niles, Indiana. There was a Niles in Indiana, in DelawareCo not far from Preble, but no Thomas DENNISONs of a suitable age anywhere in Indiana for the 1880 USCensus. However, Thomas Deniston of NilesMI, in BerrienCo, fits the parameters perfectly (aged 77,b.OH) and his parents were born in PA, which confirms the Pennsylvania origin of this PrebleCoOH family of James2.

The above passage itself tells us that: James Dennison, Sr (James2) was settled in PrebleCoOH at the time of its creation, 1808, that he came from Pennsylvania, that he erected a mill but died a few years later, leaving it in the hands of his son James (James3). It further tells us that James3 died Feb1763, aged about 63, and that he had a brother Thomas3 who lived in Niles and was still alive about 1880 when the History of Preble County was being compiled.

² My rather jocular characterization of these invaluable county historical and biographical compendiums derives from their penchant for publishing solemn engraved portraits (or later photos) of local worthies who probably paid an extra fee on top of their subscription fee, to secure this additional prominence in the published volume. At some point, the coiner of the term “mug book” was struck by the resemblance of this gallery of unknown faces to the books of photo the police compile to assist in the identification of criminal suspects.

As it happens, all of these parameters fit James, the deceased-by 1812 son of James DENNISON Sr of YorkCoPA, as indicated in the language of the 1812 YorkCo petition quoted above. And from that petition, we also know that James2 (James1) of YorkCo (the PrebleCo immigrant called James Sr) had other sons named William and Michael, and in the 1830 USCensus for PrebleCo, we find households headed by James, Thomas, William, and Michael, all of suitable ages and family composition to be the sons of this deceased James2. There are also two DENNISON households in PrebleCo for the 1820 census, one headed by James[3], likely the eldest son of the deceased James2, and the other headed by Sarah Dennison, and containing either four or five males who likewise fit the parameters to be her and James2's sons. Altogether, this makes a compelling circumstantial case that the William Deniston (aged 30-39) who headed a household in PrebleCoOH in the 1830 USCensus, was the son of James, the PrebleCo immigrant of 1808 or before, who was himself the son of the YorkCoPA James Dennison who died about 1812, shortly after (or before) his son James of PrebleCo.

The remainder of my case that the William Dennison (aged 52,b.KY) who headed a household in the 1850 USCensus for AuglaizeCoOH, and was the father of Levi Dennison (32,b.OH) who lived next to him, rests on the comprehensiveness with which I've searched the USCensus for and examined the several alternative Williams who might have been the 1830 William of PrebleCo, as set forth above in [the section on William3](#).

Reconstruction of the Conjugal Family of James2 (James1 of YorkCoPA)

Here is my abstract of the 1820 PrebleCoOh household of James2's putative widow, Sarah:

1820 USCensus	Free Whites							F	A	C	M	Sla	Fre	Oth		
	M:	0	10	16	16	26	45	-	o	-	g	o	a	ves	Col	Not
	F:	9	-15	-18	-25	44	+	r	r	m	n					Txd
OHIO, PREBLE County, Lanier Twp																
Ja[me]s Dennison	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	x	0	0	1	0	0	0		
1 PrebOH-Lani: 87A-17	0	0	-	1	0	0										
Sarah Dennison	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	x	2	0	0	0	0	0		
4 PrebOH-Lani: 91	-10	1	0	-	0	1	0									

Since there is only one adult female in this household, and just one child under 10, Sarah is probably the widow of James2 who died by 1812, William3 of AuglaizeCo's father. An 1812 YorkCoPA petition in the probate of James1's estate father names all of the then living children of James2, and presumably Sarah, and later USCensus records that can be associated with certain of these children help us work out the approximate birth years of most of the children of this family.

The named children of James2 (and Sarah) were: John, Thomas, James, Joseph, Michael, and William, Margaret, and David. Ordinarily one would suppose that a list of children like this in a legal document was in birth order, but in this instance other evidence which I'm on the point of adducing, rebuts this presumption.

A paragraph in *History of Preble County, Ohio* (1881), 277, tells us that son James3 remained in PrebleCo where he was the proprietor of the mill his father built, and in PrebleCo we find him still in 1850 and 1860, aged 54 and 63 respectively, so James3 was born about 1796, but whether in VA as is claimed in 1850, or PA as his 1860 census record alleges, is up in the air. He may even have been born in KY. Be that as it may, James3 was probably the oldest son, not only because it was he who carried on his father's mill enterprise, but also because both his father and grandfather were named James, and both the Scottish and the Chesapeake tidewater naming patterns would have called for the naming of the eldest son James.

I've argued that son William³ was William of AuglaizeCoOH in the 1850 census, and since this William was b.abt 1798 in KY, he figures to be the next oldest son.

The lone female in Sarah's household is presumably, Margaret, the lone daughter of her and James² and their youngest child, born say 1811, just before, or possibly just after, her father's death.

The remaining denizens of Sarah's household are probably either four (or I think five) of this couple's remaining sons. Jumping ahead to the 1830 census for PrebleCo, we find DENNISON ("Deniston") households headed by James, William, Michael, and Thomas, the first three of these in their 30s, Thomas in his 20s, and these figure to be the four oldest sons of James². I further think it likely that those overlapping age categories in Sarah's 1820 household (1 male 16-18, 2 males 16-25) represented (by the enumerators mistake - the male in the first category should also have been one of the two in the second category) three, not two DENNISON sons, and that these were (in decreasing order of age) William, Michael, and Thomas.

I've noted above that Thomas (said in the *History of Preble County, Ohio* (1881) to have been the only survivor of nine children of his father James²) was still alive for the 1880 USCensus of Niles, BerrienCoMI, and his age there is given as 77. Thomas, a grocer, is found in the censuses for BerrienCo from 1880 back to 1840 (with his surname spelled "Denniston" from 1880-1850) and his ages, respectively are 67, 57, 46, and 30-39. We may therefore say with some confidence that Thomas³ was born abt 1803.

Still unaccounted for, among the list of James²'s children in the 1812 YorkCoPA probate petition are John, Joseph, and David, and just two remaining males in their widowed mother Sarah's 1820 household, both aged 14-20.

I think that one of these males was the David Dennison (aged 20-29) who appears just once, in the 1830 USCensus for ButlerCoOH, which is adjacent to PrebleCo. There is one other David of interest in the censuses of 1820-1860, and that's the David (aged 54,b.KY) in the 1850 USCensus for WapelloCoIA; his KY birth is intriguing, but I think the 1830 ButlerCoOH David is a better candidate to fit into this family. My dismissal of this Iowa David was confirmed when I found in the same 1850 census a David Denniston (aged 49,b.OH) in BerrienCoMI (the same county as putative brother Thomas³), with (like Thomas in 1880) a Redding in his household. Thus puts David's birth year at 1801, which fits well into the family, though it challenges my assumption above that the oldest three males of mother Sarah's 1820 household were William, Michael, and Thomas. I note, though, from the widely varying birth places of David's five children in the 1850 census that he was exceptionally peripatetic; it seems likely, therefore, that David, who in 1830 headed a household in ButlerCo, not in Preble like his brothers, was the son (aged about 19) who was absent from his mother's household in 1820, probably working as an unnamed hired hand in some other household. Be that as it may, I place David's birth date as abt 1801, and Michael's as about 1800.

I've searched pretty comprehensively for the remaining two sons listed in the YorkCo petition, John and Joseph, in the censuses of 1830 on, but found no trace of them. One or both most likely died young. In any case, we may arbitrarily assign their birth dates to the period 1805-1810: John say 1806, and Joseph say 1808.

Onomastic (Child-Naming) Considerations

Even without the yDNA test of Levi Deniston, putative descendant of this line, both the sets of given names within the DENNISON families I've focused on here, and the frequent and persistent "t" spelling of their surname, identifies it as Scottish-originated [DENNISON Patrilineage 1](#). It is therefore more than probable that the two conjugal families I've reconstructed here, that of James1 and James2, would have followed the [the Scottish Onomastic Pattern](#)^[3] in naming their children in the order of their birth, at least with respect to the first three children of each sex. I estimate that at least 90% of first generation immigrant families of this ethnicity followed this pattern, which persisted in America to some extent well into the 19th century, and back in Scotland itself even into the 20th.

The Parental version of this pattern that was overwhelmingly prevalent in America calls for the first and second sons to be named for their grandfathers (with the paternal grandfather's name preferred for the first son, and the maternal grandfather's for the second), while the third son was named for his father. Daughters were named (homologously) in order for: (1) their maternal grandmother; (2) their paternal grandmother; and (3) their own mother.

This deferral of naming children for their own parents was to the 3rd child was the signature of the Scottish onomastic pattern, which differentiates it from the other two onomastic patterns prevalent during the colonial and early American period: the New England pattern that called for the first son to be named for his father; and the [Chesapeake tidewater pattern](#) that called for either the first or second son to be named for his father.

It's worth noting, however, that of the two other immigrant families of this patrilineage that have been mapped, Daniel1 and John1 of AugustaCoVA, who were both in Virginia by the 1750s, while John1 named his third son John (presumably after himself), Daniel1 named his first (and only known) son Daniel, and this Daniel2 seems to have departed from all known patterns, as he didn't get around to naming a son Daniel until his 6th son.

As for the lineage we are focused on here, let's look at the conjugal family of James2 first, since we know that his parents were named James and Margaret.

James2 seems to have followed the pattern, at least insofar as he named his first son James—presumably after his father James1, but the given name having been thus used, precludes it being used again in the naming of the third son for himself. Likewise, James2's first (and only) daughter was named Margaret, presumably for James2's mother, and not for James2's wife, who was named Sarah.

The Parental Scottish Pattern next calls for naming the second son for his maternal grandfather, but we don't know Sarah's surname, or therefore the name of her father: it would be a good bet, though, that his given name was William. The remainder of the pattern calls for naming additional sons for their paternal uncles, ideally in their order of birth, and since the given name of James2's next older brother, William, has already been used, the name of his 3rd son ought to be Michael, after James2's next older brother, Michael2, and that is indeed what we find.

I therefore conclude that James1's son James2 followed the pattern, and it's therefore highly probable that his father did too. Thus, we ought to expect that James1's father was also named James, and his mother was most likely named Mary, like James1's oldest daughter, Mary.^[4]

³ An appendix at the end of my paper on the Scottish onomastic pattern provides a frequency table of Scottish given names. Although all of these names overlap with British names in general, due to the Scottish onomastic pattern, there was an extreme concentration on the same names, both within families and in the Scottish population as a whole. Thus, it's rather easy to differentiate families with this ethnic origin, provided that they are relatively large and also complete.

⁴ Though I've posited an earlier daughter for James1 whose name is unknown, whom I suppose died in infancy, it was a feature of the pattern to reuse a given name of a deceased child at the next naming opportunity after his/her death.

Final Considerations and Additional Suggested Research

The evidence that the above analysis is predicated on is far from complete. In fact, the research accumulated so far barely scratches the surface of the various sets of county records, and a thorough canvass of those is likely to strengthen the circumstantial case I've made above, or on the other hand, turn up anomalous or contradictory evidence that might point in the direction of a more accurate or definitive reconstruction of these families.

In particular, I've tried but failed to come up with any unequivocal accounting for James2 (the putative eldest son of James1 of YorkCoPA) before his first appearance in PrebleCo about 1808 (unless it be the 20Dec1808 patent issued to James Denniston for land two counties away in HamiltonCoOH), and I've also been unable to find James2's brother William2 at all—though some of the records I've abstracted may pertain to him. Since James2's son James3 was born in VA (according to his 1850 USCensus record in PrebleCo, but in PA according to the 1860 census), it's possible that James2 (and perhaps brother William2 as well) were recorded in the annual personal property tax records of one of those northern and western Virginia counties that I haven't so far scanned for DENNISONs: those VA counties that I have covered are abstracted [here](#). Thus, further abstracting of these VA county tax records may shed further light on the peregrinations of these brothers.

I also expect at least James 1 appear in the township tax records of YorkCo, and I'd expect there to be a few other YorkCo records for DENNISONs as well, but the only YorkCo records I've abstracted exhaustively for DENNISONs so far are the probate records, and the few tax records that are included in my collection of [DENNISON Pennsylvania Archive abstracts](#). Unfortunately, the tax records of YorkCo, which are specific to particular townships, are an archival jumble spread over many LDS microfilms (and now [online databases at FamilySearch](#)—accessible for free, but one needs to establish an account), and like most of these old manuscript records they can also be difficult to decipher, especially for the novice. Still, any thorough job of research on this Pennsylvania-based Patrilineage 1 DENNISON line should tackle these YorkCo township tax records.

The other main group of Pennsylvania DENNISTONs (with a "t") who dwelt in the western counties of Cumberland, Westmoreland, Allegheny, and Mercer (as shown by [the PA land grant records for DENNISONs](#)) should also be researched in the county tax and other records, as they are almost certainly relatives of the YorkCo contingent; unfortunately, though the tax records of Allegheny county were discarded, and those of early Mercer counties, don't seem to have survived either.

I mentioned in passing above, an 1808 patent issued to one James Denniston dated 20Dec1808 for a half section of land in the SW corner of the state, in HamiltonCo within the Cincinnati Land Office District. A half section is a tract of substantial size, consisting of 320a, and one wonders whether the man who first appears that same year (according to the PrebleCo mug book account) in an area some 30 miles to the north that was erected into PrebleCo (not directly from HamiltonCo but from Hamilton's daughter county Butler, created in 1801) would also have been making such a large investment two counties away. Presumably the deeds records of HamiltonCo would shed light on this question by showing when this land was sold, and by whom, e.g. it might have been sold a few years later by the heirs of James Sr (James2) of PrebleCo.

My Principal Evidential Sources

This lineage was earlier researched by Norman D. Deniston (the grandfather of its subject, Levi James Deniston), who found much of the same evidence that I have and some that I didn't, going all the way back to the earliest ancestor I've shown above—James1 of YorkCoPA (identified by the place he died). [My own collection of USCensus abstracts for this lineage](#) is consistent with the ancestry contributed by Levi, but I haven't made any systematic attempt to verify his line since William3 of AuglaizeCoOH above (AuglaizeCo being the last county William2 appears in, in the 1850 USCensus).

Instead, I've focused here entirely on William3 and his ancestry. The pertinent evidence I've compiled, negative as well as positive, includes several collections of comprehensive DENNISON abstracts for colonial and early American Pennsylvania, links to which will be found in the upper left navigation panel of [the DENNISON Surname Patrilineages Association \(DenSPA\) page](#), but see especially "[DENNISONs in the Pennsylvania Probate Records for York County](#)" which are complete for all DENNISONs through about 1850.

Appendix A: An Alternate Theory of Levi's Ancestry Disproved by yDNA Testing

Before the Y-Chromosome (ySTR) DNA test results commissioned by Levi Deniston were reported, the sum total of the DENNISON evidence I was aware of suggested an alternate theory of his ancestry from the one arrived at by Levi and his grandfather Norman: that instead of stemming from James DENNISON of YorkCoPA, their line descended from the Daniel Dennistons of Beverley Manor in AugustaCoVA, whom I've researched exhaustively and reported on [here](#). Specifically, I thought that James³ (Daniel², Daniel¹) of this line, who ended up in BourbonCoKY, not far from the Ohio border, might be the father of Levi's William³ of AuglaizeCoOH. As far as I know, this James³ had only sons John (b.say 1786), and Daniel David (b.25Oct1794), with his wife Hannah having additional childbearing years before her. William³ of AuglaizeCo was, according to his 1850 census record, born about 1798 in KY, and the 1850 James Dennison of PrebleCoOH (b.abt 1796 in VA) might have been William³'s elder brother (as indeed, he appears to be) and both the sons of James³ (Daniel², Daniel¹) of BourbonCoKY. Reinforcing this theory, according to the Scottish Onomastic Pattern, which was followed by at least one of James³'s brothers, William, James^{3a}'s next son should have been named James, and his next son after that, William.

However, Levi's yDNA test results conclusively rules out this theory (leaving the YorkCoPA lineage I've outlined above as the best competing theory). The descendancy of the Daniels of AugustaCo has been extensively yDNA-tested and as the [DENNISON Patrilineage 1 Project haplotype chart](#) shows, all of this [closer cousin cluster](#) have certain inherited mutations in common, that Levi's haplotype lacks, specifically the marker values DYS576=17, DYS549=13, and DYS533=14.

Levi's yDNA is also a mismatch to the descendancy of the other DENNISON ("Denniston") AugustaCoVA pioneer, the immigrant John¹. Therefore, based on the exhaustive research I've done for the SW Virginia DENNISONs (including two other DENNISON patrilineages based in this area), Levi's ancestors can at most have dwelt only briefly in Virginia (as it appears that William³'s father, James², in fact did), and that, probably in one of Virginia's northwesternmost counties. By the same token, given the birth of William³ in KY and his older brother James² in VA, James² almost certainly came from, or through, Pennsylvania, as did practically all of the Scots and Scotch-Irish who came to America before 1800 and did not settle in New England (usually NH or southern CT), or New York.

Appendix B: Revolutionary War records for James DENNISONs

One other topic I haven't so far addressed, except in passing, is the question of whether James¹ of YorkCo participated in the Revolutionary War militarily, and in particular whether he was the veteran of the Pennsylvania Continental Line to whom the two bounty warrants noted [above](#) were issued.

Most of the voluminous historical military service and pension records are now online and indexed at [Fold3](#), where they can be searched for free, though full access to them is by subscription.

Here's a list of the James DENNISTONs I found in these Revolutionary War records:

(1) [Sgt. James Dennison](#) of the 8th PA Regiment of the Continental Line, mustered Apr1779, and as of 19Nov1784 he executed receipts for back pay for service in the 8th Pennsylvania for the years 1780-1783. This may be the same James Denniston to whom the two bounty warrants were issued. Soldiering in the Continental Line implied a commitment to serve for three years or the duration of the war;^[5]

(2) Pvt. James Denniston of Massachusetts, Continental soldier from Jun1779-Jun1783; enlisted at Camp Freetown, BristolCoMA; later retired to RensselaerCoNY where he in 1818 filed for a pension outlining the details of his service;

(3) James Dennis[t]on who served in the 3rd & 4th Maryland Regiments of Continentals.

(4) James Dennis[t]on of McClaughry's Regiment of NY militia from UlsterCo (near NYC); listed adjacent to an Alexan[de]r Denniston on a 1779 roster at West Point;

(5) Pvt. James Dennis[t]on who enlisted 17?Aug1776 in Col. Moses Rawling's Regiment of NY militia, who served at least through Nov1777;

and these James DENNISONs, among several others:

(6) James Dennison of EstHaddamCT, enlisted at LymeCT abt 20Mar1776 in Capt. Waterson's Company of Col. Samuel H. Parson's Regiment of the Connecticut line, discharged 27Dec1776 due to illness;

(7) Capt. James Dennison of NY, appointed 20Feb1776 in AlbanyCoNY to command a company of New York militia in Col. William VanRenselaer's Regiment

Of these, only (1) is a plausible match for the James who was awarded both a federal warrant for 100a in Ohio, and a Pennsylvania warrant for 200a in western PA, for his service as a Continental soldier from Pennsylvania. Yet there are two discrepancies here that need to be addressed.

The James who was issued the bounty warrants was Pvt. James Denniston, while the military records pertain to Sgt. James Dennison (without the "t"). As I've explained elsewhere, the "t" and the "t"-less spellings are normal variants that fall within the broad range of phonetic spellings that governed writing before the early 1800s when Webster's *Dictionary* sold the idea of a single "correct" spelling for every word. The more serious discrepancy is the difference in rank, because that affected the size of the Pennsylvania bounty grants: sergeants got 250a, while privates got only 200a. It's not so easy to dismiss this discrepancy as a mere mistake.

I'm inclined to believe that all of these records indeed pertain to the same James Dennis[t]on, but that he remained in the service for a time after the conclusion of actual hostilities in 1781, but before

⁵ There's no particular reason to suppose that since two warrants were issued to James Denniston, one state, one federal, that there were two James Dennistons. Continental veterans were allowed to "double dip" in this way. Most veterans in any case never took up their own land; most instead signed their warrants or surveys over to others for ready cash.

the formal end of the war at the Peace of Paris on 3Sep1783, and was promoted to sergeant during that interval.

Be that as it may, I think it very unlikely that James1 of YorkCo was the James who served from 1779-1783 with the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment of the Continental line, for several reasons

First, [the tax records for YorkCo, Warrington Township](#), where James lived, show that he was a resident taxable for each of the war years, 1779-1783—just the years when Sgt. James Dennison was in service.

Second, this Wiki page for the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment indicates that the regiment was recruited from the counties that lay on the frontier, west of the Allegheny mountains, and that except for about a year from early 1777 to early 1778, it was stationed west of the mountains as well. Even though these state regiments of Continentals were subject to being marched away from the areas from which they were raised, and even out of state, and many such regiments were dispersed in that way, following the flow of the war, the men, some of whom were married, didn't like it much when they were kept far away from the families that depended upon them for subsistence, and whenever reasonable this was taken into account. The other factor (which may be hard for us moderns to grasp) is that in those days the roads were poor—unpaved muddy bogs or snow-clogged passages for much of the year—and the mountains themselves were a formidable barrier. There was, in general, little intercourse of any kind between the settlers west of the mountains and those on the cismontane side. That is why, incidentally, the western settlers were obliged to reduce their corn crops to whisky in order to have at least one exportable commodity to trade with the east to secure a little ready cash money.

Third, according to my reconstruction of James1 of YorkCo's family, above, by 1776 James would have had six children, the oldest son, James2, being only 15 and not ready to take over and run the farm that this large family would have depended on for subsistence. Consequently, James1 seems a very unlikely volunteer for service in the Continental forces, which required a commitment for three years or the duration, and which therefore were largely recruited from the population of young, still unmarried men.