

John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) DENNISON of Augusta County, Virginia, and his VA Descendants 1

An overview of the purpose and scope of this and several related reports that provide its evidence backing it will be found on [the next page](#).

Consolidated 4 Generation Descendancy of John³ (Daniel¹⁻²) DENNISON in Virginia

Omitted surnames are all DENNISON; other surnames are rendered in all-caps.

- 1 Daniel DENNISON, the immigrant (say 1688 [Ireland?] - bef1Nov1749 AugustaCoVA)
 - m. say 1717 Sarah _?_ (say 1700 - say 1740)
 - 2 Daniel (say 1720 [Ireland?] - bef 26Nov1793 [FayetteCoKY?])
 - m. abt Jul1744 Elizabeth _?_
 - 3 [John](#) (say Jan1750/1 - abt Sep1824 AugustaCoVA), and [John3's Conjugal Family](#)
 - m1. abt 1778 Mary KING (say 1752 - by 1810), d/o of John & Margaret
 - 4 [John K\[ing?\]](#) (abt Apr1779 - abt Feb1834 AugustaCoVA), and [John4's Conjugal Family](#)
 - m(bond). 3May1800 Hannah HENDERSON (say 1780 - btw 1820-1830), d/o Jones & Isabella
 - 5 Isabella (say 1801 - aft 1Jan1834)
 - 5 Rebecca (say 1802 - aft 1Jan1834)
 - [?5 John? (say 1803 - aft 29Oct1806 —when next son Washington was born)?]
 - 5 Mary K[ing?] (abt 1805 - aft 3Sep1850)
 - m(bond). 1Nov1828 "Polly & Charles WINDLE"
 - 5 Washington H[enderson?] ((29Oct1806 AugustaCoVA - 6Sep1885 IndependenceCoAR)
 - m1. Dec1826 Rebecca Ann GEATING [GUTLING], in AugustaCoVA, d/o Henry
Children: Joseph M[ercurius] ([25]Jan1838), George W (abt 1845) and 3 daus
 - m2. 9Aug1866 Sarah Nica LOVE, in EllisCoTX, d/o James & Esther; divorced-no children
 - m3. 7Jun1885 Mary Jane FORESTER, in IndependenceCoAR, d/o of David & Anna
Children: Washington Cleveland Dennison (1Mar1886)
 - 5 Margaret (say 1811 - aft 1Jan1834); m(bond). 5Mar1832 Alexander YOUNG
 - 5 Hannah (say 1815 - aft 1Jan1834); m. William WATTs
 - 4 [Margaret](#) (abt 1781 - 26Nov1856 IN)
 - m. abt 1802 James1 NOBLE (bef 21Oct1779 - abt 1828)
Children: Elizabeth, Mary, Sarah, Margaret, Hannah, John D[ennison?] NOBLE
 - [?4 Elizabeth (say 1783 - aft 1791 —when next dau Mary was born)?]
 - 4 [Daniel](#) (abt 28Dec1786 - 15Jan1864 [JohnsonCoIL?])
 - m. 30Jun1813 Nancy McFALL (c1787 - 21Jul1853 FlemingcoKY), in AugustaCoVA
 - Children: Mary King (5Apr1814 VA), <son> (say 1817), Nancy M[cFall?] (abt 1819)
 - 4 Mary (say 1791 - by 1818)
 - 4 [Samuel Mc.](#) (abt 1795 - btw Aug1835 and Aug1836), and [Samuel4's Conjugal Family](#)
 - m1. 10Oct1816 Betsey PARRIS (say 1793 - bef 1826), d/o John & Hannah, in AugustaCoVA
 - 5 [John](#) (abt 1819 - btw 17/24Mar1856 AugustaCoVA), and [John5's Conjugal Family](#)
 - m. 10Dec1840 (bond 8Dec) Sarah LANDES (abt 1816 - by 4May1859), in Augu, d/o John & Esther
 - 6 Eliza Ann (abt 1841 - aft 1Jun/14Jul1860)
 - 6 William Harvey (25Feb1843? VA - 12Mar1929 AugustaCoVA)
 - 6 Mary Jane (abt 1846 - aft 1Jun/14Jul1860 [when the 1860 USCensus was taken])
 - 6 John M (abt Aug1850 - 7Dec1853 AugustaCoVA)
 - 6 David A (abt Aug1852 - 14Feb1853 AugustaCoVA)
 - 6 James Addison Luther (say 1855 - bef 1859)
 - 5 [Jane Eliza](#) (abt 1824 - abt 1874); m. abt 1847 Nicholas K. HENDERSON
 - [4 Samuel DENNISON's 2nd wife:]
 - m2. 18Jun1828 Nancy PARRY, in AugustaCoVA
 - 5 [James A\[ddison?\]](#) (abt 1829 - 26Nov1859 NicholasCoVA)
 - m. 12Oct1854 Jane GIVEN (abt 1837 -), d/o of Samuel & Mary, in NicholasCoVA
 - 6 Samuel Given (Jun1856 NicholasCoVA - bef 1Jun1860?)
 - 6 John Elliot (26Nov1858 BraxtonCoVA - 1922 RockbridgeCoVA)
 - [3 John DENNISON's 2nd wife:]
 - m2. 27Jun1811 Martha PARRIS (say 1777 - bef 2Mar1824), d/o John & Hannah, in AugustaCoVA

John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) DENNISON of Augusta County, Virginia, and his VA Descendants 2

Collected in this report (DEN1,John3-Analysis) are my reconstructions of the conjugal family of John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) DENNISON of Augusta County, Virginia, of the conjugal families of his sons John⁴ and Samuel⁴, and of the conjugal family of Samuel⁴'s son John⁵. Besides reconstructing these families as accurately as possible, it has been one of my main purposes here to establish the relationships between these successive family heads—members of this branch of [DENNISON Patrilineage 1](#)—by drawing on and reconciling my conclusions here with all of the available evidence.

There are, accordingly, separate analytical sections herein covering each of these conjugal families, each with its own little piece of the indented descendency tree from John³, covering all of his descendants who remained in Virginia through the time of the Civil War. The families of other descendants, who went to Kentucky, Indiana, etc., are not followed here in detail.

To sharpen the focus in the sections devoted to the reconstruction of whole conjugal families and the intergenerational relationships between these families, I've relegated my analyses of the evidence relevant to the narrower genealogical BMD (Birth, Marriage, and Death) data to a separate section for each named individual, and the table of contents below is sorted alphabetically by individual name, qualified by generation.

To avoid cluttering up my analysis with forests of footnotes, I've offloaded the actual evidential abstracts, with detailed citations to the source (backed usually by images of primary records), to the report [DEN1-John3-EvidentialTIMELINE](#), and this is in turn supplemented by several other evidential reports linked to the TIMELINE, the most important of which [DEN1,John3-ChancerySuits](#), abstracts key suits like [Chancery1818](#) in detail.

Because the items in the TIMELINE are in strict chronological order, and because when I've discussed evidence in this analytical report I've always provided the exact date under which each evidential abstract is filed, they can be readily found by simply keeping the TIMELINE and the other supporting reports open while perusing this one.

All surnames below are rendered in their most common generic spellings and in all-caps to help them stand out, except when referencing these names in specific records contexts, when they are spelled exactly as they appear therein. Since most references to surnames here are to DENNISONs, that surname has generally been omitted for reasons of concision, except where the context requires it be specified to eliminate ambiguity.

ABBREVIATIONS

"d/o"=daughter of "s/o"=son of

"m."=married "m1."=married 1st "m2."= married 2nd — all marriages are in AugustaCo unless otherwise indicated

[Daniel⁴ \(John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt 28Dec1786 - 15Jan1864 IL?\)](#)

m. 30Jun1813 (bond 29Jun) Nancy McFALL (abt 1788 - KY)

[James A\[ddison?\]⁵ \(Samuel Mc.⁴, John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt 1829 AugustaCoVA - 26Nov1859 NicholasCoVA\)](#)

m. 12Oct1854 Jane GIVEN (abt 1837 -) d/o Samuel & Mary GIVEN, in NicholasCo

[Jane Eliza⁵ \(Samuel Mc.⁴, John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt 1824 - abt 1874\)](#)

m. abt 1847 Nicholas K. HENDERSON

[John³ \(Daniel²⁻¹\) \(say Jan1750/1 - abt Sep1824 AugustaCoVA\)](#)

m1. abt 1778 Mary KING (say 1752 - aft 12Par1810), d/o John & Margaret KING

m2. 27Jun1811 Martha PARRIS (say 1777 - abt 1818), d/o John & Hannah PARRIS
and [John³'s Conjugal Family \(indented tree and relationship analysis\)](#)

[John K\[ing?\]⁴ \(John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt Apr1779 - abt Feb1834 AugustaCoVA\)](#)

m(bond). 3May1800 Hannah HENDERSON (say 1780 - bef 9Feb1828),

d/o Jones & Isabella HENDERSON

and [John⁴'s Conjugal Family \(indented tree and relationship analysis\)](#)

[John⁵ \(Samuel Mc.⁴, John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt 1819 - btw 17/24Mar1856 AugustaCoVA\)](#)

m. 10Dec1840 (bond 8Dec1840) Sarah LANDES (abt 1816 - by 4May1859), d/o John & Esther

and [John⁵'s Conjugal Family \(indented tree and relationship analysis\)](#)

[Margaret⁴ \(John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt 1783 - 26Nov1856 buried DuboisCoIN\)](#)

m. say 1802 James NOBLE (bef 21Oct1779 - abt 1828), s/o William NOBLE

[Samuel Mc.⁴ \(John³, Daniel²⁻¹\) \(abt 1795 - btw Aug1835 and Aug1836\)](#)

m1. 10Oct1816 Betsey PARRIS (say 1793 - bef 1826), d/o John & Hannah

m2. 18Jun1828 Nancy PARRY

and [Samuel Mc.⁴'s Conjugal Family \(indented tree and relationship analysis\)](#)

Daniel⁴ (John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt 28Dec1786 - 15Jan1864 IL?)

m. 30Jun1813 (bond 29Jun) Nancy McFALL (abt 1787 - 21Jul1853 FlemingCoKY)

Daniel's death date comes from a gravestone, by way of Randle Dennison, and his birth date is calculated from the age at death on that gravestone: 77 years and 18 days. Daniel's and other AugustaCo marriage records referenced here are abstracted in my [AugustaCoVA-VRs report](#).

James A[ddison?] ⁵ (Samuel Mc.⁴, John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt 1829 - 26Nov1859 NicholasCoVA)

m. 12Oct1854 Jane GIVEN (abt 1837) d/o Samuel & Mary GIVEN, in NicholasCo

James's middle initial "A" probably stands for Addison since his half-brother, John⁵ DENNISON, appears to have named children for both of his own siblings: Eliza Ann and Mary Jane for his sister Jane Eliza, and James Addison Luther for his half-brother James.

James's birth year is based on the 1850 USCensus for NicholasCoVA that finds James A. Denison, farmer, aged 21, living in the household headed by Joseph Hanna, farmer, aged 55. There is also a 26Nov1859 death record for James A. Denison, aged 30 in a typescript copy of the NicholasCoVA Death Register. James died of "consumption" and his parents were "unknown" by the informant, "father-in-law ... Sam Given".

James's 12Oct1854 NicholasCo marriage record provides a second ascription of his birth year to about 1829. It says that James A. Denison (aged 24) was married there to Jane Given (aged 17). Correspondingly, I find a Jane Given (age 13) in the 1850 NicholasCo household of the only Samuel Given in the county of an age(56) to be the father-in-law of the James Denison who died in NicholasCo in 1859, and though Samuel's household does not appear to be proximate to that of Joseph Hanna where Jane's future husband James dwelt, it is near the household of Nicholas K. Henderson, the husband of James's half-sister Jane Eliza (DENNISON) HENDERSON.

James's marriage record also says that he was born in AugustaCoVA—an additional piece of circumstantial evidence linking him to the only DENNISONs still there, the descendancy of John³.

In the 1860 census for WebsterCoVA (adjacent to NicholasCo) I find James's widow (aged 23, born in NicholasCo) living in the household of one James Hanna (66, born in GreenbrierCoVA), along with her son John E (1, born in NicholasCo); not only are these counties of birth specified but Jane is actually called "widow Jane". It's probably significant that James's widow Jane in 1860 is living with one James Hanna (66), while James himself dwelt in 1850 before his marriage in the household of one Joseph Hanna (55): was one of these Hanna names perhaps transcribed in error, or was this the same Hanna whose full name was either James Joseph Hanna, or Joseph James Hanna?

I've scanned through all of the annual NicholasCo personal property tax records from 1818-1860 looking for DENNISONs but found only James from 1850-1859, who was replaced by Jane in 1860. Since the tax records normally list only men aged 21+, or female heads of household that own taxable personal property, this is exactly as expected, though for that reason it provides no further clues to James's (and Jane's) career in NicholasCo, nor have I done any further research on either James or Jane or his half-sister Jane Eliza beyond the USCensus. The information on the children of this couple, and the further descendancy information I've posted [here](#) on the DENNISON Patrilineage 1 Project web page, all comes from descendant project member, Scottie Dennison.

Jane Eliza⁵ (Samuel Mc.⁴, John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt 1824 - abt 1874)

m. abt 1847 Nicholas K. HENDERSON

What little I know about this Jane Eliza née DENNISON comes exclusively from the 1850 and 1860 USCensus records for her husband, Nicholas Henderson's, household, both of which point to a birth date of about 1824, and a marriage date of about 1847.

John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) (say Jan1750/1 - abtSep1824 AugustaCoVA)

m1. abt 1778 Mary KING (say 1752 - aft 12Par1810), d/o John & Margaret KING

m2. 27Jun1811 Martha PARRIS (say 1777 - abt 1818), d/o John & Hannah PARRIS

I first tackled the question of John³'s birth date in my reconstruction of his natal family on pages 14-19 of my earlier report for sponsor Alan Denison, "[The Daniel Dennistons of Beverley Manor and Descendants](#)" (originally published back in 2007), and I've covered his career and reconstructed his conjugal family on pages 20-29, to which the reader is referred.

My focus in this report is on the children of John³, and their children, and I've therefore greatly amplified and revised my reconstruction of his conjugal family, but I don't propose to replicate here the detailed material on John himself, his wife Mary KING and her family, except to again present my evidence and argument pertaining to his narrow genealogical BMD (Birth, Marriage, and Death) information.

In the first place, it's highly unlikely that John³ was born after 18Aug1751, exactly 21 years before he purchased his own land in AugustaCo adjacent to that of his father Daniel² on 18Aug1772,^[1] and it's equally unlikely that he was born before Aug1750, less than 16 months after the next oldest child of Daniel², Mary, who was baptized on 9Feb1748/9 by the Reverend John Craig at the Old Augusta Stone Church near Staunton.

Beyond this my guesstimation of John's birth date within this range of dates has been guided by consideration of the typical birth interval between the early children of couples in this time and place (18-24 months), and more specifically by the otherwise determined birth interval in John's natal family.

John's next oldest sibling Mary was preceded in her baptism by two sisters baptized, respectively, 2Aug1747, and 19Jan1745/6, or an average of about 18 months, and 18 months from 9Feb1748/9 would put John³'s birth at say Oct1750. But the typical birth interval of Daniel²'s children began to stretch out after his first three or four, with the next (surviving) child after John³, Sarah, born say 1754. In fact, this suggests is a substantial gap of some four years between John and Sarah, and their mother, Elizabeth, may well have had a miscarriage or another child who died in infancy, but the birth intervals from Sarah on, average close to the more typical birth intervals of 22-24 months.

With these considerations in mind, I've therefore guesstimated that John³ was born say Jan1750/1.

At the other end of his life, John made his will on 2Mar1824, "feeling the decays of nature", but not, apparently, in acute distress, since the will wasn't probated until 23Oct1824. John Denison Sr appears on the personal property tax rolls of AugustaCo for 1824, but is missing from the 1825 lists. Usually, these lists were put to bed between July and September of each year, and it was also the rule that wills were generally probated within a couple of months of testator's demise.

I therefore estimate that John³ died about Sep1824.

John³'s first marriage, to Mary KING, occurred before AugustaCo began keeping marriage records, but her provenance is amply documented by the extensive and intimate relationship that John had with his in-laws and next door neighbors, John KING and son James KING, as shown, for example, by the 16Feb1793 deed of grantors John & wife Mary Denison of 52a on Naked Creek, adjacent to

¹ AugustaCoVA Deeds 18:463 et seq., Dan[ie]l Smith, gent to John Denison, for 5s+£115, 230a on the SW sid of "the dry river" on the S sid of the land of Daniel Denison; One occasionally finds minors as grantees in deeds, where these are intrafamilial affairs—grants from father to son, say—or listed secondary to elder brothers or guardians, but hardly ever are they granted land in their own right by outsiders, for the simple reason that under common law such contracts could be repudiated without penalty when the minor came of age.

John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) DENNISON of Augusta County, Virginia, and his VA Descendants 5

John King, and the 22Aug1794 will of John King^[2] who identified one of his sons as James King, and made “son-in-law John Denison” his co-executor. Then, there is the 28Mar1810 deed of James King selling to John Denison the 341a on Naked Creek that had been devised to him by his father, and James’s will of 12Apr1810^[3] leaving all of his remaining property to his nephews and nieces, the children of John Dennison, and to John himself—though John’s wife, and James’s sister Mary isn’t mentioned by name in the will; this may be an indication that she was dead by then, and at any rate she probably died before the 1810 USCensus was taken a few months later.

My estimate of the date of John’s first marriage, to Mary KING, is derived from my estimate of the birth date of their apparent first child, a son named John (John⁴, covered next in this report).

John’s second marriage, to Martha PARRIS, daughter of John & Hannah is documented in the AugustaCo marriage records: John Parris was a surety on the marriage bond for “John Denison, widower”, and “Martha Parris, spinster” (an indication that this was Martha’s first marriage). Mary’s parentage is confirmed by the 21Aug1814 will of John PARRIS of AugustaCo that names “daughter Martha Dennison” and makes his “beloved wife Hannah PARRIS” a co-executor.

John K[ing?] ⁴ (John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt Apr1779 - abt Feb1834 AugustaCoVA)

m(bond). 3May1800 Hannah HENDERSON (say 1780 - bef 9Feb1828),
d/o Jones & Isabella HENDERSON

The first sign of John⁴ in the records of AugustaCo is on the personal property tax list of 1796 when the tally of white male tithables in the household of his father John³, increments from 1 to 2, and remains at 2 until 1803, when it reverts to 1, and when for the first time, John DENNISON of AugustaCo is identified as John Denison Sr, and is bracketed with John Denison Jr (listed adjacent with their tax information gathered on the same day).

A close study of the AugustaCo tax records for this period suggests that the commissioners were quite scrupulous in registering the year when a young man reached the county tithables age of 16, but on the other hand were inclined not to list him by name in the same year he turned 21 unless he had also married and set up a household for himself, or at least been deemed the owner of separate personal property.

Thus, it would seem that John⁴ turned 16 sometime in the 12-18 months prior to September, 1796, when the tax lists for the year were finalized.

Meanwhile, the AugustaCo marriage bonds show that on 23May1800 “John DENNISON Jr, John DENNISON Sr, and Jones HENDERSON of AugustaCo, are bound for marriage of... John DENNISON Jr, bachelor & Hannah HENDERSON, spinster, daughter of the said Jones HENDERSON”. The reference to the father-daughter relationship between the bride and one of the bondsmen, and the absence of such a reference between the groom and his putative father, suggests (though it doesn’t prove) that Jones Henderson also provided a written consent for the marriage of his still minor daughter (as he would have been required to by law), while the absence of such a reference suggests that the groom himself was of age; however, it’s also possible that the fact that John Jr’s father endorsed his bond was taken as consent to the marriage of an underage son.

² The reader will find a couple of additional pages of discussion on the identity and career of this particular John KING (there were more than one in AugustaCo at the time, and also some mention of a third member of this “allied family” grouping: the family of Jones/Joanes/Jonas HENDERSON of the Little Calfpasture River Valley, on pages 20-21 of my [“Dennistons of Beverley Manor”](#) report.

³ James’s will was never probated; a copy of it turned up in the [Chancery1818](#) suit, q.v.

John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) DENNISON of Augusta County, Virginia, and his VA Descendants 6

It was quite uncommon during this period for men under 21 to marry, because as minors they lacked the legal right to make binding contracts on their own, and even their brides were usually of age. I therefore think that John⁴ was most likely born about April, 1779.

John⁴'s approximate death date is based on the fact that he made his will 1Jan1834, and it was probated at one of the Mar1834 AugustaCo court sessions.

John⁵ (Samuel Mc.⁴, John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt 1819 - btw 17/24Mar1856 AugustaCoVA)

m. 10Dec1840 (bond 8Dec1840) Sarah LANDES (abt 1816 - by 4May1859), d/o John & Esther

John Dennison and his wife Sarah Landes, according to John's 8Dec1840 marriage bond "daughter of the above bound John Landes [Dennison's bondsman]" were married in AugustaCo on 10Dec1840, and an affidavit accompanying the bond states that John had reached his 21st birthday, indicating that he was born before 9Dec1819. This is consistent with John's 1/14Jun1850 USCensus record which says that he was aged 30, implying a birth between Jun1819 and Jun1820. Finally, John⁵'s death is recorded in the AugustaCo Death Register as taking place in Mar1856 at the age of 37, which would put his birth no later than Mar1819. Birth dates calculated from ages at death expressed in years are inherently ambiguous so at best approximate, even when they are not (as in this case) contradictory of other evidence. This is due to a number of factors, including the common practice of rounding one's age up to the nearest birthday, and the vagaries of human arithmetic: I've therefore adopted "about 1819" as John's approximate birth date.

The death in infancy of two of John and Sarah's children is also recorded in the AugustaCo Death Register, but not the death of his widow Sarah herself, even though a record of the appraisal and sale of "the estate of Sarah Denison deceased" was made on 4May1859 and filed with the probate court of AugustaCo on May 31st; the purchasers in the sale included David and John Landes, and close neighbors A Karicofe and Silas Vance. Sarah was 34 in the 1850 USCensus, thus born about 1816.

Margaret⁴ (John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt 1781 - 26Nov1856 buried DuboisCoIN)

m. say 1802 James NOBLE (bef 21Oct1779 - abt 1828), s/o William NOBLE

Margaret is buried in Hardin Cemetery, DuboisCoIN, and her death date is taken from her gravestone. The gravestone also recorded her age at death though I am unable to decipher it. The Findagrave caption for this stone says that she was "aged about 73 years" when she died, which would put her birth date at abt 1783. The only USCensus records I'm able to find for her are: for 1830 when Margret Nobel (aged 40-49) heads a household in Harbison Twp, DuboisCoIN; and her husband's 1810 AugustaCo household, where both adults are in the 26-44 age category; these records place Margaret's birth date between 1780-1784. Given that the household of this couple comprised four children by the 1810 census (all under 10), I've estimated their marriage date as 1802. Finally, since the vast majority of Virginia women of this era were of age when they married, I've estimated Margaret's birth date as 1781, when she would have been at least two years younger than her husband.

Samuel Mc.⁴ (John³, Daniel²⁻¹) (abt 1795 - btw Aug1835 and Aug1836)

m1. 10Oct1816 Betsey PARRIS (say 1793 - bef 1826), d/o John & Hannah

m2. 18Jun1828 Nancy PARRY, in AugustaCoVA

Samuel was typically styled "Samuel M." in the records, but his middle initial was at least twice represented as "Mc.": once in the 4Jun1819 deed in which John³ and all of his children joined as grantors, and earlier in the 1810 will of John³'s brother-in-law James King, who bequeathed property to his nephew "Samuel M C Denison", according to the error-riddled transcription of this will, whose implications I've discussed at length both in [Chancery1818](#), and in the section titled "[The Conjugal Family of John³](#)", elsewhere in this document.

My estimate of Samuel's birth date is based primarily upon his age (30-39) in the 1830 USCensus for RockinghamCo, and on the age brackets he occupied in his father, John³'s, 1810 and 1820 census households (Samuel was 16-25 in both)—presuming, that is, that Samuel was indeed a denizen of his father's household in both of these years. There's not much doubt about 1810, since there were three males aged 16-25 in John's household then, and by 1820, by which time Samuel had married in AugustaCo, the only other adult male DENNISON who appears in the annual county tax records of either Augusta or nearby RockinghamCo was Samuel's older brother, John Jr—his other older brother Daniel having disappeared from the annual AugustaCo tax records after 1817; and though Daniel joined with his brothers John and Samuel in the 25Jan1819 AugustaCo deed by which John³ and all the members of his conjugal family conveyed away a big chunk of the family land, Daniel appears as a head of household in USCensus for FlemingCoKY in 1820. Finally, I note that when father John made his will and died in 1824, he left all his land Samuel, and that it was a common pattern in those days for a youngest child to defer their own independent married life for years to help sustain their aging parents, in return for a promise of the family farm at the father's death.

Unfortunately, the annual AugustaCo personal property tax records are of no help in estimating the year of Samuel's birth, for the simple reason that even though John³'s household more often than not comprised anywhere from two to four white males aged 16 or over (including John himself), Samuel is never listed by name in the AugustaCo tax records until 1825, the year after his father's death. However, the fact that Samuel's household in 1825 looks something like the 1824 household of John Sr that it in fact replaced, endorses the idea that he had been, in effect, a resident partner with his father from his youth in the first decade of the 19th century until his father's death in 1824. And there's yet another reason why Samuel⁴ and John³ remained co-residents even after Samuel's marriage.

We know from the AugustaCo marriage records that Samuel married 1st on 10Oct1816, Betsy Parris, the daughter of John & Hannah Parris, and Betsey appears to have been a much younger sister of Samuel's father John³'s second wife, Martha Parris. The 21Aug1814 will of their father, John Parris, names as daughters both Martha Dennison and Elizabeth Parris, and in a consolidated list of his six daughters, Martha is listed second, and Elizabeth last (Paris also had four sons, so the youngest Parris sibling could easily have been 20 years younger than the oldest. Thus, an additional motivation for John³ and his youngest son Samuel⁴ to establish a joint household was the fact that they had married sisters.

The next vital event pertaining to Samuel is that he married 2nd on 18Jun1828, one Nancy Parry, his wife Elizabeth presumably having died. There were only a couple PARRYs in AugustaCo at the time and the records for them are so sketchy that I am unable to advance a theory at this time regarding Nancy's provenance.

Samuel appears to gotten into financial and legal difficulties. He undertook a couple of mortgages, sold off some of his land, and was sued at least once for non-payment of debts. That may explain why he removed to RockinghamCo about 1830, where he both heads a household in the USCensus for that year, and appears on the tax lists of RockinghamCo from 1830 until 1835, the year of his death.

Samuel's death is indicated in the first place by the fact that his widow Nancy Dennison appears for the first and last time in 1836 on the AugustaCo personal property tax rolls as the owner of a horse, and on the fact that the Mar1837 RockinghamCo order book shows that Nancey Dennison sold her interest in some RockinghamCo land to Alexander NEWMAN—land that as a married woman, she can only have acquired full title to upon her husband's death. More direct evidence of Samuel's death, as well as the complete contents of his conjugal family is provided in the Aug183[7] complaint in [Chancery1837](#), which I have analyzed in detail in the DEN1-John³-ChancerySuits report, and in [The Conjugal Family of Samuel Mc.⁴ DENNISON](#) elsewhere in this report.

The Conjugal Family of John³ DENNISON, son of Daniel² and Elizabeth

- 1 Daniel DENNISON, the immigrant (say 1688 [Ireland?] - 1749 AugustaCoVA)
 ---m. say 1717 Sarah _?_ (say 1700 - say 1740)
 ---2 Daniel (say 1720 [Ireland?] - bef 26Nov1793 [FayetteCoKY:])
 -----m. abt Jul1744 Elizabeth _?_
 -----3 John (say Jan1750/1 - abt Sep1824 AugustaCoVA)
 -----m1. abt 1778 Mary KING (say 1752 - by 1810), d/o of John & Margaret
 -----4 John HIK[ing?] (abt Apr1779 - btw 1Jan1834&Mar1834 AugustaCoVA)
 -----m(bond). 3May1800 Hannah HENDERSON (say 1780 - btw 1820-1830), d/o Jones & Isabella
 -----Children: Isabella, Rebecca, [?John?], Mary K[ing?], Washington H[enderon?], Margaret, Hannah
 -----4 Margaret (abt 1781 - 26Nov1856 IN)
 -----5 m. abt 1802 James1 NOBLE (bef 21Oct1779 - abt 1828)
 -----Children: Elizabeth, Mary, Sarah, Margaret, Hannah, John D[ennison?] NOBLE
 -----[?4 Elizabeth (say 1783 - aft 1791 when next dau Mary was born)?]
 -----4 Daniel (abt 28Dec1786 - 15Jan1864 [JohnsonCoIL:])
 -----5 m. 30Jun1813 (bond 29Jun) Nancy McFALL (abt 1788 - KY), in AugustaCoVA
 -----Children: Mary King (5Apr1814 VA), <son> (say 1817), Nancy M[cFall?] (abt 1819)
 -----4 Mary (say 1791 - by 1818)
 -----4 Samuel Mc. (abt 1795 - btw Aug1835 and Aug1836)
 -----m1. 10Oct1816 Betsey PARRIS (say 1793 - bef 1826), dau of John & Hannah
 -----Children: John, Jane Eliza
 -----m2. 18Jun1828 Nancy PARRY, in AugustaCoVA
 -----Children: James A[ddison?]
 [3 John's 2nd wife:]
 -----m2. 27Jun1811 Martha PARRIS (say 1777 - bef 2Mar1824), d/o John & Hannah, in AugustaCoVA

To aid in the reconstruction of John³'s family, we have, besides his 1810 USCensus records and the annual AugustaCoVA personal property tax records (which I will address subsequently), three snapshots of his family, each presumably naming all of his then surviving children:

- (1) the 1st and most complete snapshot is as of 12Apr1810 when John³'s brother-in-law, James King, made his will bequeathing virtually all of his property to his named Denison nephews and nieces; the only copy of this will that survives is embedded in the papers of [Chancery1818](#), a suit in chancery in the RockinghamCoVA court by one William McMahon vs. the named "representatives" (heirs and administrators) of James KING;
- (2) the 2nd snapshot was made on 4Jun1819 when John³ joined with (presumably) all of his then surviving children as grantor in a deed conveying away much of the family land;
- (3) the 3rd occurred on 2Mar1824 when John³ made his own will.

All but one of John's children are named explicitly in all three snapshots. The one exception is daughter Mary, who is named only in the first, as a DENNISON niece in the will of John³'s brother-in-law, James King. The logical conclusion is that Mary had died by 4Jun1819, the time of the second snapshot. In fact, Mary must have been dead by 1818, the approximate time the complaint was filed in [Chancery1818](#) which names all the children of John³ except Mary.

John³'s other four children, John⁴, Margaret⁴, Daniel⁴, and Samuel⁴, are named in snapshots (2) and (3), and are amply documented by other evidence (marriage records, deeds, the Augusta and RockinghamCo tax records, and the USCensuses). In particular, there are lists of the three sons, John, Daniel, and Samuel, in that order in the legal documents that comprise snapshots (2) and (3), implying that that this was the order of their birth, and this presumption is wholly consistent with the other circumstantial evidence noted. I have inferred the position of daughters Margaret and Mary in the birth order, and the birth dates of each of these children, both from this other evidence, and as part of my overall reconstruction of John³'s conjugal family.

But first, there is need to carefully consider the naming of these children of John³ DENNISON in this sole surviving copy of James King's will in the [Chancery1818](#) papers, both because it is the most complete inventory of them anywhere in the records, and because the transcribed text of these names in the will evinces several errors—most likely transcription errors.

In his will, James King bequeathed his one substantial asset, the proceeds of his land sale, to

**my three nephews ... Daniel Denison, James H Denison, and Samuel M C Denison ...
[and] my two nieces ... Margaret Noble and Mary Denison**

As I've noted in my analysis of [Chancery1818](#), there is copious evidence that John³'s oldest son was named John (in particular the annual AugustaCo personal property tax records, the USCensus, father to son deeds, etc.), and zero evidence (besides this text from King's will) that John³ had a son named James. Furthermore, "James H Denison" is corrected in a 7Aug1819 [Chancery1818](#) document that lists the DENNISON children who are defendants to the suit as "James K Denison", and then as a further correction, this name is crossed out altogether in favor of "John Dennison Jr" whose name is interpolated as the first of the list of sons, right after his father, "John Dennison Sr". Although no middle initial was provided here when the name of John Jr was inserted in the list of defendants, there is good reason to suppose that it was, in fact "K", for "King", and that John³ and his wife Mary (King) Dennison, named their oldest son John King Dennison for Mary's father, in accord with a common American colonial variation of the standard [Scottish Onomastic Pattern](#). And although the name was originally written "James H Denison" in the transcription of James King's unprobated will that was made for this chancery case, most likely this was a misreading of "James K Denison", or possibly even "John K Denison" in the original will from which the copy was made: misreading a capital "K" as an "H", or vice versa, is one of the easiest errors to make when transcribing the copybook style of these old manuscript documents. Also, it's a common mental error when a particular name is to the fore (in this case James, the subject of the will) to inadvertently project it onto another name that was not—in this case John.

It will be also be noted that in these [Chancery1818](#) papers, that King's nephew Samuel is apparently given a second middle initial: in King's will Samuel is referred to as "Samuel M C Dennison", and this version of the name is replicated in other of these papers. Yet, even though there is almost never any ambiguity in the rendering or interpretation of the old capital "C". The construction "Samuel M C Dennison" nonetheless represents another transcription error.

On close inspection, the copy of the 4Jun1819 DENNISON deed in which John and all his children (including Samuel) joined as grantors styles Samuel as "Samuel M^c Dennison"—the superscript abbreviation in this case standing not for the old-fashioned scribal form of abbreviation with the superscripted letter being the terminal letter of an abbreviated name, but rather for a transitional form to the modern style of abbreviation for a typical Scottish (or Irish) surname with the prefix "Mc" or "Mac". Of course the fully modern form of abbreviation uses a period to signal that it's an abbreviation: thus, we might abbreviate such a name: "Samuel Mc. Dennison" or "Samuel M^c. Dennison". I have no idea at present whom Samuel might have been named for, but I suspect that the Mc or Mac name was a medium or long one or it wouldn't have been abbreviated.

The Household of John Denison Sr (John³) in the 1810 USCensus for AugustaCoVA

Unfortunately, the first two USCensuses for Virginia, for 1790 and 1800, are missing, but we do have the 1810 and 1820 censuses for the AugustaCoVA households of John³ (John Denison Sr), and by and large the structures of these households are consistent with my reconstruction of his conjugal family. Still, there are a couple of anomalies.

In John's 1810 household we find, besides John himself (aged 45+) a second male aged 45+, no older female (indicating that John's first wife, Mary King had died by then), three males aged 16-25, and two females aged 16-25. In addition, there are in 1810 households headed by John³'s oldest son, John⁴ (John Denison Jr), and by John³'s son-in-law James Noble, the husband of John's daughter Margaret. That should leave in John's household, two males aged 16-25 (sons Daniel and Samuel) not three, and 1 female (daughter Mary), not two. Thus, it would appear that John Sr's 1810 household is compound, comprising parts of more than one family.

From the fact that John³'s brother-in-law (his deceased wife's brother), James King, heads no household of his own in 1810, and given also that King sold his land to John Denison on 28Mar1810, then devised the proceeds to John's children in his 12Apr1810 will (his only remaining asset except for his bay mare, which he bequeathed to John), my guess is that King had in exchange come to live with Dennisons in his last months or years, and was the other male in John Sr's HH aged 45+. No such ready explanation suggests itself for the extra male and the extra female aged 16-25, but that either was a child of John Sr can presumably be ruled out, because James King appears to have named all of John's children in his will—all that we know about, that is, plus daughter Mary.

The Evidence of the Personal Property Tax Records for AugustaCo

Beginning in 1796, the AugustaCo tax records show that the household of John Sr (John³) comprised two white male tithables aged 16 or over (WMT16+), including John³ himself; then in 1803 his oldest son, John⁴, having turned 21, begins to be listed by name in his own right (as John Jr), even though John Sr's household still harbors 2 WMT16+: most likely this extra tithable was his second son Daniel who had just reached the age of 16, and in fact, we know from Daniel⁴'s gravestone that he was indeed born abt 28Dec1786.

The next year, 1804, there are listings for John Sr, John Jr, and Daniel, yet John Sr's household still comprises 2 WMT16+, suggesting that his third son Samuel reached the age of 16 about that year, so was born abt 1788. However, as I have argued in [the BMD section for Samuel Mc.](#)⁴ that conclusion is contradicted by the 1820 and 1830 USCensuses for Samuel, whom I believe was born about 1795. Furthermore, if Daniel only turned 16 as of the 1803 tax list, he would not normally be listed by name the very next year.

The annual Virginia county personal property tax list series that began in 1782, though a successor to the county tithables and militia rolls that listed by name all able-bodied males aged 16 and over, were from 1782-1787 restricted by law to adult males, or to tithable-exempt but taxable property owning female household heads. From 1788 on, the counties were allowed to decide for themselves who should be listed by name and most continued the practice of listing only men aged 21 and over. This made sense because the essential purpose of these lists was to identify the person actually liable and in a position to pay the taxes on all the taxable personal property of the household (principally horses and certain luxury goods or business capital items), and by law minors could not be held to any contractual promises they may have made.

There are cases of intrafamilial deeds from fathers to minor sons, and it was natural for prosperous fathers with a number of horses and/or plenty of land to allocate some of this property to a son approaching his majority. In most such cases the son would continue to live with or near his father and work the same land, and the father would continue to assume liability for all the family taxes.

I think what happened about 1803 was that John³ gave his son Daniel the use of a horse on the latter's reaching the milestone of his 16th birthday, and for whatever reason this was brought to the attention of the tax commissioner of 1804 who thereupon listed Daniel as the owner liable for the tax. Unfortunately, the rightmost columns of the tax list for 1804 is missing, so there is no way of verifying that Daniel was in fact listed as the tax-liable owner of a horse. In any case, the name Daniel disappears from the lists thereafter as we should expect until 1811, about the year he turned 21.

In fact, Daniel⁴ doesn't always appear by name in the AugustaCo tax lists from 1812 through 1819, when on 4Jun1819 he joined his father and siblings as grantors in a deed, while in 1820 he is found for the first time in KY. And Daniel's younger brother Samuel⁴ *never* appears by name in the lists until 1825, the year after his father's death, even though by all indications he continued to dwell with his father until that time—even after Samuel was married on 10Oct1816 to Betsey Parris, a much younger sister of his father's second wife Martha Parris.

This situation illustrates another anomalous, but occasional feature of these tax lists. There are a fair number of cases where a son who turned 21 and continued to live with his father might not be listed by name, as long as it wasn't made clear to the tax commissioner that the son owned any of the household taxable personal property in his own name. This might even happen, though rarely, in cases where the son was married, as appears to be the case here. As long as the father was willing to assume the tax liability for a son's personal property, the tax commissioner might be glad to save himself the trouble of creating a named entry for the son. I reiterate: failing to list adult males was not the usual practice, nor was it at all common for a married son to continue to dwell with his father, or not to own at least a horse, which would be tantamount to not owning a car in modern society.

However, there was one important and fairly common exception to the usual pattern of listing each married man as though he were head of his own household, even though he might still dwell on his father's land. Quite often, a youngest son or daughter would defer the full commencement of their own independent or married life by remaining at home to help sustain his or her aging parents, and the bargain in such cases was usually that the obliging child would be deeded or devised the parents' home place in compensation.

The Household of John Denison Sr (John³) in the 1820 USCensus for AugustaCoVA

With this tax list evidence in mind, the interpretation of John³'s (last) 1820 AugustaCo household structure is less problematic, even though it is almost certainly a compound household consisting of parts of more than one conjugal family. The oldest male (aged 45+) can only be John³ himself. The oldest female (26-44) on the other hand, is probably not John³'s second wife, Martha Parris, since she failed to join her husband and children as a grantor in the 4Jun1819 deed by which John and his children sold off a big chunk of the family land. In common law, a wife had a one-third dower interest in all of the real property owned by her husband at any time during their marriage, and she was therefore legally required to give her consent to any unconditional conveyance of that real property, either by joining him as a grantor in a deed, or by acknowledging her consent explicitly in a private interview in court, which was duly recorded in the county court books—and there is no such appearance by Martha in connection with the 4Jun1819 deed—presumably because she had died.^[4]

⁴ There's a slight chance that Martha wasn't included as a grantor for the 1819 deed because as her husband's second wife the couple made a jointure upon their marriage (we would call it a pre-nuptial agreement) that stipulated that the family land that was sold in 1819 belonged exclusively to widower John and his children by his first wife and was therefore not to be subject to dower. However, Martha did join as a grantor with her husband of other family land on 17Sep1817.

With Martha out of the picture, and in view of the fact that son Samuel never appears in the county tax lists under his own name until after his father's death, upon which he was devised all of his father's remaining land in the latter's 1824 will, it's reasonable to presume that the remaining inhabitants of John Sr's household in 1820 were his son Samuel, Samuel's wife, Betsey Parris (the sister of John's deceased wife Martha Parris), and the first son of this couple, whom other evidence shows was named John, presumably for his namesake paternal grandfather.

Onomastic Considerations: the Onomastics of John³'s conjugal family

Because this DENNISON (Denniston) patrilineage was Scotch-Irish, and ultimately Scottish, and because virtually all such families in America were influenced in naming their children by the [Scottish Onomastic \(child-naming\) Pattern](#), with most of them following it for at least the first three children of each sex, and for the first few generations, I've included an analysis of the child-naming patterns for each of these reconstructed DENNISON families. And as it happens, the patterns I've found more often than not do evince the influence of this pattern, which reinforces those reconstructions.

Where there's reason to believe that the pattern was influential, it is sometimes suggestive of the existence of certain children who were likely born in the family at a particular time, yet died in infancy, leaving no trace in the public records. And where these patterns run, they are equally suggestive of the given names of the otherwise unknown parents of the wife.

For John³'s conjugal family, I begin by noting that John's father, Daniel², didn't himself pay much attention to the pattern, though most of the 14 children of his large family did receive the preferred Scottish given names compiled in the Appendix to my paper on the Scottish Onomastic Pattern. However, Daniel²'s son, William³, followed the traditional pattern quite closely, probably influenced in part by his wife, Mary, with her Scotch-Irish DUNLAP and GAY ancestors, showing that the influence of contemporary social norms could trump particular familial predilections.^[5]

Thus, it should be no particular surprise that John³ and his wife Mary KING followed the pattern quite closely too, and this suggests what is also to be expected: that the in-law KINGs were also of Scottish or Scotch-Irish derivation despite their generic British surname.

John and Mary followed the Parental version of the pattern for their first three children, except that they used the names of the mother's parents (John and Mary KING) first rather than the father's parents as the Scottish pattern traditionally calls for—but this was a very common variation on the American scene.

We know from James King's will that John³ Dennison's first son John⁴ probably had the middle initial "K", and I think that he was almost certainly given the full name John King Dennison, because this first (post-Revolution) generation of American-Scotch-Irish to use middle names typically emulated their Scottish peers and simply used, as the first two names of their sons, the full two element names of their grandparental namesakes. Thus, my own Scotch-Irish ancestor from this period (born 1797), the first son of John Gay and Agnes McKee (daughter of John McKee) was named John McKee Gay, for his mother's father—again a common American inversion of the traditional more patriarchal Scottish order that put the father's father before the mother's father.

Continuing with this slightly modified traditional pattern, the first daughter, Margaret, was clearly named for her mother's mother, the second son Daniel was named for his father's father, and I strongly suspect that there was a second daughter named Elizabeth named for her father's mother who

⁵ William & Mary DENNISON followed the preferred Parental version of the Scottish Onomastic pattern perfectly for the first two children of each sex, and then merely switched the naming order for the next two boys, and they even named the boy after that for his father's father's father—a throwback to the more old-fashioned Ancestral version of the pattern.

died in infancy—but not before the second and last surviving daughter Mary was born say 1791, or the name Elizabeth would have been re-used as was the Scottish custom.

The very signature of the Parental version of the Scottish Onomastic Pattern was the naming of the third son and daughter for their own parents (in this case John and Mary), but since the name John had already been used for the first son, the third son (Samuel) had a different namesake; however, the third (as I think) daughter was here named Mary for her mother.

In the Parental version of the pattern, once the parents' parents and the parents themselves had been honored, additional children of each sex were supposed to be named for their uncles and aunts—boys by choice for their paternal uncles in order of their seniority and girls for their maternal aunts in order of their seniority. This traditional Scottish pattern tended to break down in America at this point, though the spirit, if not the letter, was preserved to some degree, with the names of uncles and aunts who had been left behind in the old country passed over in favor of others who had co-migrated. Or, jettisoning the pattern at this point, subsequent children might be given the names of close family friends or admired figures in the local community, or on the national stage.

The next son (the third and last for John³), Samuel Mc.⁴, was clearly not named for any of his DENNISON uncles since there were none named Samuel, and even though the 22Aug1794 will of his mother Mary's father, John King, showed that Mary had a brother named Samuel, I think that this played at most a minor role in the choice of name for this third son. I expect rather that Samuel Mc.⁴ was named for an unknown Samuel M^c-something who was a family friend or admired public figure

Having thus established a precedent for the use of the Scottish Onomastic Pattern in the John³'s conjugal family, we shouldn't be surprised to find it influencing the naming of some of John³'s DENNISON grandchildren, even though, as the 1800s proceeded, the traditional American onomastic patterns began to loosen and fray.

The Conjugal Family of John K[ing?]⁴ DENNISON, son of John³ and Mary née KING

-----4 John K[ing?] (abt Apr1779 - btw 1Jan1834&Mar1834 AugustaCoVA)
-----m(bond). 3May1800 Hannah HENDERSON (say 1780 - btw 1820-1830), d/o Jones & Isabella
-----5 Isabella (say 1801 - aft 1Jan1834)
-----5 Rebecca (say 1802 - aft 1Jan1834)
-----[?5 John? (say 1803 - aft 29Oct1806 when next son Washington was born.?)
-----5 Mary K[ing?] (abt 1805 - aft 3Sep1850); m(bond). 1Nov1828 "Polly & Charles WINDLE"
-----5 Washington H[enderson?] (29Oct1806 AugustaCoVA - 6Sep1885 IndependenceCoAR)
-----m1. Dec1826 Rebecca Ann GEATING [GÜTLING], in AugustaCoVA, dau of Henry
Children: Joseph M[ercurius] ([25]Jan1838), George W (abt 1845) and 3 daus
-----m2. 9Aug1866 Sarah Nica LOVE, in EllisCoTX, d/o James & Esther; divorced-no children
-----m3. 7Jun1885 Mary Jane FORESTER, in IndependenceCoAR, d/o of David & Anna
Children: Washington Cleveland Dennison (1Mar1886)
-----m2.? 7Jun1885 Mary Jane FORESTER, in IndependenceCoAR
-----5 Margaret (say 1811 - aft 1Jan1834); m(bond). 5Mar1832 Alexander YOUNG
-----5 Hannah (say 1815 - aft 1Jan1834); m. William WATTs

Although John⁴'s middle initial might be "H", because that's the way it's written in the transcribed copy of James King's 12Apr1810 unprobated will in [Chancery1818](#), it's written "K" elsewhere in the papers of that case, and I am convinced on onomastic grounds, covered in a section below, that John⁴'s full name was John King Dennison, and that he was named for his maternal grandfather, John KING.

John⁴'s children are inventoried in two documents: his 1Jan1834 will (probated in the Mar1834 court); and in the heirs' deed of 16Sep1834 in which John's surviving children are jointly selling their interest in property inherited from, I believe, the sister of their paternal grandmother, Mary (KING) DENNISON. My uncertainty derives from the fact that I have only a partial abstract of this deed (actually an exact extract of the DENNISON children who are grantors) and cannot now find an image of the original—a state of affairs I intend to rectify in the near future.

Clues to the birth order of John⁴'s children derive from a number of different pieces of evidence.

For one thing, a gravestone inscription for John's only son Washington in an IndependenceCoAR cemetery provides Washington's specific birth date—9Oct1806, or possibly 29Oct1806. And for another, daughter Mary K, who married Charles Windle in AugustaCo on 1Nov1828, can be identified as the Mary K Windel (aged 45) who was head of a ShenandoahCoVA household in the 1850 USCensus, as she is clearly also "my daughter Mary Windle" in her father's will, and "Mary K Windle of Shenandoah County" in the 1834 heirs' deed.

Although John⁴'s will doesn't provide a consolidated list of all of his children (such lists are by convention in birth order in both wills and heirs' deeds) there is a nearly comprehensive consolidated list of children to whom token bequests of \$1 are made, presumably because they had already received their portion, namely:

**my son Washington Dennison ... my daughter Rebeccah Dennison ... my
daughter Mary Windle ... my daughter Hannah Denison**

However, even this largely complete list of children clearly doesn't follow the birth order as it begins by contradicting the more definite birth date evidence I've already presented.

The heirs' deed, though, is a different matter, and I believe that the grantors there are indeed listed almost in birth order, and they are also usefully listed with their husbands and their place of residence:

**Isabella Dunnison and Rebecca Dennison of Augusta County[,] Charles Windle
and Mary K. Windle of Shenandoah County, Virginia, Washington Dennison and
Rebecca of Bath County, Virginia, William Watts and Hannah of Albemarle
County, Virginia, Alexander Young and Margaret of Wayne County, Indiana**

John³ (Daniel²⁻¹) DENNISON of Augusta County, Virginia, and his VA Descendants 15

That Isabella was John & Hannah's oldest child is indicated by the fact that she was both made John's executrix, and was the first listed grantor in the deed. Also, Isabella and Rebecca

The only flaw in the above attempt to list the heirs as grantors in birth order is that Hannah was presumably the youngest child, because she, and she alone, of her father's children was subject to a guardian bond, on 26Aug1834, and I've found no marriage record for her to William Watts, either in AugustaCo or anywhere else.

Finally, with the birth order and two birth dates in hand, I turned to the USCensuses of 1810 and 1820 and their age categories for confirmation and additional guidance on the birth dates of John⁴'s children. In 1810 John Jr's household included, besides the parents, 1 male and 3 females under 10: presumably John's only known son Washington was the male and Isabella, Rebecca, and Mary K were the females. In 1820, the four children from 1810 have moved up in their age categories, and been joined by two more females under 10, who figure to be Margaret and Hannah, in that order.

The AugustaCo marriage records also provide some confirmation and guidance as to the structure of this family. Father John was a bondsman both for Washington's marriage in 1826, and for Margaret's in 1832, and given that few Virginia females married under the age of 21, and then only with the consent of their parent or guardian, yet there is no explicit indication that John also provided a separate consent to these marriages, I've guesstimated that Margaret was born say 1811. That leaves Hannah, whom we know from her 1834 guardianship record was still underage at that time, so born say 1815.

In the pre-modern era, before reliable birth control, every family tended to settle into its own natural rhythm for producing children. The first child was usually born within a year of his parents' marriage, and most subsequent children were separated by an interval that ranged from about 18-30 months, with the last child or two strung out a bit more, as though in afterthought. In John⁴'s natal family, the average interval was about 30 months, but in his conjugal family it's a bit problematic as there are a couple of rather wide gaps. I believe, on onomastic grounds, that the first gap was probably filled by a son named John, who presumably died in infancy, or at any rate before 1810, and there is another suspicious gap between Washington and Margaret.

Onomastic Considerations: the Onomastics of John⁴'s conjugal family

John⁴ and his wife Hannah clearly paid little attention to the [Scottish Onomastic Pattern](#) with respect to birth order, though they did name all their children from the small pool of indicated family given names.

Their first daughter was named Isabella for her mother's mother, which does fit the pattern, and their other daughters are named Mary King (for her father's mother), Hannah (for her mother), and Rebecca and Margaret (for their mother's sisters). All of these names are called for by the pattern, but as you can see, the names weren't deployed in the right order of birth.

On the male side, there was only one son who survived infancy, and his name was Washington H. I strongly suspect that the "H" stood for Henderson, his mother's maiden name. It's hard to believe, though, that this couple didn't name a son John, given that the father and his father were both named John, and I've penciled in just such a son on a speculative basis, born first, before Washington. If there was such a son John, it's likely that he died after Washington was born, or otherwise the name John would probably have been re-used, because that too was a feature of Scottish onomastic practice.

As an alternative hypothesis, Washington might have been named John Washington H[enderson?] but declined to use his first given name because there was just too many John DENNISONs in the picture—another being John⁴'s nephew, John⁵, the son of Samuel⁴.

The Conjugal Family of John⁵ DENNISON, son of Samuel Mc.⁴ and Betsey née PARRIS

-----5 John (abt 1819 - btw 17/24Mar1856 AugustaCoVA)
-----m. 10Dec1840 (bond 8Dec) in Augu, Sarah LANDES (abt 1816 - by 4May1859), d/o John & Esther
-----6 Eliza Ann (abt 1841 - aft 1Jun/14Jul1860)
-----6 William Harvey (25Feb1843: VA - 12Mar1929 AugustaCoVA)
-----6 Mary Jane (abt 1846 - aft 1Jun/14Jul1860)
-----6 John M (abt Aug1850 - 7Dec1853 AugustaCoVA)
-----6 David A (abt Aug1852 - 14Feb1853 AugustaCoVA)
-----6 James Addison Luther (say 1855 - bef 1859)

The conjugal family of John⁵ and Sarah (LANDES) DENNISON is defined by two sources: [Chancery1859](#), and the AugustaCoVA Death Register.

The Death Register records the deaths in infancy of two sons of “Jn^o and Sarah Dennison of North River” (confirming their location on or near AugustaCo’s northern river border with RockinghamCo) just a couple of months apart. Although the causes of these deaths of sons Jn^o M. And David A. Dennison are given as “disease of the heart”, and some sort of fever, respectively, one suspects that both died of complications of some childhood disease making the rounds. Usefully, the ages at death of these two children are specified to the month which provides us with close estimates for their birth dates.

I’ve made a detailed analysis of the AugustaCo chancery case, [Chancery1859](#), in [this report abstracting relevant Chancery cases](#), and abstracted the case under the date 12Jul1859 in the TIMELINE. For present purposes it’s enough to quote the language of the complaint of that date that identifies the then living orphaned children of John⁵ as:

**Eliza A. Dennison, William Harvey Dennison, and Mary Jane Dennison,
infant children of John Dennison, deceased**

As in most lists of children in legal documents, the presumption is that they were listed in birth order, and this is confirmed by the household of John and Sarah Dennison in the 1850 USCensus for AugustaCo, which also provides their approximate ages at that time; the soon to die infant son John M. also appears in this record. William Harvey and Mary Jane are also listed (as “W.H.” and “M.J.”) in the 1860 household of their uncle W[illia]m Landes, each with ages that extrapolate from the 1850 census. The birth date I’ve provided above for William Harvey, 25Feb1843, comes from [a caption to his Findagrave entry](#), but there is no gravestone photo, and this date is contradicted by the birth date Jan1842 recorded for him in the 1900 USCensus. For what it may be worth, the 1843 birth year is more consistent with his 1850 and 1860 census records.

DENNISON Patrilineage 1 Project member Mary Jane Michael, is a descendant of William Harvey Dennison, and I’ve posted her line through him down to the present [here](#) on the project web page.

Onomastic Considerations: the Onomastics of John⁵’s conjugal family

In the section on the conjugal family of John⁵’s father, Samuel⁴, I’ve noted that given Samuel’s household in the 1830 USCensus for RockinghamCo, he appears to have abandoned his own children, even the last, James A, born just a year before and so still an infant. I’ve also advanced some considerations there that may explain or mitigate, if they don’t justify, such behavior..

Be that as it may, I find it telling that even though John⁵ had four sons he named none of them for his putative biological father Samuel Mc. Dennison. And I find it equally telling that John apparently named all of his children either for his two siblings or for members of the John LANDES family.

John⁵ and the John LANDES family of North River

It is my theory that John⁵, and probably his two siblings, Jane Eliza and James A. DENNISON, were brought up in the John LANDES family after their father removed to RockinghamCo in 1830, and perhaps before.

As a primary consideration, John⁵ married into the John LANDES family of northern AugustaCo.

On 8Dec1840 John⁵ married Sarah, the daughter of John Landes, who stood as his new son-in-law's bondsman; and just a week later, David Landes, whom the 15Dec1847 estate settlement of John Landes shows was his son, and therefore John⁵ DENNISON's brother-in-law, was also married, to one Catharine Reeves, and I note that John⁵'s son William Harvey Dennison, also married a REEVES.

It's true that these marriages were performed by different ministers, but both were based in Augusta. John and Sarah were married by a Lutheran minister, J.J. Reimansynder, and it's likely because John had at some point adopted the Lutheran faith that his youngest son was named James Addison Luther Dennison. The area around Naked Creek, a tributary of North River (which formed part of the border between northern AugustaCo and southern RockinghamCo), where all the lands accumulated by John³ DENNISON lay, was settled both by Germans and Scotch-Irish, and as the 1800s wore on, these originally disparate ethnicities began to merge and blend.

David & Catharine (Reeves) Landes were married by the Rev. J.A. VanLear, who was minister at Mossy Creek Church, the nearest Presbyterian church, which covered the area of northwestern AugustaCo that extended east to and with its North River boundary with RockinghamCo. Mossy Creek Church itself lay just a few miles to the NW of Naked Creek, astride which the DENNISON lands lay. Adjacent neighbors to the DENNISONs included James KING, who inherited his land from his father (and John³'s father-in-law) John KING, and John SEAWRIGHT, with whom several DENNISONs had transactions, not least the deed of 16Sep1834 in which the children and heirs of John⁵'s uncle, John⁴, conveyed to John Seawright their interest in property they had jointly inherited..

John⁵ acquired his first land only on 5Mar1844, and it was likely that before that he and Sarah initially lived with the LANDESes, or at least on their land. The tracts that John purchased on 5Mar1844 from Henry Rader (a Germanic surname) were on "the south side of North River", meaning probably in part on its banks, so were probably a few miles to the NE of Naked Creek: an otherwise unnamed "Landis" (probably John the father) was a bounding neighbor to John⁵'s first land.

Next, on 26Feb1847, we find John & wife Mary Landes executing a deed of gift to John Dennison for 17a actually on North River, and adjacent to Dennison's existing land. Since the 15Dec1847 estate settlement of John Landess that names all of his nine children included David Landess and John Dennison followed his deed to Dennison that same year, the deed and others probably executed by LANDES were probably made in contemplation of his death, and as an alternative to the will he probably deliberately chose not to make.

The body of this circumstantial evidence, taken together with the naming of John⁵'s children for either his own siblings or for members of the John LANDES family, and the fact that in John⁵'s will of 17Mar1856 he made his "brother-in-law David Landes" and "brother William Landes" his executors, and David the guardian of his children, argues for the very closest connection between John⁵ and the family of John LANDES, in stark contrast to his lack of connection to his putative father Samuel⁴, and I think strongly supports my theory that John was raised in this LANDES family.

As for John⁵'s sister Jane Eliza, and their half brother James A. Dennison, since they ended up in NicholasCo (though decades later) one cannot argue quite so strongly that they too were taken in by the LANDESes, but I suspect, nonetheless that this was so. Unfortunately, there are no formal guardian records for any of these children of Samuel, either in Augusta or Rockingham counties, even after Samuel's death in Rockingham in 1835; of course the lack of guardian records in 1835 can be

readily explained if Samuel indeed died “utterly insolvent” as one of the voices in [Chancery1837](#) alleges, in which case there would have been no need for a legal guardian: the role of guardians in the common law wasn’t to look after orphaned children—usually relatives did that—but simply to manage and safeguard their inherited property. The fact that John LANDES apparently deliberately avoided tying up his affairs in probate by making a will, would be consistent with his willingness to assume an informal responsibility for looking after these neighboring abandoned DENNISON children.

The Conjugal Family of Samuel Mc.⁴ DENNISON, son of John³ and Mary née KING

-----4 Samuel Mc. (abt 1795 - btw Aug1835 and Aug1836)
-----m1. 10Oct1816 Betsey PARRIS (say 1793 - bef 1826), d/o John & Hannah, in AugustaCoVA
-----5 John (abt 1819 - btw 17/24Mar1856 AugustaCoVA)
-----m. 10Dec1840 (bond 8Dec) Sarah LANDES (abt 1816 - by 4May1859), in Augu, d/o John & Esther
-----5 Jane Eliza (abt 1824 - abt 1874); m. abt 1847 Nicholas K. HENDERSON
[4 Samuel DENNISON's 2nd wife:]
-----m2. 18Jun1828 Nancy PARRY, in AugustaCoVA
-----5 James A[ddison?] (abt 1829 - 26Nov1859 NicholasCoVA)
-----m. 12Oct1854 Jane GIVEN (abt 1837 -) dau of Nicholas, in NicholasCo

The records of AugustaCo and my deed plots show that in 1824 Samuel inherited the bulk of his father's original 517a tract on Naked Creek in AugustaCoVA (Item 1, less Items 7-8 on [this map](#), with [key](#)) which drains into North River on the RockinghamCo border a few miles to the east; that he mortgaged his land on 11Jun1828 to neighbor John SEAWRIGHT, paid off the mortgage by 1830, but then sold the land outright on 24Feb1830 to Frederick KRAHN of RockinghamCo, for \$3598.

The USCensus of 1830 show that Sam M. Dennison was a resident of RockinghamCo as of mid-1830, and he appears on the personal property tax rolls of that county from 1830 through 1835, after which he disappears from the records anywhere for good. I've presented the evidence that he died about 1836, and discussed the evidence for his two wives, under [the BMD entry for Samuel](#).

The composition of Samuel's conjugal family is laid out in two Chancery cases: [Chancery1837](#) in RockinghamCo, and [Chancery1859](#) in AugustaCo. My detailed analysis of these cases will be found in [this report on DENNISON Chancery cases](#), and I've also abstracted them more conveniently for genealogical purposes in the TIMELINE, but the evidence that defines Samuel's conjugal family at the end of his life comes from the Aug1837 complaint in Chancery1837:

During the year 1835 or 1836, the said Samuel M. DENNISON departed this life intestate and utterly insolvent, leaving a widow named Nancy and the following children, infants under the age of twenty-one years, as his heirs, to wit. John, James, Jane, and Eliza DENNISON.^[6]

[Chancery1859](#) and the evidence it provides is more complicated, as it is a "fictitious" suit in chancery by the guardian of all the children of Samuel's deceased oldest son John⁵ versus all the siblings of John⁵, and thus it too inventories Samuel's children as of 12Jul1859, the date the complaint was filed. The siblings of John⁵ who are made defendants in this suit are identified as

James A. DENNISON, and Nicholas K. HENDERSON and Jane Eliza his wife, late DENNISON, of the county of Nicholas

James is also linked to AugustaCo by his 12Oct1854 marriage records that says he was born there.

There are two pieces of evidence that contradict the above inventory of Samuel's children, but neither, in my opinion, can stand up to the direct evidence of these two chancery cases.

The first is the Mar1856 AugustaCo death record for John⁵ that claims his father was named "Jn^o [*i.e.* John] Dennison", but fails to specify the name of the deceased's mother, indicating a lack of personal knowledge on the part of the informant, David Landes, who though John⁵'s brother-in-law, was also his contemporary and may have been somewhat vague on John's parentage.

⁶ The original text erroneously makes two daughters "Jane, and Eliza", out of just one (Jane Eliza) as [Chancery1859](#) and other evidence shows.

The second piece of contradictory evidence needs to be interpreted in the light of the 1850 USCensus entry for John⁵'s half brother, James A. Denison of NicholasCoVA, which indicates that James was 21 in 1850, thus born about 1829. This second piece of evidence is the one USCensus record we have for James's father Samuel, presumably living with his bride of three years, Nancy Parry, in RockinghamCo. We know that Samuel and Nancy were a couple resident in RockinghamCo also from the fact that while Nancy Dennison appears just once on the county tax lists, in 1836 in AugustaCo, on Mar1837, we find Nancey Denison selling land in RockinghamCo that as a married woman she can only have acquired title to in consequence of her husband's death.

The 1830 household of Sam M. Dennison comprises, besides the parents, 2 males 10-14, 2 males 5-9, and 1 female 10-14. Yet, of these, only (possibly) one of the males aged 10-14 (who might be Samuel's oldest son John⁵) matches the children of Samuel stipulated in two different chancery suits.

Although I have found no evidence pertaining to Samuel's second wife, Nancy Parry, before her marriage to Samuel in 1828, it's easy enough to hypothesize that she was a widow, and that these children of 1830 are all hers by her former marriage. But that doesn't explain how or why Samuel's children appear to have been abandoned, including James A., born about 1829, who can only have been Nancy's and who would have been an infant in 1830.

At the end of [the Conjugal Family of John⁵](#), I've advanced the theory, on onomastic grounds, that Samuel's son John⁵ was taken in by the family of John Landes of AugustaCo, who, like this whole branch of DENNISONs, owned land on or near North River, which constituted the border between Augusta and Rockingham counties, and John⁵'s siblings, Jane Eliza and James A may have grown up there too, but that leaves unexplained why Samuel apparently abandoned his own children.

A Theory to Explain Why Samuel Mc.⁴ DENNISON Abandoned his children

I note that Samuel was married at least from the ages of about 21-25 and probably to about age 30, and again from the age of about 33 until his untimely death at about 40. Yet in all that time, in this era before effective birth control, he apparently produced only three children. I also note that his death record, for which the information was furnished by David Landes, a member of the John LANDES family that I believe took in Samuel's oldest son, John⁵, says that the latter's father was John, not Samuel Dennison.

Perhaps that is after all true. Perhaps Samuel was infertile, and the children ascribed to him in the legal documents of the chancery cases were sired on Samuel's two wives by his brother, John⁴. That might account for Samuel's apparent repudiation of them in his last years. And if John LANDES, a close neighbor of these DENNISONs, stepped in about 1835 after both DENNISON brothers had died off leaving these orphans destitute, LANDES and his sons would probably have been in a position to know just who their father was.

If this is indeed the way things were, since putative father John⁴ failed to acknowledge these bastard children in his will it wouldn't be surprising if Alexander Newman, the complainant in [Chancery1837](#) didn't know who their real father was either and simply ascribed them to Samuel. Also, I note that [Chancery1859](#) nowhere mentions by name the father either of the deceased John⁵ or of his surviving NicholasCo siblings, nor does it even make explicit their mutual relationship. Since David Landes was the executor of John⁵'s will and the guardian of his children (and it was Landes who entered the 1859 suit in that case as their guardian), his possible knowledge of the real parentage of these three Dennison siblings may have been deliberately withheld, and deliberately omitted from the documents in the case.

Other Theories in Possible Explanation and/or Mitigation of Samuel⁴'s Behavior

Even though Samuel inherited from his father John³ what was apparently a large, successful and financially unburdened farm, Sam seems to have struggled and ultimately failed financially, dying some ten years later “utterly insolvent”. One might suppose that it was to partly escape his AugustaCo debtors that he removed with his second wife and her children to RockinghamCo, leaving behind his children whom he couldn't support financially to be brought up by AugustaCo neighbor John LANDES. We see from Samuel's 24Feb1830 AugustaCo deed, with co-grantor wife Nancy, that they received a substantial sum, \$3598, for the 257a he had inherited from his father. It was evidently enough to purchase a property in RockinghamCo (and Samuel even owned a slave there in the 1830 USCensus) where Samuel's AugustaCo debtors would have had trouble collecting from him, though by the end of his life in 1835 his debts seem to have caught up to him and he died “utterly insolvent”.

Why, then, were Nancy's putative children by her first marriage allowed to accompany them? Perhaps Samuel was temporarily rescued in 1828 by the financial resources of his second, widowed, wife, and caring for her children was a part of some pre-nuptial agreement: but this wouldn't explain why even Nancy's own putative child by Samuel, James A., was also left behind in AugustaCo.

It occurred to me that perhaps those children in Samuel and Nancy's 1830 RockinghamCo household (3 aged 10-14 and two boys under 10) weren't her children at all, but rather Samuel's employees in some sort of child labor manufacturing or artisan enterprise. Some may have been propertyed orphans whose financial guardianship he secured. Unfortunately, though the 1830 census enumerated the household inhabitants by occupation (whether Agriculture, Manufacturing, Commerce, etc.) the occupation columns were left blank in Samuel's section of the census.

Or here is another theory altogether that I'm sure has at least some relevance to this situation.

I note that Samuel and both of his putative sons died at early ages—all of “consumption”, Samuel⁴ at about 40, John⁵ at about 37, and James A⁵ at just 31.

“Consumption” is just one of the old-fashioned terms used to denote the scourge of the 19th and early 20th century in America: tuberculosis. TB is thought of today as a lung disease, but actually it's manifestations are protean, and it's most likely to attack the kidneys. An examination of 19th century death certificates will show an inordinate number of people in their 40s and 50s dying of various forms of kidney failure, one common syndrome being called Bright's Disease, and I have read that roughly half of all the premature deaths of 19th century adults in America were due to one or the other of the manifestations of this scourge. I've collected all the death records of my own ancestors born from the mid-1800s on, and this 50% statistic holds true for all those who died before 1925.

TB is a wasting disease that sets in during a person's youth, and it varies from case to case primarily due to the speed at which it progresses. One can soldier on and lead a reasonably productive life until the affected organ systems begin to fail but there is no doubt that it is significantly debilitating. Samuel's death from consumption might explain, or at least mitigate, his apparent failings.

That said, his putative son John⁵, who started with literally nothing, seems to have built up quite an accumulation of land, all in small pieces, which he could not have done if he hadn't worked hard and made his farm pay. The word “heroic” might not be too strong for the degree of his success, considering that he too died of consumption at an even earlier age than his father. If Samuel fell short in this regard, that might actually have served as a powerful negative example for the son who was determined to show that he was made of better stuff. In the same way, the great Robert E. Lee grew up amidst the miasma of his own father's shame and disgrace, due to profligacy and drunkenness, but this seems to have provoked the son into making himself the soul of rectitude and trustworthiness as well as a high achiever.

Onomastic Considerations: the Onomastics of Samuel⁴'s conjugal family

As for the onomastics of Samuel's conjugal family, with just three children there's not much to work with. It's no surprise, though, that the first son was named John, given that the fathers of both of his parents (Samuel and Betsey Parris) were named John, and daughter Jane Eliza was likely named in part for her mother.

DNA Evidence Points to John⁵ (Samuel Mc⁴) and James A⁵ having the same father

Patrilineal descendants of the John Dennison, aged 37, who died in AugustaCoVA in Mar1856, and the James A Denison, aged 30, who died in NicholasCoVA on 26Nov1859 (whom I've identified here as John⁵ and James A⁵, but whom I'll call "John1856" and "James1859" for purposes of this discussion) have had their male Y-Chromosomes tested, and it turns out that not only do they share the mutational profile of tested patrilineal descendants of four different sons of Daniel²: they also share a mutation (marker value DYS505=13) not possessed any of these other descendants of Daniel².

One might suppose that this additional mutation may have occurred before, rather than after the three mutations that mark this branch of DENNISON Patrilineage 1, but then the line of John1856 and James1859 would have to have split off before the other three mutations occurred and then these same three mutations would have to have occurred independently in their line, but the odds of that happening are astronomically small.

Just a little genealogical information helps us sort out the remaining possibilities.

Since these other descendants of Daniel² were born between 1759-1768, and since, as the annual tax records of Augusta and other nearby counties, as well as other evidence, show all of these other sons had removed to Kentucky at least 25 years before John1856 and James1859 were born, it has long been assumed that either they were descendants of the one son, John³ (Daniel²) who remained in AugustaCo, or of another close cousin of Daniel² who may have immigrated later. However, my now exhaustive canvass of these annual county tax records, which generally list all males aged 21 or over, unless perhaps, they are young adult, usually unmarried, sons still living with their fathers, renders this alternate possibility highly unlikely. In fact, all the DENNISONs who turn up in the AugustaCo tax records from 1782 can unequivocally be identified as John³ or one of his sons, by the timing and of their emergence and appearances in the records, and by the geographic proximity that their close grouping with John's household show.

We are thus left with the overwhelmingly likely hypothesis that John1856 and James1859 were sons either of John³ himself, or of one of his three sons, John⁴, Daniel⁴, or Samuel⁴.

The DNA evidence can tell us no more than this, and only rarely can DNA testing of the kind done for genealogical purposes^[7] do more than this. However, this DNA evidence is nonetheless powerfully confirmatory of what both the circumstantial and the direct evidence I've cited above indicate: that John1856 was John⁵ (Samuel⁴, John³, Daniel²) and James1859 was James A⁵ (Samuel⁴, John³, Daniel²), though these two were equally certainly the products of different mothers, since all the indications are that Samuel's first wife was dead by 1856, three years before James A was born.

On the DNA side, this genealogical analysis tells us that the distinctive mutation shared by these two sons of Samuel⁴, must have occurred either during the genetic transmission from Daniel² to his son John³, or from John³ to his son Samuel⁴, and testing a patrilineal descendant of another of John³'s sons, John⁴ or Daniel⁴ would tell us which of these possibilities was the true one.

⁷ The most indicative, and preferred, form of DNA testing for genealogical purposes is the Family Tree DNA Y-Chromosome Y-STR testing that is used as a basis for membership in the DENNISON DNA projects, though autosomal DNA tests such as FTDNA's Family Finder can be of some supplementary value and help to narrow down the time to the convergence of several tested DENNISON descendants to a MRCA (Most Recent Common patrilineal Ancestor).