

The composite document to which these notes pertain, which resides at the Library of the Kentucky Historical Society^[1], consists of four negative photostat pages (which I have converted to positive images), and which appear to be the Birth-Deaths-Marriage “Family Record” pages of the same Bible. These are accompanied by three pages of manuscript notes all in the same modern hand, and as they include the name and address of Shirley Ellen (Vawter) Byler, of CrosbyTX, she is presumably the author of the notes.

Mrs. Byler is known to me as a Vawter cousin, as a reasonably competent genealogist, and as a careful and accurate transcriber of ancient documents, within the limits of her understanding of them; I own a book published by her on her own ancestry, which overlaps extensively with my own research, and which is replete with many accurate transcriptions from primary records.

Here in her notes, dated 1963, Mrs. Byler has provided us with a description of the physical bible which she herself apparently brought to light. She tells us that much of the book was worn away, but says: “I have kept the few outside loose pages which have come apart. They are very old and brittle and broken at the edges”. And she provides us with the book’s publishing information (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1812).

It remains to be noted that Mrs. Byler has interpolated certain data into her bible extracts, though she has generally had the good sense to demarcate her interpolations from her readings by enclosing the former within parentheses. In particular, Byler’s interpolated ages at death should be ignored since they are evidently derived by simple subtraction from the birth and death dates, and one or two of her readings of these are wrong.

Some of Byler’s gratuitous commentary is based on records for these families found in the 1850 and 1860 USCensus for MarionCoMO. I have compiled my own abstracts of these, and used them myself in my interpretation of some of these records.

The pages of Mrs. Byler’s notes bear the stamp of the Library of the Kentucky Historical Society, but in them she offers to supply copies of photostats of the original pages in her possession. Since the data which she has extracted corresponds almost exactly to the four photostated pages which accompany her notes, we may reasonable infer that these photostats are these very same original pages. Unfortunately, Mrs. Byler, fails to provide us with any more information on the provenance of this bible, or how she came by it, leaving us only with the tantalizing note: “Finding this old record has been a very interesting experience”.

Analysis of the Records Themselves

Who Entered these Records, and When?

The first page of births was evidently entered in the same hand, though apparently in two batches, beginning with John Gay (born 1748), followed by what appears to be the names and birth dates of his wife and children thru 1798. Then there is a scribal device (a separator), followed by three more birth dates, entered, apparently, as a second batch: the first of Janella Gill Gay (born 1802), then birth dates for Sarah Ann Gay (1826), and for William Alexander Gay (1828). Besides the scribal similarity across these two batches (capital letters “W”, “M”, and the less distinctive “G”, “D”, etc.), each contains the idiosyncratic spelling “Aprile”, and in each batch dates are written, e.g. September 23^{the} with the prefatory definite article “the” written above and to the right of the number, as though meant as the ordinal suffix “th”. Another feature of this scribe is his willingness to break words between lines, at any letter, and without hyphenation as notice of continuation. Call this Hand-A.

¹ I am indebted to Mr. Lee Gay of HoustonTX for obtaining copies of these photostats and accompanying notes, and for forwarding images of them to me by e-mail. The originals are still presumably to be found at the Kentucky Historical Society Library, 100 W Broadway, in FrankfortKY, where he found them in the summer of 2007.

The first five “Births” entries on the next page are in these different hands:

Mary Ellen Gay, born 15Jul18[3]4 (Hand-B)
 Richard H Durrett, born 21Mar1817 (Hand-C)
 Mary Jane Catherine Durrett, born 17Apr184[5] (Hand-D?)
 John William Kincaid Durrett, born 2Sep1847 (Hand-D)
 Sarah Ann Virginia Durrett, born 17Feb1850 (Hand-D)

Mary Jane’s entry is smudged, but it resembles in two respects, those of Hand-A: the initial “M” is very similar in formation, and the initial “1” of the year is turned under to the right. However, “April” is spelled in the usual way, and an ordinal suffix is omitted for the day.

On the marriage page, we find two marriages, both also recorded in Hand-D:

William A Durrett [Jr??] & Sarah M Gay, married 7Nov1839 (Hand-D)
 Richard Henry Durrett & Sarah A Gay, married 23Apr1844 (Hand-D)

Hand-D bears some striking similarities to Hand-A, but there also some distinct differences. Although the “W” of “John William”’s birth record, above, is styled in the manner of Hand-A, the “S” of “Sarah Ann Virginia” is worlds different from the capital “S”’s of the two “Sarah”’s on the first page of Births, while it exactly matches the “S”’s of the two Sarahs on the Marriages page. Hand-D also handles numeric ordinal suffixes in a conventional, if old-fashioned way.

The entries in the “Deaths” section, which begins in the right column of the page in which the left column contains the aforementioned “Births” for the Richard H. Durrett family, begin with the death of Agness Gay in 1804; evidently the same Agness whose 1779 birth is recorded on the preceding “Births” page. This record is clearly in Hand-A, as are all the remaining “Deaths” record on this page at least up to the death of John Gay, in which the recording style changes markedly to a simpler format, which unfortunately obviates some of the more distinctive idiosyncracies of the Hand-A writer. Although the style has changed somewhat by the next death record after John, the one for Sarah Gay (probably John’s wife, Sarah)—for example, the capital “S” is completely different from the two for Sarah’s on the first page of birth records—the hand may yet be the same. I shall call this slightly different style: Hand-A1.

Thus, the death records, which appear contemporaneous, run thus:

Mary Gay, died 19Feb1820 (Hand-A)
 John Gay, died 19Oct1826 (Hand-A1?)
 Sarah Gay, died 14May1828 (Hand-A1)
 Rebecca Gay, died 23Mar1831 (Hand-A1)
 Kinkaid Gay, died 12Sep1834 (Hand-B) [the same hand used for Mary Ellen’s 1834 birth record]
 Mary Ellen Gay, died 8Dec1853 (Hand-D)
 Janella G Gay, died 20Oct1835 (Hand-D)
 William A Gay, died 1Mar1861 (Hand-D?)
 Richard Samuel Durrett, died 26Jul1864 (Hand-D)
 Mary Jane Catharine Durrett Parsons, died 1Feb1874 (Hand-D?)
 Richard H Durrett, died 27Aug1879

...

with the records from Richard H Durrett on, in various more modern hands which I haven't attempted to categorize.

The 1850^[2] and 1860^[3] USCensus records for MarionCoMO both show adjacent households for Richard H Durrett, and William A Durrett, aged one year apart (spelled "Derret" in 1850). Most likely, they were brothers, possibly even twins. They also both appeared to have both married Sarah Gays since the bible record has William A Durrett marrying Sarah M Gay in 1839, and Richard H Durrett marrying Sarah A Gay in 1844. On the same 1850 census page as these two Durrett families are households headed by Jane Gay (born c.1797), and Janetta G Gay (b.c.1802). The latter no doubt corresponds to the "Births" entry for Janella Gill Gay, born 23Apr1802, but Jane, whose household also contains a John R Gay (b.c.1824) does not appear amongst the bible records. Living with "Janetta" in 1850 are William A and Mary E Gay, who can be readily identified with two of the three birth records which immediately follow Janella's own in the bible, while the first birth record which follows Janella is that of Sarah A Gay, presumably the same Sarah A Gay who became the wife of Richard H Durrett, whose family bible record this principally is.

	Nancy Nelson	84	f					
109	Richard D. Derret	33	ch	Farmer	✓	2000		Occ.
	Sarah d.	23	f					Occ.
	Henry J. G.	5	f					Occ.
	John W. G.	3	ch					Occ.
	Sarah d. G.	1/2	f					Occ.
110	Janetta G. Gay	41	f			1900		Occ.
	William d.	21	ch	Laborer	✓			Occ.
	Mary G.	15	f					Occ.
111	William d. Derret	24	ch	Farmer	✓	2000		Occ.
	Jolly d.	29	f					Occ.
	Richard D.	9	ch					Occ.
	John G.	6	f					Occ.
	William d.	3	ch					Occ.
	Dennis W.	1/2	ch					Occ.
112	Jane Gay	53	f					Occ.
	John G.	26	ch	Laborer	✓			Occ.
113	Thomas W. Robbins	41	ch	Farmer	✓	5000		Occ.
	John G.	16	f					Occ.

The 1850 USCensus for MarionCoMO, showing Derret and Gay households (original document is out-of-focus)

² 30Oct1850 USCensus for MarionCoOH, Warren Twp, page 347A (10-25), Ancestry.com image 22.

³ Richard H. Durrett and William A. Durrett households, 22Jun1860 USCensus for MarionCoOH, Warren Twp, page [662] (17-26) and (27-35), Ancestry.com image 34.

We may therefore also reasonably suppose that “Janella Gill Gay”, as she was styled in the bible, was born Janella Gill, and married a Gay, presumably one of the sons of John whose births are recorded on the first page of “Births”. But of these sons, John and James are otherwise accounted for by Railey, and on the evidence of the bible record itself, three others died young: Robert Gay (1776-1805), William Dunlap Gay (1793-1813), and Samuel Gay (1796-1816), leaving only Kinkaid Gay (1798-1834) as a candidate to be Janella’s husband. Meanwhile, in the 1840 USCensus (6 years after Janella would have been widowed with children), there are just 3 households headed by a Jan* Gay (none by a Jan* Guy), and the two in MarionCoMO are both consistent with the the two so headed in that place for 1850, except than the “Janetta G Gay” of 1850, is “Jane M L Gay” in 1840. Finally, the 1830 WoodfordCoKY household of Kinkaid Gay is also exactly consistent with this hypothetical family, containing, besides Kinkaid himself: 1 female aged 20-29, 1 female under 5 and one male under 5.^[4]

Even better, the 1830 USCensus for WoodfordCoKY includes a household headed by Kinkaid Gay, comprising himself, a female aged 20-29, and a boy and a girl both under 5.

The bible includes the following birth records, all in Hand-A, corresponding to these three inhabitants of Kinkaid Gay’s household:

Janella Gill Gay was born Aprile the 23 1802
 Sarah Ann Gay was born July the 25 1826
 William Alexander Gay was born September the 23 1828

These records, on the first page of births are separated from the preceding birth records of Kinkaid’s parents and siblings by a scribal device, and all appear to have been entered at the same time. The first birth record on the next page

Mary Ellen Gay was born July the 15th AD 18[8|3]4 [*Hand-B*]

is in an entirely different hand, and since Mary E Gay (aged 15) is found in the 1850 USCensus living with Janetta [sic] G Gay, we may presume that she was a second daughter of this couple, and resolve the ambiguity of the reading of her birth year in favor of 1834.

The preceding set of death records include deaths of John Gay (1826), and Sarah Gay (1828) in Hand-A, and of Kinkaid Gay (12Sep1834) in Hand-B. We are told by Robert B. Walters, in his *Gay/Guy Families*, 350, that John Gay of WoodfordCoKY made his will in 1826 naming sons James, John, and Kinkead, so we may presume that the John who died in 1826 is the father, not the son, and the Sarah who died in 1828 is likely his wife, the mother, not the daughter. Furthermore, the handwriting clearly changes from A to B only with the birth of Mary Ellen Gay on 15Jul1834, and the death of Kinkaid Gay on 12Sep1834.

It therefore appears highly probable from the above that Kinkaid Gay, the youngest son, married Janella Gill about 1825, and entered all of these bible records himself soon after 23Sep1828, upon the birth of his first (and only) son, William Alexander Gay. Since two of the death records of his siblings include not only the day but the hour, it is likely that he copied the entries for his parents and siblings from his parents’ family bible. After his death, his wife Janella (as Hand-B) probably brought the record up to date by recording the birth of their third child, Mary Ellen Gay, and the death of her husband. Since the next birth record is that of Richard H. Durrett, in Hand-C, and since a later marriage record shows him marrying Sarah Ann Gay, presumably the daughter of Janella, and since most of the entries prior to Richard’s death are in Hand-C, we may also presume that the Kinkaid Gay Bible morphed at that point into the Richard H. Durrett Bible.

⁴ Kinkaid Gay household 1830 USCensus for WoodfordCoKY (misc. townships), folio 296, Ancestry.com image 1.

A Note on the Onomastics of the Family of John & Sarah Gay

John was the oldest son of James Gay, and there is reason to believe that father James, his siblings, and his children all followed the Scotch-Irish onomastic pattern.^[5] Based on this, I have inferred the given name of John's mother: it is Mary. As for John's wife, Sarah, it is believed that her father was Robert Lockridge of the Calfpasture, but we do not know the name of her mother. The Chalkley entries for Robert Lockridge do not yield a record of any use (such as a will, or a deed with Robert as grantor), but there may be one, nonetheless from a later period, or in RockbridgeCo; I mean to keep looking for that. Still, of the first six given names predicted for the first three children of each sex, we know at least three (James, John, and Sarah), and two others (Robert, and Mary) are highly probable. And except for a single anomaly, the first three children of each sex were named as predicted, with the third son, and the third daughter each being named for their parents. The odds against this happening by chance are on the order of thousands to one. This creates a strong presumption that the unknown or doubtful names of the grandparents are the corresponding ones given to the grandchildren.

But there is, as I say, one anomaly. John & Sarah's first child, a daughter, appears as "Marget" in the Gay-Durrett bible record, while the second appears to have been first written "Marget", then corrected to "Mary" by writing a small "y" over the "g". The third daughter is then "Agness" and the fourth "Sarah", whereas we should expect from the pattern that the third daughter would be "Sarah" for her mother, just as the third son was named "John" for his father (the first two sons were named Robert and James for their maternal and paternal grandfathers, respectively).

My analysis above indicates that the birth records for these children were probably copied by Kinkaid Gay from a family record kept by his parents; one indication of this is the inclusion of non-contemporaneous information about the hour, and even the minute of death of two of Kinkaid's brothers. Kinkaid was his parents' youngest child, and was probably a bit hazy about his baby sister who died in infancy, and who likely bore the same name as his second sister Mary, who survived to adulthood. What I suspect is that he began the copying by misreading "Mary" in the original record as "Marget" for both of the first two entries, then corrected the second to "Mary" but omitting to correct the first as well; perhaps he made the correction later when his parents' record was no longer in front of him.

In consideration of the strong onomastic pattern in the family of John³ (James², John¹) Gay (as established in my paper "The Gays of the Little Calfpasture & Descendants"), I have little hesitation in labeling the name of the first child here a mistake, and I believe, by the same token, that there is a strong presumption that the parents of John's wife, Sarah (Lockridge) Gay, were named Robert & Agnes Lockridge, but that remains to be shown by independent research.

⁵ A large proportion of Scotch-Irish followed a standard pattern in naming their children of both sexes, at least for the first few children. The first children of each sex were named for their father's parents, the second for their mother's parents, and the third for their own parents. Subsequent children (starting with the 4th of each sex) were then named for their paternal uncles, or for their maternal aunts, respectively, oldest uncles/aunts first. Few families carried out this pattern to the last detail, but, in my experience, the majority of 18th Century Scotch-Irish settlers of the frontiers of PA and VA followed it for their first three children of each sex (though occasionally preferring the maternal to the paternal parents if the former were of more prominent family), and at least 80% of fathers named their first sons for their own fathers.

Another, lesser known feature of colonial naming customs which certainly obtained among the Scotch-Irish, was "necronymy"—the practice of reusing the name of a child who had just died in infancy by assigning it to the next child of the same sex to be born.

See my article "The Scotch-Irish Onomastic Pattern" for more on onomastics as it applies to family history research, and specifically to the Scotch-Irish.

BIRTHS—BIRTHS [*two columns of births---the 1st of 4 "Family Record" pages*]

All the entries on this page are in the same clerical hand, which I call "Hand-A". Besides the eccentric spellings of "Domini" (e.g. "Dommoni"), and "April" ("Aprile"), this writer has apparently never learned that superscripted ordinal suffixes are conventionally appended to the day of the month, yet s/he uses the ordinal suffix position to tuck away the definite article "the" preceding such dates; sometime, indeed, the tiny "the" is written above the number of the day. Thus, s/he writes: "March 14^{the}", "February 2^{the}", and "January 6^{the}". In my transcriptions, I have accordingly rendered these dates "March the 14", "February the 2", and "January the 6".

John Gay was born January the 1 Anno Dommm*ii 1748

[*Shirley Byler reads the day as "4", but the only other number it might be is "7"*]

Sarah Gay was born March the 14 Anno Dommonii _____

[*Byler interpolates the year as 1754, and Sarah's maiden name, supposed to be Lockridge, perhaps from Railey, p71*]

Marget Gay was born September the 28 Anno Dommani 1771

Mary [or "Marget"?] Gay was born January the 6 Anno Dommoni 1774

[*It looks as though the name as first written was "Marget", just like the preceding child, then this was changed to "Mary" by writing a tiny "y" over the original "g" of Marget". There would have been nothing paradoxical about naming a second child, Margaret, if the first of that name had died in infancy: in fact, such was the usual practice in this population. For this reason, it is more likely than not that the first child, as well as the second was actually named Mary. It should be noted that these records were copied out of John & Sarah Gay's family bible record by their youngest son, Kinkaid, who may have been vague about the details of his lost baby sister. That the first daughter was named Mary becomes overwhelmingly likely when we consider that if this was so, all five of the six names of the first three children of each sex are predicted by the Scotch-Irish onomastic pattern, which was followed by John's father, and by at least two of his siblings; the odds of this occurring by chance are on the order of thousands to one.]*

Robert Gay was born June the 25 Anno Dommoni 1776

Agness Gay was born February the 2 Anno Dommoni 1779

James Gay was born November the 1 Anno Dommoni 1781

Sarah Gay was born Aprile the 10 Anno Dommoni 1784

John Guy was born November the 16 Anno Dommonii 1786

Rebeckah Gay was born May the 5 Anno Dommonii 1790

William Dunlap Gay was born May the 19 Anno Dommoni 1793

Samuel Gay was born March the 30 Anno Dommoni 1796

Kinkaid Gay was born the October the 6 Anno Dommoni 1798

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ [intrinsic handwritten separator]

Janella Gill Gay was born Aprile the 23 1802

[USCensus records suggest that Janella was née Gill, and married to Kinkaid Gay, preceding, and that the following three birth records were for her children:]

Sarah Ann Gay was born July the 25 1826

[matches the Sarah A Derret, wife of Richard H in the 1850 USC for MarionCoMO]

William Alexander Gay was born September the 23 1828

[living with Janetta G Gay, and next door to Richard H & Sarah A Derret in 1850]

The entries on the remaining three pages of this record are in various hands, which I have annotated "Hand-B", "Hand-C", etc.

BIRTHS—DEATHS [the 2nd of 4 Family Record pages]

Mary Ellen Gay was born July the 15th AD 18[8|3]4 [Hand-B]

[living with Janetta G Gay, and next door to Richard H & Sarah A Derret in 1850; since she was aged 15 in that year, the bible record year, though it looks like "8", must instead be "3"]

Rich[ar]d H Durrett was born March 21st 1817 [Hand-C]

Mary Jane Catherine Durrett was born April 17 184[5?] [Hand-D]

John William Kincaid Durrett was born September 2nd 1847 [Hand-D]

Sarah Ann Virginia Durrett was born February 17 1850 [Hand-D]

Margaret Keaylor Bell Durrett was born the 19th day of June 1853 [Hand-D]

Richard Samuel Durrett was born the 13th day of November 1854 [Hand-D]

Elizabeth Cotton Durrett was born May 17th 1857 [Hand-D]

Rebecca Gay Durrett was born April 19th 1860 [Hand-D]

and, inscribed below the bottom page border:

Henry Clay Durrett was born Mar 18th 1865 [Hand-D]

Janella Alexander Durrett was born January 1[8?]th 1868 [*Hand-D*]

DEATHS [*right column of this 2nd page*]

Agness Gay Departed this life August the 20 AD 1804 [*Hand-A*]

Robert Gay Departed this life Spetember 30 AD 1805 [*Hand-A*]

William D Gay Departed this life November the 30 in 1813, 45 minutes after 3 in the morning [*Hand-A*]

Samuel Gay Departed this life January the 15 in 1816 1 Oclock in the morning [*Hand-A*]

William Mc[e?]lvain Departed this life in September the 28 in 1814 [*Hand-A*]
[*Railey, p155, says that William McIlvain was the husband of Sarah Gay, daughter of John, and that she married 2nd James Stevenson of WoodfordCoKY*]

Mary Gay Departed this life February the 19 1820 at 1 oclock in the morning [*Hand-A*]

John Gay Departed this life October 19 1826 [*Hand-A1*]

DEATHS—DEATHS [*the 3rd of 4 Family Record pages*]

Sarah Gay departed this life May 14 1828 [*Hand-A1*]

Rebeccah Gay departed this life March 23, 1832 [*Hand-A1*]

Kinkaid Gay Departed this life September the 12th AD 1834 [*Hand-B*]

Mary Ellen Gay departed this life December 8th 1854 at 15 minutes past 8 o'clock in the evening [*Hand-D*]

Janella G Gay departed this life October 20th 1835 [*Hand-D*]
[*The 3rd digit of Janella's death year is clearly written "3" but an 1835 date would be out of order here in the bible records, and more crucially, Janella (as "Janetta") was still alive in the 1850 USCensus for MarionCoMO. Shirley Byler has written Janella's death year as "1855", and further noted that she died, aged 55 (although the age is evidently wrong since Janella was 48 in the 1850 USCensus, and my reading of her birth year is "1802"). Where Byler got the specific death year (1835 being wrong), she doesn't say, although there is an illegible annotation to the left of the Janella entries; probably she just guessed that it was only this one digit of the year which was wrong, and since Janella wasn't around in 1860, she probably died in the 1850s.*]

William A Gay departed this life March 1st 1861 [*Hand-D?*]

Richard Samuel Durrett departed this life July 26th 1864 [*Hand-D*]

Mary Jane Catharine Durrett Parsons departed February 1st 1874 [*Hand-D?*]

The remaining death records are in one or more different hands not encountered above

Richard H Durrett departed this life August 28th 1879 at 6 O'clock in the morning

Janella Alexander Durrett departed this life May 2nd 1899

Daniel Webster Durrett departed this life Apr 23rd 1909

Sarah An Durrett (born Gay) March 30, 1910

Margaret Kaylor Bell [C]al[vert] (born Durrett) departed this life March 17th 1914

Rebecca Durrett Martin died Apr. 6, 1937

Henry Clay Durrett Jan 18 1945

MARRIAGES—MARRIAGES [*the 4th of 4 Family Record pages*]

William A Durret & Sarah M Gay were married the 7th November 1839 [*Hand-D*]

Rich[ard] Henry Durrett & Sarah A Gay were married the 23rd April 1844 [*Hand-D*]

The remaining marriage records are in hands other than A-D, which I have not attempted to classify.

James D Parson & Mary J.C. Durrett were married August 20th 1863

Francis McChurchwell & Sarah A V Durrett were married 3th of Oct[be2?] 1867

Thomas Calvert & Margaret Durrett were married March 20th 1873

[Z?] N Martin & Ellen E. Durrett were married the 24 of November 1880

Samuel S. Martin & Rebecca G. Durrett were married the 21 of March 1883

Henry Clay Durrett [&] Rosa Annie Pop[e?] were married December 27th 1893

SOURCES:

Railey, Wm. E., *History of Woodford County (Reprint from Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, 1920-1921)* (FrankfortKY: Roberts Print. Co., 1928)