



John Ritchie

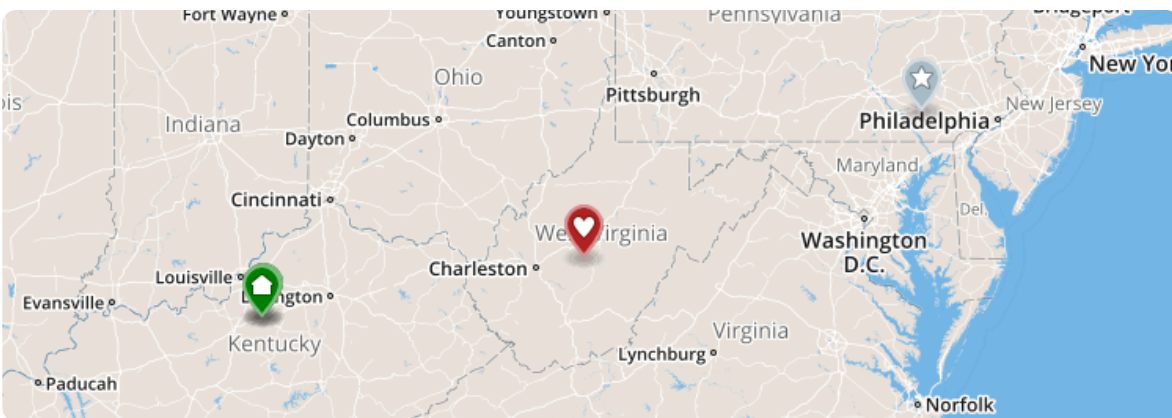
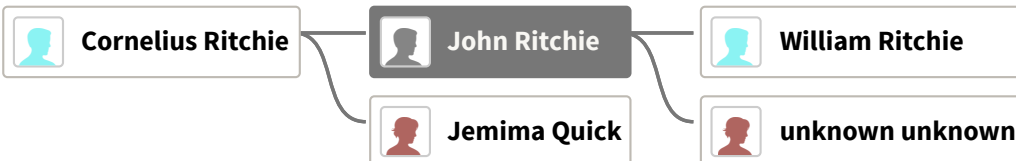
1752–1814

brother-in-law



John Ritchie (ca. 1752 - 1814)

This profile is based on fact not legend. Many members of ancestry.com subscribe to the "whisky legend" of Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky, that claims he was born in Scotland in 1752 and married to Jemaima Quick at various times and in various places ranging from New Jersey to Kentucky. There is evidence for none of this. What evidence there is points to a more prosaic beginning, born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to a Scots-Irish father, named William. The case hangs on tithe records of Nelson County and on the wills of he, his wife Jemima and William. It is regrettable that members of ancestry.com who repeat the legend are either ignorant of the facts or disregard good practice by trying to "prove" the legend. He died in Nelson County in 1814.



He is Probably Born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

The period of his life between about 1730 and 1770 is still under active study. The current theory has him born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, around 1752, the fourth son of a Scots-Irish father, William Ritchie.

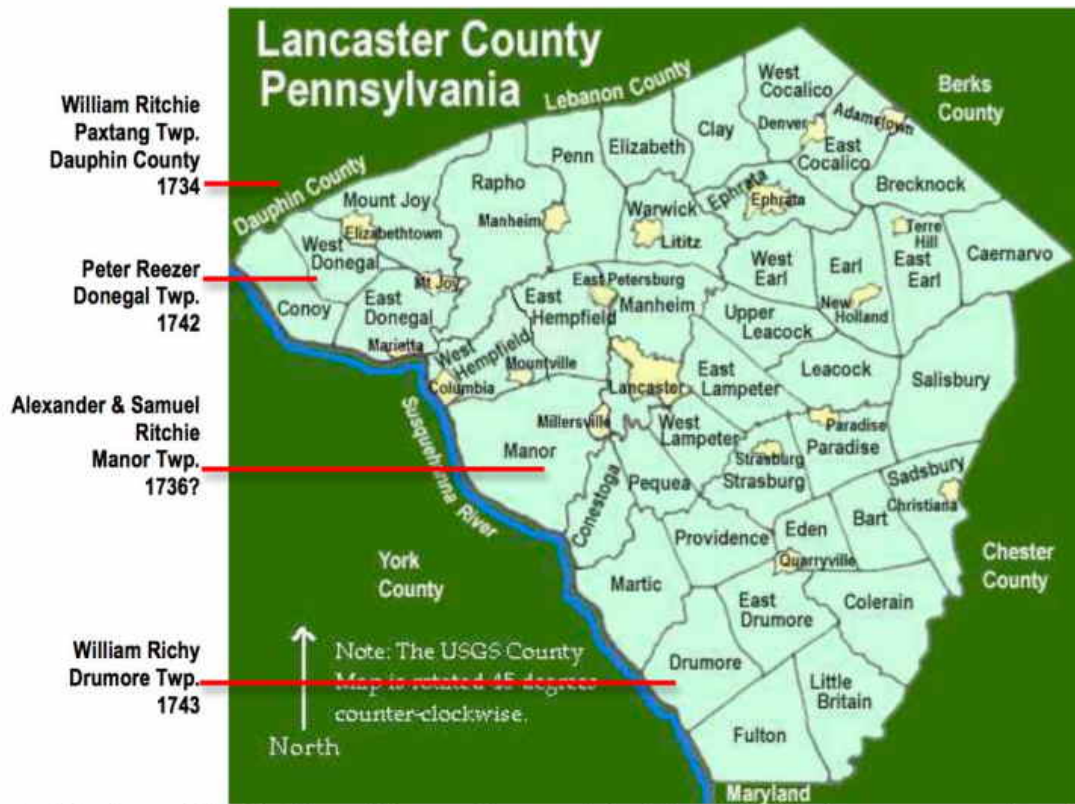


Figure 2. Members of the Ritchie and Reezer (Reasoner) families settled in the western reaches of Lancaster County.

perhaps 1752 • probably Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

The Legend

There is a legend of John Ritchie many researchers take literally, its unshakeable grip being no doubt due to a reluctance to denigrate the folklore of Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky. Bardstown claims to be the first place sour mash bourbon whiskey was produced in the United States. John Ritchie, an early distiller of the product, has become inseparable from the legend.[1] Though dates in the legend are disputed, certain events it describes may be true. The likely originator of the legend was a Dr. Martin Coomes who in 1895 read a paper before the Filson Club claiming he was born in Scotland in 1752. One version of the legend has him married to Jemima Quick in New Jersey, another has the event taking place in 1770 on the banks of the Licking River. These tales are contradicted by facts in historical documents. In the first place, John Ritchie never set foot in New Jersey. He and Jemima could not have been married in 1770 because she (along with her father) did not reach western Pennsylvania until 1780. She was born after 1754 (the birth of her sister Saertje) so if she married in 1770 would have been 15 years old. Most damaging to the legend is its failure to mention a putative father William and his brother Gilbert who moved from Nelson to Bourbon County around 1790. Perhaps religion played a role in the legend. Martin Coomes was a noted physician and a Catholic. Jemima, John, William and Gilbert Ritchie (reputed to be a preacher) were protestants. Perhaps Gilbert and William left Bardstown because of differences in religion. In any case, the legend did not begin with John and Jemima themselves but with their children and grandchildren, many of whom married Catholic spouses and converted to the Catholic faith.

[1] See "The Acorn from which the Oak Grew" in the Gallery.

1754

1755

AGE 3

Who John Ritchie was Not

Whatever the date John Ritchie arrived in Kentucky, and wherever he came from, it is essential to explain how he got there. Kentucky is a long way from the eastern seaboard. Between the two places lies Pennsylvania, so it is logical to think that if he did or did not arrive on the seaboard he spent some time in Pennsylvania. A number of Ritchie families lived in Pennsylvania in the 30 years prior to his appearance in Kentucky, and a number at first glance could be him at an earlier stage of his life. It is essential to identify these men and argue whether or not any one could be he. The arguments are lengthy and are placed in the essay "Provable and Unprovable Origins of John Ritchie of Nelson County" in the Gallery. To summarize:

- 1 He is not a kinsman of Matthew Ritchie, a business associate of Gen. George Washington. Matthew Ritchie did have a brother, John, but his will shows him to be married to a lady named Eleanor.
- 2 Based on name- and date-matching alone he could be a son of Alexander Ritchie and Margaret Wilson of Stewarton, Ayrshire, Scotland, but that in itself is not proof. Though it cannot be proven or disproven for lack of evidence, it is highly unlikely.
- 3 He is not a son of James Ritchie and Christian McCurrick of Scotland for the simple reason that there is no evidence of any kind this couple actually existed.
- 4 Based on name- and date-matching alone he could be a son of James (Craig) Ritchie of Fowlis Wester, Perthshire, Scotland, but as in case 2 it is highly unlikely.
- 5 He is not a son of Alexander Ritchie of Kirkcudbright who was convicted of theft and banished to America.

All the details backing up these statements can be found in the Gallery.

1755

1756

AGE 4

What Researchers Have to Say About John

The William Ritchie proposed here as John Ritchie's father actually did have a son named John. But researchers of William Ritchie have little to say about him. Though acknowledging his existence they describe him weakly and unconvincingly, e.g., "It is thought he followed Gilbert to Indiana and then returned to get married". They are not aware of the tithe records of Nelson County that put William and John in the same time and place.

1756

ABT.
1758

AGE 6

Birth of Brother



Gilbert Ritchie

1758-1854

abt. 1758 • Probably Paxtang Township, Lancaster (now Dauphin) County, Pennsylvania

ABT.
1760

AGE 8

Birth of Sister



Mary Ritchie

1760-

abt. 1760 • probably Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

ABT.
1760
AGE 8

Birth of Brother



Robert Ritchie
1760-1833

abt. 1760 • probably Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

ABT.
1760
AGE 8

Birth of Brother



Isaac Ritchie
1760-1843

abt. 1760 • Frederick, Frederick County, Maryland, USA

1768
AGE 16

John's Early Life - to 1768

The theory proposed here has John growing up on his parents' farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, his father being one of several men named William Ritchie who hold land warrants there.[1] John knows only the life of a Pennsylvanian and is never in New Jersey.[2]

[1] Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Pennsylvania State ArchivesRG-17 Records of the Land Office WARRANT REGISTERS, 1733-1957. [series #17.88] *LANCASTER COUNTY Document Images* [2] Bardstown legend.

1768

1769
AGE 17

John in Westmoreland County, 1769

As described in the profile for William Ritchie, William settled in 1769 in a part of Bedford County that was later reorganized into Rostraver Township, Westmoreland County.[1] His son, John, then around 17 years of age, was a member of the household.

[1] Ancestry.com. Pennsylvania, Land Warrants and Applications, 1733-1952[database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.Original data: Warrant Applications, 1733-1952. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania State Archives.

1769 • Now Rostraver Twp., Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

ABT
1770
AGE 18

Birth of Sister



Nancy Ritchie
1770-

abt 1770 • probably Rostraver Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

ABT.
1772
AGE 20

Birth of Sister



Catherine Ritchie
1772-

abt. 1772 • probably Rostraver Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Is John in Pennsylvania Between 1773 and 1787?

Numerous documents exist to support the trace of John Ritchie after 1769. The first regarding John and his putative father and brothers are the Tax and Exoneration records of Rostraver Township, Bedford County.[1] (This part of Bedford County would later be reorganized into Westmoreland County.) The first is of Abraham, John's proposed brother in 1773. Abraham appears again in 1783 in Rostraver Township, Westmoreland County, along with his putative father "Wm Ritchey Senr". In 1787 four members of the family appear together: William Senior and Junior, Abraham and John. The family can hardly be other than the Ritchies who later move to Kentucky. The adherents of the legend ignore this evidence.

[1] Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission; Records of the Office of the Comptroller General, RG-4; Tax & Exoneration Lists, 1762-1794; Microfilm Roll: 322. Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801 for William Ritchey. Westmorland County, Rostraver Town

Table 1. Tax Records of Bedford and Westmorland Counties, Pennsylvania, 1773-1787.

Record	Year	Place	Name	Comments	Note
PTE	1773	Bedford Co., Rostraver Twp.	Abraham Ritchey	0 1 0. Described as an inmate	a
"	1783	Westmorland Co., Rostraver Twp.	Abm Ritchey Wm Ritchey Senr	5 1 - 1 1 2 1 10 - 10 9.	b
"	1783	"	William Ritchey Abm. Ritchey Willm Ritchey Senr	- - 9 - 5 1 - 1 3 2 1 10 - 10 9	c
"	1787	"	William Ritchey William Ritchey Abraham Ritchey John Ritchey	- 4 11 - - 4 - - 4 - - 4	d

Table Notes

- a PTE = Pennsylvania Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801
- b Since there is a William Ritchey Senior there must be a Junior.
- c There are two William Ritcheys a Senior and a Junior. The senior is probably the third man.
- d One would think that, based on assets, the first named Ritchey is the father followed by his 3 sons each taxed the same at 4d.

1773

Are John and Abraham in the 13th Virginia Regt., 1778 ?

Aside from land and tax records there are also military records. In 1778 or 1779 a John (Riche), an Abraham (Riche) and a Samuel Lemon together served in the 13th Virginia Regiment commanded by Col. John Gibson. (The date is unclear from the document.) John Riche was stationed at Fort Crawford. The muster roll survives for the months of April and May of that year.[1]

[1] The roll is dated Pittsburgh 8 Jun 1779?

1778

ABT.
1780
AGE 28

Birth of Son



Cornelius Ritchie
1780-1815

abt. 1780 • possibly Nelson County, Kentucky

1782
AGE 30

Birth of Daughter



Mary Ritchie
1782-1868

1782 • probably Nelson County, Kentucky

ABT.
1782
AGE 30

Birth of Son



John Ritchie
1782-1835

abt. 1782 • Nelson County, Kentucky

1785
AGE 33

The Ritchies in Kentucky, 1785-1791

Tithe records of Nelson County, Kentucky, are the single most important (and ignored) documents in this branch. They prove three Ritchie men - William, Gilbert and John - were in 1787 living in close proximity in Nelson County. Gilbert is known from other evidence to be William's son, so there is no reason not to think John is a son also. Tithes were collected in Nelson County beginning in 1785, the year after its creation from Jefferson County, Virginia. In this year Joseph Barnett was collecting tithes from John Richey while working in an area that probably included Bardstown. Whether this is true or not it is certainly true that in 1787 Gabriel Cox was collecting tithes from William, Gilbert and John Ritchie in Bardstown.[1] (This was around the time John Ritchie received his land warrants.) Gilbert and John appear in the 17th and 18th positions in the recorded-as-encountered tax lists, which is a pretty good indicator they were neighbors or members of the same household. William and Gilbert are surely the men of the same names who later moved to Bourbon County. John stayed behind. There are no records of any other John Ritchie who could be William's son.

[1] See the pdf document "Nelson County Tithes 1785-1791" in the Gallery. They were transcribed by Mary Yoder, mayoder@davesworld.net. Thank you.

Table 1. Extracts from Nelson County Tithes, 1785-1791, Nelson County, Kentucky.

Year	Name	Tithes Paid	# on List	Collector's Name	Note
1785	John Richey	5-1	61	Jos Barnett	a
1787	William Richey	1	12	Gab'l Cox	b
	Gilbert Richey	1	17	Gab'l Cox	b
	John Richey	1	18	Gab'l Cox	b
1788	William Rickey	1	52	Josh. Hobbs	c
	Gilbert Richie	1	25	Josh. Hobbs	c
	John Richey - Coxs Creek	1	8	CLK N.C.	d
	John Richey	NG	66	David Cox	e
1790	John Richey	1	2	M. Campbell	f
	William Richy	2	9	Joshua Hobbs	g
	John Ritchie	1	84	Wm. May	h
	Tuenis Quick; Thomas Watts	2	35	M. Campbell	f
1791	John Riched	1	53	Thomas Morton	i
	John Ritchey	1	14	Mich'l Campbell	j

Table Notes

- a Joseph Barnett: 1786: on all the waters of Rolling and Beach Forks westwardly of the waters of Hardins Creek. Total: 166.-1785 1 # of whites, #of white tithables, # of tithables nebras, # negros under 16.
- b Gabriel Cox ----1787 Youngs Co- area immediately north of Bardstown, Nelson Co.
- c Joshua Hobbs ----1788 Capt Young's Co; immediately north & northwest of Bardstown Clerk, Nelson Co-1788 Taken by CLerk- appears to duplicate some additions made by Caldwell).
- e David Cox -----1788 His own Company- North central Nelson Co around Cox's Creek
- f Michael Campbell -1790 Capt. Williams Co (South Central Nelson Co)
- g Joshua Hobbs ----1790 - Capt Bruces Co - Norther Nelson Co
- h William May -----1790: Capts McDaniels & McFalls Cos. (North Central Nelson Co)
- i Thomas Morton -----1791 George Berrys Co - north central Nelson Co.
- j Mich'l Campbell-----1791 Edward Willams Co- south central Nelson Co.

1785 • Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky

ABT
1785
AGE 33

John Marries Jemima, 1785? 1770?

A wealth of documentary evidence proves John was married to Jemima Quick, the daughter of Cornelius Quick, but none give a date or a place. The date is surely between 1780 and 1787 because her father (and presumably she) did not arrive in the west until 1780. By 1787 she was already married because Cornelius names her "Jemima Ritchie" in his will of 1787. If 1762 is taken as an educated guess for the year of her birth then it is surely reasonable to suppose she was married around 1785. John Ritchie's name does not appear in Cornelius Quick's estate package so he and Jemima were probably in Kentucky by then. This is consistent with John receiving his first warrant for land in Kentucky in 1782. The Bardstown legend, on the other hand, has his first child born in Kentucky in 1778. This is surely too early for the simple reason it would mean he and Jemima were married before he had land to settle on (yes, he could have been a squatter). I think it more likely they were married in the area of western Pennsylvania-Virginia-West Virginia sometime between 1780 and 1787 and went to Kentucky after their marriage.



Jemima Quick

1762-1840

abt 1785 • probably Virginia (West Virginia)

1 MAR
1786
AGE 34

John Buys Land in Kentucky, 1782-6

The trail or "descent" of John Ritchie's land in Kentucky can be followed in the article in the Gallery. He received the final deed for 590 acres of land on 1 Mar 1786. [1] The tract was described "...containing five hundred and ninety acres by survey bearing date the first day of march one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six lying... in the County of Nelson on the south side of the Beech Fork and bounded as following to wit: Beginning at two ash trees and sugar tree on the bank of the Beech Fork and about forty poles above the mouth of "Ritchie Run" running thence east one hundred and fifty poles to two white oaks and hickory, thence north three hundred and fifty poles to a poplar beech and sugar tree, thence east one hundred and eight poles to an elm in the forks of a small drain of "Ritchie's Run" thence north fourteen poles to a hickory and white oak thence east thirty poles to an ash and two sugar trees, thence north one hundred and five poles to two black oaks and a sugar tree on the point of a know thence north seventy five degrees west one hundred and ninety nine poles to two beech trees on the bank of the beech fork thence down the same binding on its meanders to the beginning..."

[1] The deed is dated 1787. For full details see the Gallery.

1 Mar 1786 • Nelson County, Kentucky

1786

AGE 34

Birth of Daughter



Eleanor (Nellie) Ritchie

1786-1814

1786 • Nelson County, Kentucky, USA

1790

AGE 38

Nelson and Bourbon Counties in 1790

The early records of the Ritchie family appear in more than one county in Kentucky because of the division and subdivision of the counties. In 1790 Nelson County encompassed a land mass that included numerous modern counties. The men proposed as John's father and brother moved from Nelson to Bourbon County around 1790, no great distance. The Ritchie family is of importance to the Quick family, as Jemima is John Quick's sister. In the Spring of 1790 John Quick and his family were captured by Shawnee Indians from a cabin on the Ohio River in Mason County that would later become Lewis County. Were they on their way to the Ritchies?

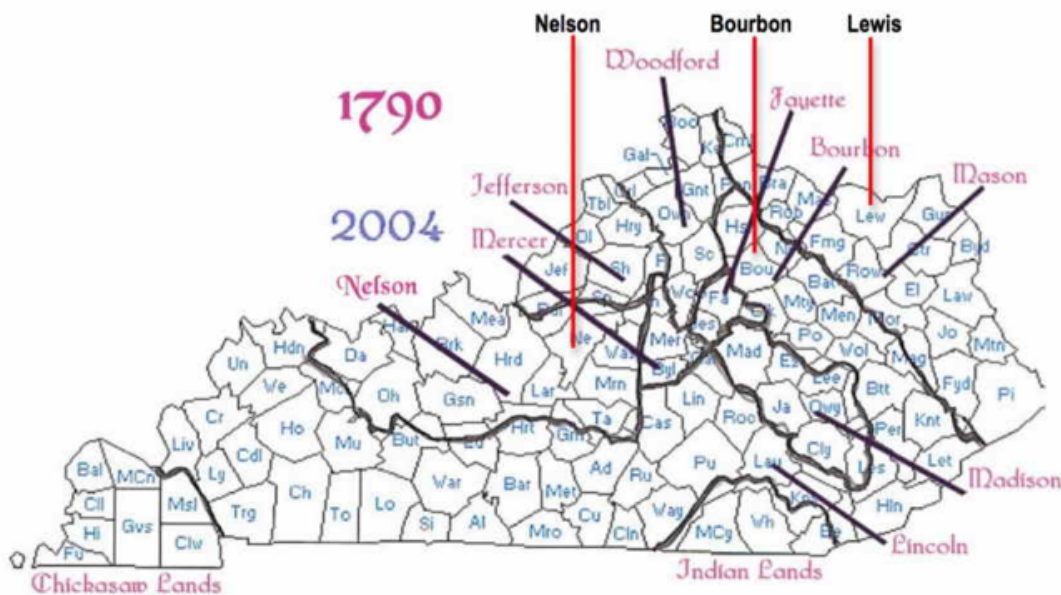


Figure 1. In the Kentucky of 1790 no great distance separated John and Jemima (Quick) Ritchie (Nelson County), Gilbert and William Ritchie (Bourbon County) and John and Elizabeth Quick (Lewis County).

1790

Death of Mother



unknown unknown

1711-1790

abt. 1790 • possibly Nelson County, Kentucky

ABT.

1790

AGE 38

1791

AGE 39

William and Gilbert Move to Bourbon County, 1790-91

A side-by-side comparison of the tax records of Nelson and Bourbon Counties show that William senior, Gilbert, and the rest of William's family moved from Nelson to Bourbon County around 1790. Also present in Bourbon County a little later are Philip, Robert, Isaac, and David Ritchie. Precisely why they moved is a question whose answer would shed much light on the family history.[1]

[1] Bourbon County Tax Lists transcribed by Bob Francis. Bob Francis, 1920A Butner St., Ft. Eustis, VA 23604; Homepage: <http://www.shawhan.com>. To my knowledge the original lists are not available on ancestry.com. There is no trace of Philip.

1791 • Kentucky

1792

AGE 40

John Ritchie in Nelson County, 1792

The 1792 tithe records of Nelson County show John Ritchie remained in Nelson County.[1]

[1] Ancestry.com. Kentucky, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1810-1890 [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999. Original data: Jackson, Ron V., Accelerated Indexing Systems, comp.. Kentucky Census, 1810-1890.

1792 • No Township Listed, Nelson County, Kentucky

1793

AGE 41

John (or his son) in the Cavalry, 1793

By 1793 Jemima's brother John Quick and his family were prisoners with the Shawnee in Ohio, and had been so for three years. In this year a John Ritchie rode in a company of mounted volunteers in Russell's Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry.[1] They were part of a larger army under "mad" Anthony Wayne whose mission was to push the Indians north through Ohio. This effort forced the Indians in 1794 to make a stand at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and in 1795 to sign the Treaty of Fort Greenville. This may be John Ritchie of Nelson County or his son. Exactly how long he served is not known. Did he know of the fate of his kin? Was it the knowledge that motivated him to join the cavalry?

[1]

(1798.)

R | Russell's Reg't, Cav. | Ky. Vols.

John Ritchie

Appears with the rank of *Priv* on a

Muster Roll

of a company of mounted volunteers from Kentucky, under the command of Capt. George Frazer, in the service of the United States, commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles Scott, for *not stated*, 179 .

Roll dated *not dated*, 179 .

Date of appointment or enlistment, } *Oct 6*, 1793 .

Present or absent *Present*

Remarks: *Mustered present 9th Nov Ft Washington.*

1793 • Ohio Territory

1795

AGE 43

Death of Father



William Ritchie

1711-1795

1795 • Bourbon County, Kentucky, USA

1795

AGE 43

Death of Father



William Ritchie

1711-1795

1795 • Bourbon County, Kentucky, USA

1810

AGE 58

John and Jemima in Bardstown, 1810

John Ritchie (Richey) appears on the 1810 Census for Bardstown, Nelson County. [1] His household contains: 1 male of 10 and under 16; 1 male of 20 and under 45; 1 female under 10; 2 females of 10 and under 16; 1 female of 26 and under 45; 1 other free person. This record is indexed on ancestry as "John L Richey", the "L" being likely a misreading of "Sr".

[1] Year: 1810; Census Place: Bardstown, Nelson, Kentucky; Roll: 8; Page: 30; Image: 00019; Family History Library Film: 0181353.



1810 • Bardstown, Nelson, Kentucky, USA

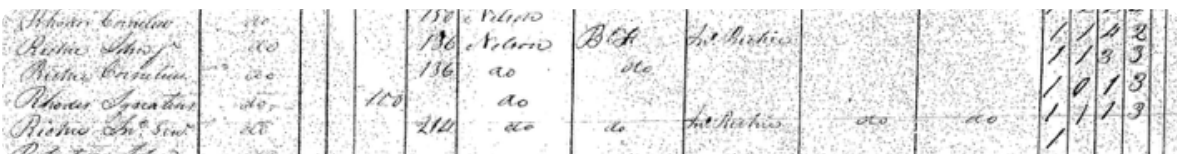
1813

AGE 61

John and Jemima in Bardstown, 1813

In 1813 John Senior pays taxes in Nelson County. [1] John Ritchie Junior and Cornelius Ritchie are living nearby.

[1 Image courtesy Kandie Adkinson (SOS) [mailto:Kandie.Adkinson@ky.gov] via: jeanieritchie-blaski@gourdsbyjeanie.org. Thank you to both. To my knowledge these records are not online.



1813 • Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky, USA

BEF.

1814

AGE 62

Death of Daughter**Eleanor (Nellie) Ritchie**

1786-1814

bef. 1814 • Nelson County, Kentucky, USA

19 APR

1814

AGE 62

Probate, 1814

John Ritchie had his will written 19 Apr 1814. It was proved to the court 15 Aug 1814. He names his "beloved wife Jemima", sons Cornelius, John and William, and his daughter Mary (Ritchie) Leeman. [1][2] His daughter Eleanor is not mentioned presumably because she is dead.

[1] Probate Files, 1781-1850 ; Index, 1781-1924; Author: Washington County (Pennsylvania). Register of Wills; Probate Place: Washington, Pennsylvania. Notes: File Q: 1797-1844, Q1-Q2. [2] Nelson County, Kentucky Will Book C pgs. 259-261.

19 Apr 1814 • Washington, Pennsylvania, USA

AUG
1814

Death and Burial, 1814

John died sometime between April and August 1814. Legend has it he was buried in a grave in a cemetery on the family farm. The grave is unmarked and its location unknown. It is also believed that Jemima was buried in the same place.

Aug 1814 • Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky

1815

Recapitulation

The genealogist, in his attempt to find answers to difficult questions, is apt to unearth questions of even greater difficulty. Sometimes a point must be argued with circumstantial evidence. Why, of all the members of the family - William senior and junior, Abraham, Gilbert and John - did John alone buy land in Kentucky? A legend has him travelling down the Ohio River with whiskey to trade in New Orleans. Did the funds to buy land come from such ventures? Why did Abraham and William junior, who served in the Virginia Continental Line, stay in Pennsylvania, in spite of receiving Military Land Warrants they could have redeemed in Kentucky? Why did John remain in Nelson County while William senior and the remnants of the family proposed for him move to Bourbon County? Why were William senior and Gilbert so poor they could not buy land in Bourbon County, a fact that very likely led to Gilbert's decision to move to Indiana? We may never know the answers, but we at least have the evidence, circumstantial though it is. A story based on circumstantial evidence is more satisfactory to the logically-minded than a legend.

1815