

## ISSUES REGARDING JAMES NEELY and JANE GRIMES.

James was born about 1713-1715, most likely in what is now known as Northern Ireland and died about 1772-1776. James and Jane married in 1740 in Philadelphia.

Something to keep in mind, James had a son also named James and they both lived in Botetourt County. While there are instances where the junior James is identified as such there are other instances where that's not the case which can result in confusion. Further compounding the confusion is the many Neely family members living in the area who often share the same names.

In an effort to determine fact from fiction, details concerning James Neely and his wife, Jane Grimes, were researched from an assortment of publications, all available online; a list can be found at the end of this paper.

*Documented* facts regarding James Neely:

- A James Nelly and Jane Grimes married in Christ Church, Philadelphia, PA on 21 May 1740
- A James Neely starts appearing on property transactions and other records in Augusta County, Virginia from 1742 to 1776. **Augusta County records provide numerous examples. In these transactions/events, the name always appears as James, never, James John. In one property transaction, James and Jane Neely names appear together,** "11th September, 1769. James Neely and Jane to William McClenachan, 400 acres on Roanoke."
- A James Neeley, Sr, who died 10 Feb 1779 in North Carolina is buried in the Alamance Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Guilford County, North Carolina. Also buried there are a James Neeley, Jr, who died 12 Sep 1777; an Agnes Neeley, who died 16 Jun 1774; and a Sarah Neeley who died 8 Mar 1783.
- In a 1772 Botetourt County militia roster of Tithables of Captain F. Smith shows several James Neely's available for service.
- 10 Sep 1774 Botetourt militia volunteer roster show two James Neely's; one assigned to Captain John Murray's company of volunteers and one to Captain Philip Love's company of volunteers. A 7 Oct 1774 roster shows the same but indicates James Neely was now a cadet in Captain Philip Love's company.
- The will of John Grimes of Northampton, Brunswick, New Jersey, dated 6 Feb 1645, proved 20 Aug 1645, mentions his cousin, Jane Neely [wife of James].

Assertion: James Neely was born in Ireland/Northern Ireland in 1713.

Circumstantial evidence given the time period, the Neely family migrations from Ireland, family stories passed through the generations and even the creation of a

town named Neelytown in Ulster County, New York by Neely immigrants, does provide a plausible basis. The year of birth is at least 1722 given a marriage in 1740 but likely earlier, 1713-1715 as has been noted by researchers. In 1742 James was appointed as a justice of the Augusta County court which suggests he was a bit seasoned in age.

Assertion: James Neely is the son of Robert Neely and Isabel.

While there is no documented proof it's generally accepted that Robert and Isabel Neely are the parents of James. This despite the fact that James is not mentioned in Robert's will. Researcher, Grace Renshaw notes concerning the will of Robert: "... naming in his will his wf Isabel; ch Addam, William, David, Matthew, Mary; brothers, William and John." No mention of a son named James. Grace also wrote that the three sons (Robert, William, John) who came to America from Ireland, settling in Ulster and Orange Counties, New York were thought to be the sons of Rufus Neely (b. c1660, Northern Ireland). Piggybacking on this is the FTDNA Neely family project, where dna is being used to determine ancestral relationships. James Neely is part of Project 2 which seeks to validate Botetourt County, VA and NY Neely's Descendants.

Assertion: James Neely full name is James John Neely.

I've seen nothing to support this claim, quite the contrary; none of the published or professionally researched sources use James John Neely, only James Neely. In the research paper, *The Neeley Family*, by Ronald R Neeley, James John is used. In this paper, Ronald provides notes from three researchers: Laura Milliman, Linda Baker and Charles A. Smith *but none of them refers to James as James John. It seems Ronald made the change or saw it used elsewhere and simply repeated it.* This same document provides no source documents, except the excerpts of other "researchers" work as noted above. The use of James John Neely on Ancestry.com is resulting in a mix of details of two different people which only adds to confusion.

Confusion may exist because two brothers, James and John Neely both married women whose last name is Grime and both settled in Virginia near Roanoke. Again, Grace Renshaw's work provides details. Grace does report some collateral evidence about the James Neely family. A John Grimes of New Jersey died in 1745. He left a will naming a brother, William Grimes, and cousins Jane Neelly [wife of James] and Sarah Neelly as legatees. Jane's legacy was 'All debts owed to me in Virginia.' Sarah must have been Jane's sister and their home Burlington County, New Jersey. ... Sarah Grimes had also married a Neely. In Burlington Co. marriage records we find, 'John Nelly [Neely] of Burlington, m Sarah Grimes, 19 Aug 1742.

Assertion: James Neely died in 1772.

Not true. Property was transferred by James Neely in 1776: 1776 - Jane Love, wife of Philip Love - 200 acres on Roanoke, from James Neely. [Kegley's Virginia Frontier, pg. 472.] It appears James Neely was alive in 1776 to make the transfer.

While there is a remote possibility it was James Neely, Jr who made the transfer, I'm inclined to believe its James Neely, senior, since there's no indication it's anybody but him. No record of James after that. The James Neely, Sr, who died 1779 and is buried in Alamance Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Guilford County, North Carolina is not James Neely, Sr. of Botetourt County. More details on this later.

Assertion: James Neely served in the Revolutionary War

Many family trees show James date of death as 1772 so if you stand by that then there's no way he could have served given the war started in April 1775. In any case I find no evidence that James served in the Revolutionary War despite claims by some.

His sons, James, Robert and William were members of the Botetourt Militia during the war. While it appears James, senior was a member of the Botetourt Regiment in 1774, it's actually his son, James, junior. On the roster of the Botetourt Regiment, dated 10 Sep 1774, two James Neely's appear in the list of volunteers. There is a James Neely serving in Captain John Murray's Company along with family member William Neely. And in Captain Philip Love's Company another James Neely is found. So it appears we have both father and son. But on closer inspection of the records it's revealed James was added to Philip Love's Company on 7 Oct 1774 as a Cadet. James Neely, Jr was originally in Captain John Murray's Company as a private then was transferred to Captain Love's Company on 7 Oct and promoted to cadet, three days before the Battle at Point Pleasant. So there's only one James Neely present, not two. Further proof this is true comes from the book, *The Battle of Point Pleasant . . .*, where only two Neely's are recorded: Neely, James (Cadet) and Neely, Wm.

Point Pleasant was an action of Lord Dunmore's War, not the Revolutionary War. Some argue that Point Pleasant was a Revolutionary War battle but none of its participants qualified for Revolutionary War benefits. To qualify for benefits required a service date beginning 19 Apr 1775.

Grace Renshaw, in Neely Narrative, mentions James held the rank of captain of the Botetourt County militia until 1784 when his son, Robert, took over from him. But after viewing various publications on the subject I believe Grace is wrong; she confused father and son since, "Neely, James Jr., Captain, Botetourt Mil. Apr 12, 1781" appears in the record. James Neely does not.

Assertion: James Neely left Virginia and moved elsewhere. Possible, since he seems to disappear from Augusta/Botetourt County records after 1776. He is NOT the James Neely who's buried in Alamance Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Guilford County, North Carolina. In that cemetery, four Neely's are buried, including two James Neely's, noted as Sr. and Jr., plus two women who are likely their wives (Agnes and Sarah). James Neely, Jr was very much alive until 1818 plus he's known to have died in Tennessee so that invalidates any claim that James Neely of Botetourt is the same James Neely buried in North Carolina.

Assertion: Jane Grimes father is John Grimes who died in New Jersey in 1745. The will of John Grimes of Northampton, Brunswick, New Jersey, dated 6 Feb 1645, proved 20 Aug 1645 has been used as a basis to declare Jane a child of John. Unfortunately the will abstract can be taken out of context since it's simply a snapshot summary. According to Grace Renshaw, who included a typed copy of the will in her book on page 113, Jane is mentioned as a legatee and a *cousin* as is Sarah Neely. The will specifically states, "I bequeath to my Couzen Jane Neelly all my debts due me in the Province of Virginia." Put in that context, John is not the father but William may be. Could also be another brother or sister (assuming there is one) whose not mentioned in the will.

Assertion: Jane Grimes is Margaret Jane Grimes, born in Philadelphia about 1720 and died in Botetourt County in 1776.

Documented evidence shows her name as Jane. Her marriage and a single property transaction use the name Jane as does her Uncle John in his will. Where does Margaret come from? I have no idea and never saw Margaret associated with her except in family trees.

No evidence when and where she was born. A marriage in 1740 indicates a likely date of birth before 1723, say about 1720. Likely birth location is Pennsylvania or New Jersey. Her uncle, John Grimes was of Northampton, Brunswick, New Jersey as was Sarah Neely who Grace Renshaw believed was her sister. She based this on the will, the marriage of Sarah Grimes of Brunswick to John Nelly [Neely] of Brunswick, and that Jane Neely named her two daughters, Jane and Sarah.

According to Grace Renshaw, Jane likely died in 1776 and she bases this on two things. First were land transactions in 1776, mentioned earlier, by her husband, James, who seems to be disposing of land by giving it to their children. Second is a letter from James to his daughter Jane that alluded to the loss. Grace was privy to the letter's existence given she married a Neely thus knew grandfather, Rev. T.J. Neely (1802-1890) who was able to pass down accounts of Neely family ancestor history.

## SOURCES

WeRelate. Person James Neely3 (b. 1718 Scotland, d. Kentucky) Detailed list of property transactions and other events in Augusta County, source citations included.

[http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:James\\_Neely\\_\(3\)](http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:James_Neely_(3))

- **Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement in Virginia, by Lyman Chalkley**

Charles Neely and the Neely Family in Logan County, Kentucky; revised draft 3-6-13, by unknown but quotes the work of Louise Y Neely and Grace Renshaw below.

[http://www.edenmartin.com/books/Charles\\_Neely\\_and\\_Family-old.pdf](http://www.edenmartin.com/books/Charles_Neely_and_Family-old.pdf)

- Neely and Martin Descendants , by Louise Y. Neely, published in Dallas, 1982.

Neely Narrative, Grace P. Renshaw, Memphis, 1976. Available in pdf on Ancestry.com.

Virginia Militias in the Revolutionary War, McAllister Data, by J.T. McAllister, Hot Springs, Virginia, 1913. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/>

**Neely Family - 1590 to 1728 - From Scotland to Ulster**, by James R. "Jim" Neely and John Neilly, who lives in Northern Ireland.

<http://www.geni.com/projects/Neely-Family-1590-to-1728-From-Scotland-to-Ulster/13191>

**THE NEELEY FAMILY: Ireland - Virginia - Tennessee - Texas - Oklahoma -California - Washington – Colorado**, by Ronald R Neeley, published 23 Nov 2012 on Ancestry Public Family Tree Content. Family tree: Shana (Stone) Family Heritage tree, mygenealogy1948.

<http://community.ancestry.com/viewusercontent.aspx?uid=00e46729-0002-0000-0000-000000000000&type=story>

Family Tree DNA: Neely Family Project. Four groups; Group 2 - Botetourt, VA and NY Neely's Descendants.

<https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/neely/about/results>

Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution, by John H. Gwathmey, Richmond, Dietz Press,1938. Available on Ancestry.

New Jersey, Abstract of Wills, 1670-1817, Ancestry.com [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. John Grimes, 6 Feb 1744/45, Northampton, Brunswick, New Jersey. Abstract only, mentions, in part, brother William Grimes as executer, Jane Neelly all debts due me in the Province of Virginia.

Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769-1800, Part 2, by Lewis Preston Summers, Abingdon, 1929, reprinted 1996. Page 1411. Private James Neely appears twice, first in Captain John Murrey's company then in Captain Phillip Love's company; both companies part of the Botetourt County Regiment which took part in Point Pleasant, 1774.

Virginia Colonial Soldiers, by Lloyd Dewitt Bockstruck, Genealogical Publishing Com, 1988, p.152. 10 Sep 1774, roll of company volunteers: Captain Murry and Captain Love.

The Battle of Point Pleasant, a Battle of the Revolution Biographical Sketches of the Men Who Participated, by Livia Nye Simpson Poffenbarger, The State Gazette,1909. Shows a list of all known participants. Neely, James (Cadet) and Neely, Wm.