

John Lea (1677-1731)

It generally is believed that the Lea family of Virginia that moved to Orange County, North Carolina (that part of which became Caswell and Person Counties), originated in England. And, some show that the John Lea of this entry was born 1677 at Lea Hall, Cheshire, England, but without providing any supporting documentation. Note the following:

"Where did the Leas who were in Virginia before 1800 come from? There are some guesses but very little solid information. It is commonly agreed that they came from England, and we know that they settled in several of the other colonies besides Virginia. Passengers and Immigration List Index lists fourteen Leas who came to this country before 1800: five to Virginia, five to New England, two to Massachusetts, one to Pennsylvania and one simply to 'America.' But from what part or parts of England they came we do not know."

Source: *Lea Families in Caswell & Person Counties North Carolina and in Virginia Before 1800*, Ben L. Rose (1995) at 147.

The parents of the John Lea of this entry are not known. Also, note the substantial uncertainty with respect to the sons of John Lea and Ann Unknown Lea. Researchers are advised to proceed with extreme caution in this area as the Lea family of Virginia and North Carolina is difficult to understand. Please beware of the extensive undocumented "genealogy" that is in both print and on the Internet. Particular attention is called to the negligent work done by Albert E. Casey in his book *Amite County Mississippi 1699-1890*. While portions of Casey's book are helpful (especially with respect to the Lea family of Amite County, Mississippi), his description of the early Lea ancestors is believed flawed. The number of junk online family trees is too large to list. Let the researcher beware.

Apparently, John Lea of King and Queen County, Virginia, had wife Ann, who was dead by October 5, 1731, and two minor sons, William and James Lea (and possibly a sister Elizabeth (Betty)), who had guardians appointed for them in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, October 5, 1731. There were possibly more children, but no record of them has been found.

Based upon the research done by Ben L. Rose (who, however, did not always get it right), John (Country Line) Lea has been detached from this branch of the Lea family. Other researchers had

John (Country Line) Lea as a brother of Captain William (South Hico) Lea. While some family relationship may exist, Ben L. Rose has concluded that John (Country Line) Lea and Captain William (South Hico) Lea were not brothers. For more on this see the entry for John (Country Line) Lea.

Instead, Ben L. Rose concludes that James (Kilgore's Branch) Lea was the brother of Captain William (South Hico) Lea and the minor son of John Lea mentioned above in connection with the 1731 guardian appointment. This is believed incorrect; see below.

Source: *Report of Research on the Lea Family in Virginia & North Carolina Before 1800*, Ben L. Rose (1984).

Other Lea family researchers, including the well-respected Katharine Kerr Kendall, strongly disagree with Ben Rose with respect to ascribing James (Kilgore's Branch) Lea as the brother of William (South Hico) Lea. Over the years much evidence was submitted to Rose in an effort to convince him that his conclusions were incorrect. He apparently recanted, but did not alter his published Lea research. Accordingly, this database does not show James (Kilgore's Branch) Lea as a brother of William (South Hico) Lea. Based upon research done by Katharine Kerr Kendall, James (Country Line) Lea is shown as the brother of William (South Hico) Lea.

Louise Graves also concluded that James (Country Line) Lea (1707-1792) and William (South Hico) Lea (c.1715-1804) were the two sons of John and Ann Lea of King and Queen County, Virginia. See: *The Heritage of Caswell County, North Carolina*, Jeannine D. Whitlow, Editor (1985) at 352-353 (Article #438, "James Lea" by Louise Graves). However, another researcher disagrees with this, claiming that the father of the James (Country Line) Lea purportedly who married Anne Herndon was a William Lea (with an unnamed wife). See: *The Spirit in the South: Stories of Our Grandmothers' Spirit*, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Vold Forde and Anne Curtis Terry, J.D. (2009) at 341. Again, researchers are advised not to blindly follow undocumented Lea family research.

While we do not agree with the conclusion reached in the following by Ben L. Rose (that James (Kilgore's Branch) Lea is the orphan son of John Lea and the brother of William (South Hico) Lea), his arguments are set forth here in an effort to provide researchers all sides of the issue. Note also that Rose suggests that

the third orphan, Betty Lea, may have married Thomas White, and that guardian Thomas Creathers served not only in that capacity and as the executor of the estate of John Lea (father of the orphans), but also was the orphans' "step-father."

James Lea, the orphan, who in 1731 is identified in the records of Spotsylvania County, Virginia, as one of three orphans of John Lea of King & Queen County, Virginia (The other two orphans were William and Betty). In 1731, John Key was appointed by the court as guardian of this James Lea, which means that at the time James was under fourteen years of age. James's brother and sister, William and Betty, were allowed by the court to choose their guardian, which means that they were over fourteen but not yet twenty-one years of age. In 1754, this James Lea was a witness to the sale of a small parcel of land by Thomas White and his wife, Betty (whom we believe was James's sister), to the church wardens for the new church on East North East. Four years before this, in 1750, the vestry of St George's Parish had ordered that a church be built "on William Lea's old field" on East North East Creek. In 1766, James Lee (Lea) and his wife Ann of Orange County, Virginia, sold one-hundred acres of land in Orange County, Virginia (Orange County had been formed from Spotsylvania County in 1734), on "a branch of the Pamunkey River called Arseforemost." This was almost certainly the one-hundred acres that James Lea, the orphan, had inherited from his father, John Lea (KQ). Although no deed for this has been found, James's brother William received one-hundred acres from his father's estate, so we assume that James received the same since Creathers, the administrator of John Lea's estate, reported to the court that he had paid two of the orphans and was "ready to give security for the payment of the third."

We note that all these transactions were in the extreme western part of Spotsylvania County, Virginia, near the line between Spotsylvania County and Orange County and that Arseforemost is a creek in that vicinity. After he sold his land in 1766, this James Lea disappears from the records of Spotsylvania and Orange Counties, Virginia. The records of these counties between 1731 and 1766, tie together James, William Lea, and Betty Lea, orphans of John Lea (KQ), and Thomas Creathers, who was step-father of the three orphans and administrator of the estate of John Lea (KQ), in such a way as to leave no doubt that James Lea, the orphan of John Lea (KQ), did not leave Virginia until after 1766. The other James Lea of Spotsylvania County, Virginia, sold his land in Virginia and apparently settled on Country Line Creek in Orange County, North Carolina, thirteen years before this. We believe that James Lea, the

orphan of John Lea (KQ), moved to North Carolina after 1766 and settled on Kilgore's Branch. We believe further that this James Lea was the brother of Captain William Lea who, we hold, was also one of the orphans of John Lea of King & Queen County, Virginia.

Source: *Lea Families in Caswell & Person Counties North Carolina and in Virginia Before 1800*, Ben L. Rose (1995) at 135-136.

The above article by Ben L. Rose states that Thomas Creathers was the guardian of William Lea. However, the following records indicate that Zachary Taylor was the guardian as of 5 October 1731.

Spotsylvania County, Virginia
Guardians Bonds, Will Book A

£50 Zachary Taylor, guardian to William Lee, orphan of John Lee, with Thomas Chew, security. October 5, 1731.

£50 John Key, guardian to James Lee, orphan of John Lee, with Zachary Taylor, security. October 5, 1731.

Source: *Spotsylvania County Records, 1721-1800: Being Transcriptions from the Original Files at the County Court House*.

Although Casey provided no supporting documentation for the following, it is placed here because it is in print and may be seen by Lea family researchers:

"John Lea b c 1677 New Kent Co Va d c 1729 K & Q Co Va . . . m c 1699 K Q Co Va Anne possibly dau of James Taylor & Mary Gregory b 1684 New Kent Co Va d 1731 St Georges Parish, Spottsylvania Co Va."

According to Casey, John Lea, son of Colonel William (King and Queen County) Lee/Leigh married c.1699 in King and Queen County, Virginia, Ann (possibly the daughter of James Taylor and Mary Gregory). This Ann was born 1684 in New Kent County, Virginia, and died 1731 in St. George's Parish, Spotsylvania County, Virginia. John Lea and Ann (possibly Taylor) Lea had a son to whom Casey refers as John Lea, Jr., who on 1 September 1724 was around twenty-five years old and living in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. Note, however, that Casey with impunity claims that the Lee and Leigh surnames were used by the same family. John Lea/Leigh purportedly inherited the bulk of his father's estate.

Casey apparently claims that this John Lee/Leigh who married Ann (possibly Taylor), died 1727-1729, and his widow married c.1730 Thomas Carruthers, who moved out of King and Queen County, Virginia, to St. George's Parish, Spotsylvania County, Virginia, where she died in 1731 leaving minor heirs Elizabeth Lea (born c.1709), William Lea (born c. 1711, died Orange County, North Carolina, at Leasburg, leaving wife Mary), and James Lea (born c.1715, who married Anne Tolbert and died in Caswell County, North Carolina, on Kilgore's Branch in Leasburg).

Other older children of this Captain John Lee/Leigh, in addition to the three orphans listed above, purportedly were (a) John Leigh, Jr. (born 1699/1700), (b) Catherine Lea (born c. 1702), who married (1) George Priddy and (2) Richard Shackelford of King and Queen County, Virginia, (c) daughter (born c.1705), who possibly married John Key; (d) daughter (born c.1707); and (e) Elizabeth Lea (born 1709/1710), who married Zachary Taylor.

Source: *Amite County, Mississippi 1699-1890 (Volume #3): The Environs*, Albert Eugene Casey (1957) at 550-551.