



At the Root of It All

Submitted by Cathy Field



When my husband Marshal decided it would be fun to join the Clan Montgomery Society after a weekend at the Stone Mountain Highland Games, I asked why that particular clan. He told me that his great-grandma had been a Montgomery, and “that guy was really nice.” He was talking about James Morton Montgomery, who was sitting alone at the tent. It had one table and a chair and a few items from the ancient tent kit that moved around the South. I pointed out to Marshal that he had other Scottish grandmothers, but he said that their clans were really unfriendly. So we began the ancestor hunt. It didn’t go very far. We knew these facts:

Lura Jane Montgomery was born in 1871 in Jefferson County, Indiana. She married William Baxter in 1888, and she died in 1939. She and her husband lived their lives in the same area of Jefferson County; they raised five children there as well. When Marshal’s grandmother Sylvia Baxter Wyne learned that we were getting interested in family history, she began to recall some of her memories of her mother and father, and of her grandparents. Grandma told us that Lura Jane was the daughter of James A. Montgomery and Mary Catherine Perkinson. That was exciting news. I was designated the genealogy coordinator in our household, and that’s when the genealogy virus entered my brain.



Adeline, Philinda Katherine and
Margaret Montgomery

James A. Montgomery was born in 1846 and lived to be only about 35 years old. He too was born in Jefferson County. Mary Catherine and James managed to have 8 children in their short married life. They were: Thomas, William, Lola Viola, Lura Jane, James L., David W., Andrew, and Royal Chester. These children were born between 1868 and 1879. David and Chester were twins. That’s just about all that Grandma could come up with. That’s also about the time that I discovered the 1850 US census, and micro film in the library.

On one of our trips back home to southern Indiana, I spent some time in the Madison Library (in Jefferson County), and found a wealth of information in census. I was in hog heaven, and I thought that if I could find so many things from the 1850 census, then the earlier censuses would really be helpful. That must be an amateur genealogist’s first crushing defeat. From studying the 1850 census I found that James A. was the son of (shocking surprise) James M. Montgomery. He was born in 1816 in New Jersey. That really was a surprise. By this time, Marshal and I had made the acquaintance of Monty Montgomery, who was the president of CMSI then. Her family all came from Seymour, Indiana, which is just a short ride up the interstate from Jefferson County, We all felt there would be a connection. There was absolutely none. Her family wasn’t from New Jersey.

James M. Montgomery was married to a woman by the name of Electa Farrar. They married in 1839 in Jefferson County, and had 9 children: Francis M., William M., Margaret, James A., Philinda Katherine, David, Andrew John, Adeline, and Rebecca. From county records and cemetery searching we found just small details about the Jefferson County Montgomerys.

That’s where John C. Montgomery, CMSI Genealogy Coordinator, got into the picture. John introduced me to the Mormons and their website. Luckily for me a home computer was part of the package of being married to a computer wizard. John had been in touch with other Montgomery genealogists, and he called us with some pretty exciting news. He was able to connect our pitiful gleanings with about 40 more generations of Marshal’s family. At first I thought he was into the single malt. But as it happened, two other genealogists, who were not amateurs, were able to plug our information into the data base, and we were given the whole thing—blam! Wonderful! It was an incredible disappointment for me. The thrill of the hunt was gone.

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I decided there had to be mistakes, loopholes, oversights, etc. That was ten years ago. And there are mistakes, loopholes, oversights, etc. The basic facts are correct, and what we know so far is as follows:

James M. Montgomery was the son of Alexander Montgomery and Catherine Jagger. Alexander was born in 1791 in Cumberland, New Jersey.

The children of Alex and Catherine were:

Julia Ann, born c. 1813 in New Jersey; married William Eppley in 1839

James M. born 1816 in New Jersey

John Joseph born c. 1822 in Ohio; married Catherine Stucker in 1849 in Jefferson County.

Tamson D. born c. 1823 in Ohio; married Samuel Eppley

Jane born in Ohio; married Christopher Cantwell

William H. born c. 1827; married Melissa Ann Duffy

Hannah born 1831 in Ohio; married James K. Jones

Bethany Ann born 1832 in Ohio; married John J. Bennett in 1854 in Jefferson County

Alexander Jasper born 1834 in Cincinnati, Ohio; married Elizabeth Hall in 1856 in Jefferson County

Martin Van Buren born in 1837 in Cincinnati, Ohio; married Cyrena Prudence Jones

The next in line after Alex is James (of course) and his wife Mary Elmer. James was born c. 1765 in Cumberland, New Jersey and died there as well in 1795. We know only of their son Alexander. The other genealogists tell us that James father was Robert Montgomery and his mother was Elizabeth Vance. Robert and Elizabeth are said to have had two sons, Robert and William. William married Hannah Latts in 1827 in Salem, New Jersey.

Robert Montgomery had 3 wives, Elizabeth Vance, Phoebe Husted, and Rachel Lawrence. Can you see where it now gets interesting? Whose kids belong to whom? There's lots of documentation and speculation on the web about this. I haven't seen any definitive proof. The repetition of the first names just drives me nuts, and I'm sure I'm not alone.

Robert's father was James Montgomery, born c. 1694 in Scotland, and his mother was Mary Parnell, also born in Scotland. There are 5 children attributed to them: Robert, who was born c. 1732 in Upper Freehold, New Jersey; Alexander, born c. 1735 in Upper Freehold; James; Mary; Burnett who is said to have been born in 1755; and William Montgomery.

This all ends up with the father of James Montgomery being William Montgomerie, the first Montgomery settler in America. His wife was Isabella Burnett, daughter of Robert Burnett, who was one of the great landowners in New Jersey. They were Quakers. William's children were: Robert, born c. 1687 in Brigend, Ayrshire, Scotland; Anna, born c. 1690 at Brigend; Elizabeth, born 1691 at Brigend; William, born 1693 at Brigend; James, born bef. 1694 at Brigend; Jane, born c. 1700 in Scotland; and Alexander who was born at c. 1705 possibly in New Jersey. All of this information is in the CMSI database.

This is the family line that goes straight back to Roger de Montgomerie. But strangely enough, Marshal and I would like to fill in the holes in the family in Jefferson County, Indiana. They were good, strong, salt-of-the-earth people. We'd like to find and meet some closer cousins. I think we could relate (no pun intended) more to southern Indiana farm-folk than to the Vikings and knights of old.

CMSI member # 580, **James V. Montgomery**, of Cabool, Missouri has announced he is opening his home for viewing by appointment. He said, "After retiring from the Missouri Legislature and the Dept. of Revenue, my wife and I decided to place a lot of historical and political memorabilia in the home for viewing." The Victorian home was built in 1906 and is now 100 years old. "We have a lot of Montgomery items displayed along with Veterans room, Presidential room, senate room, Washington's bedroom, one room school." You may contact James at 417-962-4052.