

## **The Gaytons of Genesee County**

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century there were four Gayton families who lived variously in the towns of Le Roy, Pavilion, Bethany, and Stafford - all within a radius of 20 miles in the county of Genesee, New York.

John, Thomas and William were brothers, the sons of John Gayton and Mary Kidwell of North Devon, England. John was in New York by the 1840's. His younger brother William joined him around 1851 but soon after relocated to Michigan, firstly at Barry, then Eaton. In 1855 the middle brother Thomas arrived from England and settled at Bethany.

However, there was a fourth Gayton in Genesee. James Gayton, born around 1822 was the son of Henry Gayton and Susanna Brown and it does seem very likely that he is somehow related to John, Thomas and William. But how? Can you help?

My interest is in James who married Jane Symons, the sister of my x3 great-grandfather. I have always had a bit of a soft spot for James Gayton who managed to rescue my ancestral family from poverty. In 1839 my x3 great grandfather was living in the poor house at Barnstaple, North Devon with his mother, Jane and other siblings when he was convicted of stealing a pair of shoes from a boat in Barnstaple harbour. He was just 16 years of age and he was sentenced to 10 years transportation to the colony of New South Wales in what is now Australia.

Transportation to the southern colonies had been going on for just over 50 years by that time, but it would very soon stop and the British would cease sentencing its felons to transportation. Transporting its convicts out of the British Isles had been something that the British had been doing for a few centuries. In fact the European settlement of Australia is based on it.

Having lost 13 of its North American colonies in the 1770's the British also lost its most popular place of exile for its convicts. What to do? They started selling convicts to the now independent United States who proved very demanding customers and wouldn't take just any old criminal while the Brits were too scared to send convicts to the Canadian provinces lest they mutinied and joined the rebellious States in the southern part of the continent. They had hopeless attempts at setting up colonies in West Africa and gave up on that before some bright spark in the Admiralty remembered the land that Captain Cook had chanced upon in 1770. The rest as they say is history.

The reason I think that James is related to the three Gayton brothers of Genesee County is that while James was born in Chittlehampton, Devon his two older brothers were born in Swimbridge, respectively in 1815 and 1816. Swimbridge is the town that John, Thomas and William were born and with John being born in 1814 and a sister Sally born in 1816 it means that the 3 brother's parents were living in and having children in Swimbridge at exactly the same time that James's parents were.

Are you aware of any evidence that would show that James' father Henry, and John, Thomas and William's father John were brothers or any other kind of relation?

I had at one time thought that that Thomas Gayton of Genesee was in fact the older brother of James since James had a brother called Thomas b1820. However, there are two pieces of evidence that I have recently uncovered that have disabused me of that theory.

Firstly, in the 1851 English census Thomas' birth is recorded as having occurred in Swimbridge whereas the brother of James was, like James himself, christened in Chittlehampton. The second more compelling piece of evidence is in the 1870 US Census where a son of Thomas was residing with John Gayton and is described in the census as his nephew. If this relationship is correct it demonstrates beyond doubt that the Thomas that went to the US was the brother of John Gayton and not the brother of James as I had originally supposed.

The information I have on James and the three Gayton brothers is as follows.

John Gayton m. Mary Kidwell	Henry Gayton m. Susanna Brown
27 Jan 1813, Swimbridge, Devon	2 Aug 1813, Tawstock, Devon
<b>John</b> b. 1814, Swimbridge	William b.1815 Swimbridge
Sally b. 1816, Swimbridge	Henry b.1816, Swimbridge
<b>Thomas</b> b. 1819 Swimbridge	Jane b.1818, Middlecot
<b>William</b> b. 1821 Swimbridge	Thomas b.1820, Chittlehampton
	Mary Ann b.1822, Chittlehampton
	<b>James</b> b.1823, Chittlehampton
	Sally b.1825, Tawstock
	Julia Ann b.1827, Tawstock
	Susanna b.1828, Tawstock
	Christopher b.1830, Tawstock

Glenn Palmer

London, UK  
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gatp63@hotmail.com