

# John and Jane (Corothers) Ritchey vs James and Elizabeth (Sherbondy) Richey as Parents' Inconsistencies

There are contradictory original documents showing different parents of these Richey families including the children David, John, Hunter and Andrew F.

One source is the will of **John Ritchey (and wife Jane)** of Wayne County, Ohio in 1823. It names his wife Jane and his children as David, James, Jesse, John, Elizabeth Limer, Samuel, Rebecca, William, Andrew and Hunter. This is the most reliable source because it has the children's names and it is the closest source we have (at the current time) to their births.

Another source is the County History of Fayette County, PA (referred to Fayette History herein) published in 1912. It names the parents as **James Richey** and wife Miss **Sherbondy** (page 328-329). Another section (page 47) names the parents as **James and Elizabeth Richey**. It names their sons as John, David, Hunter and Andrew F. This History was written in 1912, approximately 100 years after the events occurred, so is less reliable than the will, which was written at the time near his death. The children named on this biography agree with the names from the will, which adds to credibility, but the names are incomplete. The source for this biography may have been relatives who were not very familiar with the events from that far back. The existence of James and Elizabeth Richey is confirmed with the census records of 1850 (both named), 1860 (James only) and 1830 and 1840 (parents birth ranges agree in both), all in Fayette County.

Inconsistencies also appear in the sources for son David Richey. The Fayette History states he married **Sophia Eicher**. Their children were Hiram, John J., Mary, Margaret Jane, Joseph and Francis Marian. All of this is supported with other sources except for Hiram. For example, Sophia, John, Mary E., Margaret, Joseph and Marrison are named in the 1850 census record residing in Westmoreland County, PA.

The David who died in 1879 is the most reliably connected to the family of John and Jane Richey. However, he also had lived in Fayette Co, PA. His will from Allegheny County (probated 30 July 1879) names the following siblings (among many others) in the will, which agrees with the will of his father John: Rebecca Culbertson, Jesse, James, Andrew, William and Hunter. David was a very wealthy individual, a “well-to-do and influential farmer” per the Fayette History. In the 1870 census, he valued his estate at \$310,000. He willed large amounts of money (even in today’s dollars!) and large lots of land in Allegheny and Fayette Counties, PA to many relatives (even a non-relative Kate Smurr). It’s very interesting to read! However, he **names no wife or children** in his will.

The cemetery records have inconsistent information. The Allegheny Cemetery with the David Richey has a death date of 19 July 1879. This is consistent with the will in Allegheny County. His tombstone is large and representative of his stature in the community. However, there is **a similar tombstone** next to the one of David Richey but there is no close-up photo of the inscription and there is no transcription. I searched the internet for details of the other tombstone with no results.

The Pennsville Baptist Cemetery in Fayette County, PA has David Richey with a tombstone showing death date of 10 July 1872 (age 56) and on the same tombstone is his wife Sophia with a death date of 9 Feb 1882 (age 69). This confirms that these are **two different David Richeys**. This and the 1850 census confirm the existence of **Sophia Richey** with this David Richey.

A search was made for **David and Sophia Richey** in the census records of 1860, 1870 and 1880 (Sophia only). David was found in 1860 living in the household of Alice Ritchie along with his children Mary and Marion. No Sophia. Is Alice a middle name or other name for Sophia? Is Alice a 2<sup>nd</sup> wife? Is Alice a sister (not mentioned before)? Remember, he was buried next to Sophia. In 1870, other than the David d 1879, there are 5 David Richey households in Pennsylvania, but none of them match the family members and locations known to be associated with David d. 1872. No matches found for Sophia in PA in 1880. We don’t know where David was in 1870 and where Sophia was in 1870 and 1880.

For the **James and Elizabeth Richey family**, John and Hiram were confirmed as children per searches of census records in Fayette Co, PA. A George Richey was found in Fayette Co but with no other link to this family other than location. Hunter was found living in the household of his brother David in Allegheny Co, PA in 1870 so is part of John and Jane Richey. Searches were made for Hunter and Andrew Richey in Fayette County (and others) with no new results. We’ll show 2 different Hunter’s for now. Col. **Andrew F. Richey** will be shown as a **son of both**

**sets of parents for now** until new information surfaces. There are individuals who match names but too many to conclude that they are the correct ones and none match the locations. **Hunter Richey** shows death date in 1882 in Allegheny County, PA. The death record shows he was born in Ireland (not in PA as per the census records) and the estimated birth year is 1812 instead of 1817 so it **could be the incorrect Hunter**. Or, it's possible that the information provided is incorrect if the informant of the death certificate did not know Hunter well. Searches were made for households of James Richey and John Richey in the census records of 1790 to 1830. There were too many households in PA for those names with too much variation in the genders and birth ranges to match with the known information from the existing sources. I have searched for wills for James Richey but none were found.

The conclusions are as follows:

- Both families had sons named David and John.
- David d 1879 had no known wife or children.
- David d. 1872 had a wife Sophia and 6 children who lived to adulthood.
- County Histories sometimes have errors and must be compared with other records.
- The Fayette History "wealthy and influential" comment was associated with the wrong David Richey. Both David Richeys had lived in Fayette Co, PA.
- The Fayette History author may have confused this James Richey and Elizabeth Sherbondy with the family of John Sherbondy and Rose Ann Ritchey of Westmoreland Co, PA (married 1811). Sherbondy may not be the maiden name of Elizabeth.

More **original records** are needed for definite identification of the James and Elizabeth Richey family. Wills, deeds, county histories and Church birth/baptismal records are good sources for family information prior to 1850 when census records included all names and approx. 1905 when many county records started.

Jeffrey D. Sherbondy, Sherbondy Family Association. June 2023. I started on this project with the goal of identifying Elizabeth Sherbondy Richey, but became much more involved than I anticipated. Hopefully more records will surface later.