

Individual Narrative of John⁵ Leverich [17]

John Leverich [17] was born on 29 Aug 1721 at Newtown, Queens Co, New York. John's birth date is a calculated date, based upon his age at death.¹ John was baptized on 13 Jan 1729 at Newtown, Queens, New York, at the Newtown Presbyterian Church.²

Edward Willett of Jamaica, Queens Co, New York was appointed School Master by the Honorable Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts. He began a record 1 January 1734 listing in alphabetical order the names of his scholars. His list includes the following: Leveredge/Leverage/Leverog, John 1734, 1736, 1735, 1738, 1739.³

James Riker, in *Annals of Newtown*, records that John Leverich was the oldest son, and pursued his father's occupation as a mason, living for a season at Fishkill on the Hudson (Dutchess Co, New York), but otherwise at Newtown.⁴ An early draft of the Leverich history found in James Riker's manuscript papers includes the following addition, that was not included in the published version. Speaking of Sackett Leverich, son of John Leverich, Riker says "he died a bachelor ... of rheumatism, a complaint of which his father had suffered until he was cured by certain Indians near Fishkill on the Hudson by being put in a state of profuse perspiration and then plunged in the river through a hole cut in the ice, for it was winter."⁵

John Leverich married Elizabeth Sackett, daughter of John Sackett and Susannah Field, on 22 May 1743 at Newtown, Queens, New York, at the Newtown Presbyterian Church.⁶ Elizabeth Sackett was the step-sister of her husband, John Leverich Jr, since her mother Susannah, widow of John Sackett, married a second time to John Leverich Senior, father of Elizabeth's husband John Leverich Jr.^{7,8,9} The records of the Newtown Presbyterian Church list several persons who became members in the year 1752, including: William Sackett, Elizabeth Leverich, William Furman, John Cornish. William Sackett was likely the brother of Elizabeth Leverich. On 5 April 1752, there was a group of baptisms celebrated, which included: William Furman, adult, and his son Robert; William Sackett, adult, and Anna, daughter of John Lawrence, who would become the wife of William Sackett; Elizabeth Leverich, adult, and her children by John Leverich, i.e. Sackett and Anne. At that time, Sackett was age 2 and Anne was age 7. It is interesting to note that although John Leverich and Elizabeth Sackett were married at the Newtown Presbyterian Church in 1743, Elizabeth and the children did not formally join the Church until 1752.¹⁰

On 4 October 1753, John Leverich and John Leverich Jr were witnesses to a deed Elizabeth Pumroy to Elders of the Newtown Presbyterian Church.¹¹ On 28 August 1757, Richard, son of John and Elizabeth Leverich, was baptized at the Newtown Presbyterian Church, at the age of four months.¹² On 28 March 1759, John Leverich Jr., Mason of Newtown, sold land to his brother William Leverich, blacksmith, of Newtown.¹³ On 1 May 1763, John Leverich Jr witnessed a deed, Nathaniel Woodard of Newtown to William Leverich, blacksmith, of Newtown.¹⁴ The 1771 Census of Newtown, Queens County, New York, copied at Albany, New York by James Riker, includes the following Leverich's: John, John Jr., William, and Elnathan.^{15,16}

On 3 April 1775, 100 Freeholders of Newtown voted to send Col. Jacob Blackwell as a delegate to the Provincial Congress in New York, 20 April 1775. Included among those voting were Elnathan Leverich and John Leverich Jr. It is interesting to observe that some members of the Leverich family reflected Whig sentiments during the War of the Revolution, whereas the other family members appeared to maintain a semblance of neutrality without being specifically branded as "loyalists."¹⁷

New York City and Long Island, including Queens County, were occupied and controlled by British military authorities for the duration of the war of independence. Historian Henry Onderdonk Jr observed that "the King being now in possession of Queens county, and his soldiers scattered over it, the leading Whigs having been thrown in prison, and the property of those who fled seized by the enemy, the remainder were constrained to join the Loyalists in petitioning the King's Commissioners that Queens County might be restored to Royal Favor." The petition, issued on 21 October 1776, requested "And we humbly pray, that your Excellencies would be pleased to declare this county at the peace of His Majesty, and thereby enable us to receive the benefits flowing from his most gracious protection." This petition was signed by John Leverich, presumably senior although not so stated, and W. Leverich, presumably the son of John Leverich Sr. Noticeably missing from the list of petition signatures were John Leverich Jr and his brother Elnathan, as well as their nephews Gabriel and Samuel Leverich, sons of Samuel Leverich deceased.¹⁸

During the war for independence, British troops were billeted for the winter on the farms of Newtown. Officers of British and Hessian Troops were billeted in various Newtown residences, while soldiers camped in farm fields and meadows. During the winter of 1778/1779, soldiers of the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment (*The Black Watch*) under the command of Lt. Col. Thomas Sterling were billeted on the Leverich home farm. According to James Riker, "at the time referred to, they lay in Trains Meadow, on the land of John Leverich (where the widow of Richard now lives,) and occupied huts back of the barn."¹⁹ Susan M. Leverich, daughter of Richard Leverich mentioned above, in a memoir entitled *A House of the Olden Time*, written about 1890, recounts that "Lt Col. Sterling, his wife, and two of the officers of the Royal Highland 42nd occupied a portion of the house, and their band always played during the progress of the dinner or meal."

Most likely reflecting an oral family tradition, Susan, who was the great granddaughter of John Leverich Sr and grew up on the home family farm, also notes that "during the Regiment's abode at Trains Meadow, the cholera carried off several of their members. I well remember a pile of stones that used to lie at the corner of a field, where our land joined the wood of John Penfold. It was erected by the Highlanders over the remains of their dead comrades, as a memorial; and every one each time he passed would throw a stone according to an old Scottish custom. Such memorial Stones or Cairns, are still often seen in Scotland and Ireland. A Highlander would often say to his benefactor, 'I will throw a stone on your Cairn'." About twenty five years ago a railway was made through the place removing the stones, and when opening the cut for it, human remains were found. They were first thought to be those of Indians or negroes, but an expert pronounced them of European origin. My mother was waited upon in New York to know if she could throw any light on the matter. Her story soon put the subject at rest. A workman obtained twenty five dollars for a skull which was in perfect preservation, having every tooth in the jaw. Poor fellow he little dreamt when in the flesh that his bones would be sold in a foreign land one hundred years after."

British troops had a reputation for stealing livestock. Susan Leverich tells the following story. "The Leverich cattle had been declared free from molestation, but one day during the absence of Col Sterling, some of his men attempted to drive them from the meadows. A member of the family informed Lady Sterling of what was being done. Calling her maid, she walked in white satin slippers into the black peat meadow, and ordered the animals driven back, threatening at the same time the offenders with punishment."^{20,21} On 28 April 1779, 93 of the principal residents of Newtown, presented the following address to Lt. Col. Sterling. "The inhabitants of Newtown beg leave to make their hearty and grateful acknowledgements to Col. Sterling, and the officers of the 42nd Regiment for their very equitable, polite and friendly conduct during their winter stay among them: they will entertain an affectionate esteem and regard for them, and will never forget that they have been treated with all the justice and cordiality due to fellow subjects and citizens. They, at the same time, request the favor of Col. Sterling to return their sincere thanks to the regiment in general, for their regular, orderly and honorable behavior, so conformable to the true character of gentlemen and soldiers. They part with the 42nd Regiment with regret, and wish them glory and success."

Among the 93 residents signing the address were John Leverich (presumably Senior) and his nephew Samuel Leverich. The historian James Riker observed that "the above address of the inhabitants doubtless emanated from the loyalists, who, during this seven years' reign of terror, had everything their own way. And it is pitiful to observe among the names appended to the address, not a few who are known to have been undoubted whigs, at heart, and who could not utter a serious aspiration for the glory and success of their country's enemies, but in this, as in other instances, were forced into mortifying concessions to the wishes and movements of the tories." If any of the members of the Leverich family at this time had loyalist sympathies, they were apparently not substantial enough to warrant their exile and confiscation of their property once the war was over.^{22,23}

John Leverich Jr died on 18 Sep 1780 at Newtown, Queens, New York, at age 59 years, 20 days. His father John Leverich Sr died the same year, and both were buried at the family burial ground at Trains Meadow.²⁴ Elizabeth Sackett Leverich, widow of John Leverich Jr, died at Newtown 5 September 1809 at the age of 89, and was also buried at the family burial ground.^{25,26}

John Leverich Jr and Elizabeth Sackett had three known children.

- i. Anne Leverich was born 10 April 1745, was never married, and died 27 September 1812, age 67 years, 5 months, 17 days. She is buried at the family burial ground.

- ii. Sackett Leverich was born 25 May or 4 June 1750, was never married, and died 14 May 1811, age 60 years, 11 months, and 10 days. He is buried at the family burial ground.
- iii. Richard Leverich was born 12 April 1757. He was married first to Amy Titus on 14 November 1781, and secondly to Nancy Lane on 5 October 1830. Richard died at Newtown on 21 May 1836, age 80, and was buried at the Newtown Presbyterian Church.

The birth dates of the three children are found in the James Riker Papers. Riker likely obtained this information from a family bible in the possession of Susan M. Leverich, daughter of Richard. The cited birth date for Anne calculates exactly to the age at death. Sackett's birth date however conflicts with the age at death compared to Riker's date by 10 days. This suggests a transcription error on the death date or age at death, or a calculation error related from the change from Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar in 1752.^{27,28}

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Endnotes

¹ *James Riker Papers 1660-1989*, Historical Research Notes, Donated to NY Public Library 1918 by Title Guarantee and Trust Company, File W94-a231. New York Public Library, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Manuscripts and Archives Division, 5th Avenue and 42nd Street, Manhattan, New York, New York, Box 9, Notebook 2, pages 87-91. Hereinafter cited as *James Riker Papers*.

² Arthur White, "Newtown Presbyterian Church Records," 1922, Transcription, New York Public Library, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy, 5th Avenue and 42nd Street, Manhattan, New York, New York 10018, Baptisms, 1729. Hereinafter cited as "Newtown Presbyterian Records."

³ Kenneth Scott, "The Alphabetical School Book of Edward Willett (Jamaica)," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Volume 109, pages 1-4 (January 1978). Hereinafter cited as "Edward Willett School Book."

⁴ James Riker Jr, *Annals of Newtown in Queens County, New York: Containing Its History from its first Settlement* (New York: D. Fanshaw, 1852), page 352. Hereinafter cited as *Annals of Newtown*.

⁵ *James Riker Papers*, Series II, Colonial Papers: Box 6, un-numbered folder "Miscellaneous Genealogical Information", page 203.

⁶ Newtown Presbyterian Records, Marriages, 1743.

⁷ Charles H. Weygant, *The Sacketts of America, their ancestors and descendants, 1630-1907* (Newburgh, New York: Privately printed, 1907), pages 37-38, 71-72. Hereinafter cited as *Sacketts of America*.

⁸ *James Riker Papers*, Box 9, Notebook 2, pages 87-91.

⁹ Newtown Presbyterian Records, Marriages, 1741.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Members, 1752; Baptisms, 1752.

¹¹ Newtown Town Records 1753-1850 Book 289: pages 33-34, New York City Municipal Archives, 31 Chambers St, Room 103, Manhattan, New York, New York 10007. Hereinafter cited as Newtown Town Records 1753-1850 Book 289.

¹² Newtown Presbyterian Records, Baptisms, 1757.

¹³ Newtown Town Records 1753-1850 Book 289: pages 174-175.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, page 208.

¹⁵ *James Riker Papers*, Memoria Volume 27, pages 150-152.

¹⁶ Harry Macy, "Newtown Queens 1771 Census," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* Volume 117, No. 1 (1986): pages 7-9. Hereinafter cited as "Newtown Census."

¹⁷ Secretary of State, editor, *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, Relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, New York* (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), pages 39-40. Hereinafter cited as *Calendar Historical Manuscripts Revolution NY*.

¹⁸ Henry Onderdonk Jr, compiler, *Documents and Letters Intended to Illustrate the Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County; with connecting narratives, explanatory notes, and additions* (New York, New York: Leavitt, Trow and Company, 1846), pages 117-121. Hereinafter cited as *Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County*.

¹⁹ Riker Jr, *Annals of Newtown*, pages 204-206.

²⁰ Susan M. Leverich, "A House of the Olden Time" - Leverich Family Homestead, Handwritten, illustrated hardcover notebook, Circa 1890. Susan M. Leverich Papers. Stephen P. Shaw, Chester, Connecticut, pages 32-39. Hereinafter cited as "A House of the Olden Time."

²¹ Catherine Gregory, *Woodside, Queens County, New York: A Historical Perspective 1652-1994* (Woodside, New York: Woodside on the Move, Inc., 1994), page 54. Hereinafter cited as *Woodside - A Historical Perspective*.

²² Onderdonk Jr, *Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County*, pages 134-136.

²³ Riker Jr, *Annals of Newtown*, pages 204-206.

²⁴ *James Riker Papers*, Box 9, Notebook 2, pages 87-91.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Newtown Presbyterian Records, Deaths, 1809.

²⁷ *James Riker Papers*, Series II, Colonial Papers: Box 6, un-numbered folder "Miscellaneous Genealogical Information", page 203.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Box 9, Notebook 2, pages 87-91.