

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTION, OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS

In this manuscript, I have attempted to describe the evidence proving my descent from the immigrant, Mathew SEE/SEAY. While I acknowledge the fact that some questions may remain, and that one can legitimately argue a point here and there, it seems to me that, taken in sum, looking at all of the evidence, this descent is conclusive. In addition, I have attempted to put forth the basis and the evidence for the Irish ancestry of the line of Mathew. I do not argue this ancestry for any other line of SEAYs, only for the line of Mathew.

Which brings us to the question, “What about the other SEAYs in Virginia at the time?” While a host of pre-Colonial Virginia records present a number of persons whose surnames are similar to SEE/SEAY, they appear, for the most part, on single or fragmentary documents and there is no evidence that I have seen that suggests a connection to our SEAY family or, for that matter, to prove that ever existed. The question of headrights provides a useful example. A headright is a grant of land provided to a carrier by the Crown for the transportation of persons from England to Virginia and headright fraud was, apparently, not uncommon. I am told by historians that a carrier would, on occasion, claim to transport a fictitious person and, later, claim his headright. In addition, I am further told, persons would die on the voyage to Virginia, but the headright was claimed, nonetheless. Thus, a headright citation, standing alone, without further proof, is of little concrete use to the genealogist. I leave the examination of these names to other researchers.

On the other hand, an examination of the early records of Amelia, King William, Fluvanna and Goochland Counties in Virginia, reveals the presence of three other persons named SEAY, who are of the same generation, who spelled their names the same way and who lived in the same general area at about the same time. They are James SEAY, Jacob SEAY and Abraham SEAY. In “The Mystery of Mathew SEE,” I concluded that, owing to the points mentioned above, they must be related and must be brothers of Isaac SEAY of King William County. Subsequent to the publication of “Mystery,” I have discussed this point with several SEAY researchers who do not hold that opinion and who are unconvinced that all of these SEAYs are related, much less that they are brothers. Their point of view is valid and, as a result, I have re-examined my position on this question. In so doing, I have noted a number of significant differences between these four SEAYS. I do not say that the four SEAYs are unrelated, for I do not know the answer to that question. I do say that there are a number of significant differences that raise the question of whether they are related.

Similarities.

The similarities are obvious:

1. Similarity Number One – Where They Resided Prior To 1736.

All four lived in the same area of Virginia, prior to 1736. Isaac, James and Jacob⁵¹ resided in King William County. James and Jacob were from St. Margaret's Parish, in the northwest part of the county. I don't know in which parish Isaac resided. Abraham SEAY resided in Goochland (later Fluvanna) County, about 30 miles to the west, so the geographic similarity here is less obvious.

2. **Similarity Number Two – Their Surnames Are The Same.**

All four of these persons spelled their names SEAY, for the most part, with the following exceptions. Occasionally, the Amelia records record a SEA spelling (SEAY minus the Y) and, on Abraham SEAY's 1745 land grant, his name is spelled SAY, as well as SEAY.

3. **Similarity Number Three -- They Are Of The Same Generation.**

Judging from the various records we have discus

For Abraham SEAY, the residence was Goochland (later Fluvanna) County, some thirty miles to the east, by at least 1745. Indeed, there is no evidence that Abraham SEAY ever lived, visited or conducted business in King William County or Amelia County.

2. Difference Number 2 – Documents Which Connect Them To Each Other.

I have seen no document in which Mathew, Isaac, Thomas, Joseph (I) or Joseph (II) SEAY were connected in any way with James, Jacob or Abraham – no land document, no wedding document, no tax list, no census list and no civil document. The speculation is that, were they related, there should be some document that connects them in some way, such as a will or attendance at a wedding or some other event.

3. Difference Number 3 – James and Jacob SEAY Appear Together On Civic Documents, While Isaac and Abraham Do Not.

James and Jacob SEAY, both originally of King William County, moved their residences to Amelia County to the south, sometime in the 1730's. Amelia County records clearly show that they were **active** in the county, that they bought land and lived on it, that they served on juries and performed other civic duties. The early record books of Amelia County are replete with their names. Some of the records mention James and Jacob together. For example . . .

“Deed of Lease. Thomas Prewett (also spelled Pruit) of Raleigh Parish to **James SEAY** of St. Margarets Parish, King William Co. (Va.). D. June 8, 1737 in the 10th year of the reign of George II. Consid: 5 shillings. Wit: Richard Eckhols, Thomas Spencer & **Jacob SEAY**. 200 acres in Raleigh Parish, being a pat. To sd. Thomas Prewett d. June 10, 1737, bounded in part by U/S Stocks Creek near lower fork, a cor. In the fork & a cor. below Rocky Branch.”⁵²

As the Amelia County records continue in the late 1700's, the names of James and Jacob SEAY's children appear, such as James, Jr., Gideon and Jesse SEAY. Thus, it seems unarguable that James and Jacob SEAY were brothers and that they were an active and forceful presence in Amelia County in the 1700's. The same is not true of Isaac SEAY, who purchased land in Amelia County, but never moved there and neither he nor his children were active there, as evidenced by the absence of their names from these civic lists.

In the same way, there is no record in Goochland/Fluvanna County that includes the names of James, Jacob or Isaac SEAY. The only SEAY of that generation in that county is Abraham SEAY.

4. Difference Number Four – James and Jacob SEAY were Amelia County Neighbors While Isaac Was Not.

In addition, the land purchased by Isaac SEAY in Amelia County is not near the land purchased and resided on by James and Jacob SEAY. Amelia County, seen from above,

⁵² Deed Book 1, Amelia County, Virginia, Deeds 1735-1743, Bonds 1735-1741, Abstracted and Compiled by Gibson Jefferson McConnaughey, Mid-South Publishing Company, Amelia, Virginia.

might resemble something of a trapazoid, with three “creeks” running roughly from the north in a southwesterly direction. The three creeks are Stock’s Creek, Great Bent Run and Sandy Creek. On September 8, 1736, Jacob SEAY patented 400 acres of land on Great Bent Run.⁵³ On June 8, 1737, James SEAY patented 200 acres of land on Stock’s Creek.⁵⁴ These locations were near each other, further supporting the idea that James and Jacob SEAY were brothers. According to a Research Report by *Lineages*, dated August 29, 1991, “Thus, James SEAY of King William County purchased land in Amelia County that neighbored Jacob SEAY.”

In contrast, Isaac SEAY’s Amelia County land was located in the far southwestern part of Amelia County. Isaac SEAY’s land did not neighbor the land of James and Jacob SEAY, but was located a significant distance away, perhaps as much as half the county.

5. Difference Number Five – Spelling And Pronunciation.

To the best of my knowledge, James and Jacob SEAY consistently spelled their name SEAY, with a few exceptions on Amelia County records, where it was spelled SEA. This spelling suggests, but does not prove, a SEE pronunciation.

Mathew’s surname, as we have discussed, was spelled SEE as early as 1685 and SEAY many years later, in 1721. It was also spelled SEY and SEA on one occasion each. Again, this spelling seems to suggest a SEE pronunciation, but raises the question of the original spelling.

Abraham SEAY’s name first appears on Virginia records in 1745, in a document on which the Crown grants him land in Goochland County. In this document, his name is spelled both SAY and SEAY. To my knowledge, this is the only document in which a pre-Colonial SEAY family member’s name is spelled SAY. This is an official document which seems to bring into question both the original spelling and pronunciation of Abraham’s surname. Was his name properly spelled as SAY, later evolving to SEAY? Or was the proper spelling SEAY, and SAY was simply a scribal error?

Finale.

The dearth of records in old Virginia, both primary and secondary records, makes drawing conclusions a risky matter. Thus, virtually any conclusion may be legitimately arguable. Nevertheless, by confining my assessment to the line of Mathew SEE/SEAY, as it affects my particular SEAY line, I believe I can show without question that Mathew SEE/SEAY was an immigrant and that my line traces directly back to him. In addition, it seems to me that there is sufficient evidence to speculate upon the presence of more than one SEAY immigrant. It is possible that James and Jacob SEAY of Amelia County are brothers, perhaps unrelated to Isaac SEAY of King William County, and that all three are unrelated to Abraham SEAY of Goochland/Fluvanna County.

My contention, and my family tradition, that the SEAY name for my family derives from Ireland is not supported by primary documents. Once again, to our misfortune, we face a record

⁵³ Virginia Land Patent Book 17, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Amelia County, Virginia, Deed Book 20, p. 81.

counter that is virtually bare. However, there are a variety of records in Ireland that offer strong support to this family tradition, including spellings of O'SEE, O'SEEYE, SHEEY, SHEAY and SEAY, and the notion is held by enough of our family over a sufficient number of years, to convince me that there is a germ of truth in it. Certainly, arguing against the idea presents more problems than arguing for it.

Thus, if I am pressed to the wall, I would argue that James and Jacob SEAY were English immigrants. I would argue that Abraham SEAY is, also, an English immigrant, unrelated to James and Jacob, perhaps connected to an English SAY family. And, I would argue that Mathew SEE/SEAY was an Irish immigrant, whose name, at some point and in some way, is related to the O'SHEA/O'SHEE family.