

The Starkey Family

of New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, and Ohio

John Starkey may have been German, or a descendant of the Revolutionary general, John Stark, or born with another name altogether. The family story is that he was found as a baby in a cabin in New Jersey after his parents were killed by Indians. They were thought to be named Stark, descendants of General Stark, but no one knew for sure, so a judge or some civil officer named the child John Starkey.

John's obituary does say that he was born in Cumberland County, New Jersey, on September 13, 1770. However, General John Stark of Bunker Hill fame lived in New Hampshire until his death in 1822. His son John was born in 1763 in New Hampshire and remained there. His oldest son, Caleb, was born in 1759 and could not have had a son born by 1770, when Caleb was only 11. So even if our John was actually a Stark, he could not have been a descendant of General John Stark.

In New Jersey there was very little trouble with Indians killing white people, so an incident such as this would be very rare. It's possible that as the generations passed, the names were mixed up. Another family tradition claims that John's wife Elizabeth was kidnapped by Indians. Yet another family story says that their grandson Isaac Lynch Starkey was orphaned as an infant when Indians killed his parents and burned their cabin, so he was raised by the Starkey family.

Since it would be unusual for three incidents involving Indians to occur in one line of descent, and none of these traditions have been documented, it is possible that something happened between Indians and some member of the Starkey family, but just what happened is unclear.

John Starkey was probably raised by the Whitaker family. The will of Elias Whitaker of Cumberland County, dated May 3, 1777, states: "I will that John Starkey be bound out." John would have been six years old at this time. The

will was probated on November 17, 1778, when John was eight. No relationship between the Starkey and Whitaker families has been found to date. A month later, Elias' wife Margaret married Stephen Hurley in Cumberland County. No record has been found showing when or where John was bound out (or apprenticed, to learn a trade).

John marries Elizabeth Kammer

John's next appearance in New Jersey records was on August 7, 1792, when he married his wife Elizabeth in Cumberland County. Both were residents of Cumberland County. Elizabeth's surname has been reported on various records to be Chomers, Chorner, and Comer. It is very likely that she was actually the daughter of Johann Georg Kammer and his wife Catharina.

A baptismal record for Johann Georg, the son of Johann and Elisabeth Starke born in 1798, lists the sponsor as Johann Georg Kammer. George, the son of John and Elizabeth Starkey, was born in 1798 in New Jersey according to census records. The first child of Johann and Elisabeth "Sterge," Catharina, was born in 1793, the same year of birth for Catherine, the oldest child of John and Elizabeth Starkey. The sponsors were Georg Kammer and "the child's mother." Johann, son of Johann and Elisabeth "Sterge," was born in 1795 on the same day as John, son of John and Elizabeth Starkey, born in Salem County according to his obituary.

The daughter of Johann Georg and Catharina Kammer, Elisabeth, was baptized in 1775. Elizabeth who married John Starkey was born in 1772 in Salem County, New Jersey, according to her obituary. This birthdate is three years earlier, but it was not uncommon at this time for people to estimate their ages.

All four baptisms, plus others for the children of Johann Georg and Catharina

Kammer, occurred at Friesburg Emanuel Lutheran Church in Upper Alloway's Creek Township, Salem County, New Jersey, not far from Cumberland County. The church was established by Germans who were mostly employed at Wistar's Glass Works, said to be the first glass works in the United States. No doubt Johann Georg Kammer worked there as well.

Georg came to Philadelphia in 1770 on the ship *Minerva*, along with Michael Kammer who may have been his brother. In 1771 his first child, with his first wife Barbara, was baptized at Friesburg Church. Elizabeth, born in November 1775, was the daughter of his second wife Catharina. It's possible that she was Catherine Shearer, who married George Comer in January 1775 at Deerfield Presbyterian Church in Cumberland County. This is the same church where Elias Whitaker, who raised John Starkey, was married in 1772, and where Phebe Starky (the only other Starkey in Cumberland County) was married in 1773 to Gerrard Garrison.

John and Elizabeth start a family

In 1793 John Starkey was listed in the militia census for Pittsgrove Township, Salem County, near Friesburg Church in Upper Alloway's Creek. John and Elizabeth had three children baptized at Friesburg Church between 1793 and 1798. After that date their names do not appear in the records of the church, so they must have moved away. They were still in New Jersey, though, since their next five children were all born there between 1800 and 1809.

In 1800, John and Elizabeth joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. An article about their daughter Susan stated that her "ancestors were among some of the first families of American Methodism in her native state. Her parents endured some of the trials and persecutions of those early days. Her father was a strong advocate of temperance before it had any organization in the U.S."

Two of their grandchildren became Methodist ministers. Elizabeth's obituary stated that most of her family had become "members of the church of her choice."

The Starkeys go west

In 1808 or 1809, the family migrated to Delaware. They lived in Pencader Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware.

In 1816, the family moved on to Virginia. On December 24, 1816, their oldest son, John Starkey, married Margaret Bennett in Harrison County, Virginia (now West Virginia). Seven more children were married in Harrison County between 1820 and 1834. These marriages were the only Starkey marriages in Harrison County in that period, and these families were the only Starkey families enumerated there in the 1820 and 1830 census.

In 1835 John and Elizabeth Starkey migrated to Warren County, Ohio. John was 65 and Elizabeth was 63. Most of their children—all but their two sons George and Benjamin who remained in Virginia—settled in Warren County as well. The first to come was their daughter Susan, with her husband Lemuel Jackson in 1828. Next was their oldest son John, who came in 1832. Phebe and her husband Jacob Wolf came in 1836, Shedrach came to Logan County, Ohio by 1840 and Clermont County (adjoining Warren County) by 1850, Mary and her husband Samuel Wolf came between 1846 and 1850, Eliza and her husband Ehud Williams came in 1854. The youngest two sons came with their parents; Thomas married in Warren County in 1837 and Hisler married there in 1840.

In 1840 John Starkey's household was enumerated in Wayne Township, Clermont County, Ohio (adjoining Warren County) as follows: a male born 1770-1780 (John), a male born 1810-20 (probably John's grandson Ala, who married in November 1840), a woman born 1770-1780 (probably Elizabeth), and a woman born 1790-1800 (probably their daughter Catherine, who lived with Ala after he married).

On October 13, 1848, John died at age 78, at the home of his son John in Warren County. Elizabeth had died four years earlier, on April 4, 1844, in Clermont County. Her *Western Christian Advocate* obituary stated that she had eleven children, 70 grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren.