

Greer Family Groups in Michigan

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January 30, 2013

When I first started doing Greer research in Oakland County, MI three years ago, I had a notebook where I was trying desperately to differentiate the different Greer family groups. Who knows where that notebook is now (my bad). But because there were just so many Greer's, in order to keep my sanity (hahaha), I eliminated all but two family groups. These two family groups are currently on my family tree:

- James Greer 1785-1857, husband of Jane Gillespie 1784-1868.
- Joseph Greer 1791-1841, husband of Elizabeth Beattie 1806-1880

I have hypothesized that these two Greer's were brothers. Here is some evidence that indicates they might have had closer ties:

- The names of both James and Joseph Grier appear in the 1812 Alien registration in Kingston, Ulster, NY in 1812. Joseph apparently arrived 3 years before James and Robert Greer, the latter of whom arrived shortly before the War of 1812 was declared.
- There is one record in 1814 for Joseph and Betsey Grier being received into the First Presbyterian Church of Pleasant Valley where James and Jane were known to have attended.
- The names of both James and Joseph Grier appear in the 1825 census of Montgomery, Orange, NY. It should be noted that there was more than one James Greer around this time, which is still being investigated.
- A son of Joseph, Samuel, married a granddaughter of Nancy Gillespie, namely Agnes J. Slater.
- Joseph vouched for Elizabeth Gillespie in a land deed document dated in 1831 which also involved James Greer.

I have further hypothesized that James and Joseph were sons of John Greer 1765-1840 and his wife Martha ???-1834, mostly because John and Martha

- both made the trek to Michigan with the other Greer families and at a rather late age
- they are exactly of the previous generation in their age

In looking at the evidence now, I think we might be able to connect Joseph to John and Martha, but I'm not so sure about James. Here are reasons:

- Joseph named his second-born daughter Martha, which follows the traditional naming pattern. James did not have a daughter named Martha – that we know about. We know that James arrived in America with four children and only two of them survived to go to Michigan, so it's possible that James did have a daughter named Martha and we don't know about her.
- Joseph and all his family are buried in the same cemetery with John and Martha, namely the Pine Lake Cemetery in West Bloomfield. James' family were all apparently buried on their own farm, and the graves were later moved to Franklin.

Whether James and Joseph were brothers, and whether either or both were sons of John and Martha is something we might not be able to know. But we can say with certainty that both James and

Joseph had ties to the Gillespie family, which continues to make them “primary” Greer's in terms of my research.

But what about the other Greer family groups? They are worth mentioning here because the relation has to be there even if we don't really know what it was. So here is my cursory analysis of “other” Greer family groups.

A. GREER - Unknown

It should be noted that with the exception of John (AA), all of these people are buried in the same cemetery (Pine Lake in West Bloomfield), along with the oldest Greer's, John and Martha, as well as Joseph Greer, previously mentioned. If all these people are related to John and Martha, they would have to be their grandchildren. And so who were the parents? Did the parents die and the grandparents brought them to America?

It should further be noted that a) all these individuals appear to have been born in Ireland, and b) all these individuals appear to have married (if they did) and had their children in Michigan. So this implies (to me) that the time between when they emigrated from Ireland and settled in Michigan was not all that long.

So here is one established family group. These following people are siblings:

- A. John
- B. Robert
- C. William P.
- D. Olivia (abt 1808)
- E. Fannie (Shanklee, so far can't otherwise place her)

Note that Rebecca may also be included in this group.

AA. John Greer

- b. 1795-1801 Ireland
- m. Agnes (Nancy) Mcwinney (could this name be McKinney?), b. abt 1810 (1813-1891)
- d: 1864 - Commerce Village Burying Ground, Commerce, Oakland, MI
- ch: Rebecca* b. abt 1830 in Mass, John b. in Mass, Robert* b. abt 1838 MI, Fannie abt 1839 MI, Charles Henry* abt 1845

this John Greer got a land patent in White Lake. The thing that distinguishes him is that his two older children were born in Mass.

AB. Robert Greer

- born: abt 1803, 1850 census says Scotland, 1860 census says b. 1823 Ireland
- died: 1861, (age 58), Pine Lake Cemetery, West Bloomfield
- married: Elizabeth Belsford, b. 1811 England, d. 1877
- children: John F. 1841-1897, m. Harriet, Martha L., Sarah J., William P., Francis (Fannie Elizabeth) 1854-1909, Hezekiah

lived in White Lake

AC. William P. Greer

born: abt 1805 (1860 census says 1820), Ireland

died: 1874 (age 69), burial Pine Lake, West Bloomfield

married: ?? Rebecca ?? (maybe she was a sibling - he was always enumerated with her), she died just before him, in April 1874, age 82 or 83 - means she was born abt 1792

children: none known

siblings mentioned in his will: John, Olivia, Fannie, Robert

William P. Greer will, written 13 Jun 1874, nephew Charles Henry Greer, son of my brother John Greer of White Lake, sister Livia (Olivia), sister Fannie Shanklee, nephew William P. Greer, son of Robert Greer, Robert Greer son of John Greer, niece Sarah J. Greer, daughter of Robert Greer, niece Rebecca Greer, daughter of John Greer

1830 census in Bloomfield, 1 adult male and 1 adult female (Wm & Rebecca?)

Rebecca Greer died 1874 in Bloomfield, marital status single, farmer, age 82 (b 1792). If she was a sibling of this age group, she was the oldest.

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Now here is one more Greer who may or may not be tied to the above family group. His children were not mentioned in William P.'s will even though some of them were alive in 1874. However, it's also possible this family group left Michigan after Thomas' death, although two of the sons did serve for Michigan in the Civil War. It's also worth noting that there is some connection to Canada for this Greer, which is interesting!

Thomas Greer

born: abt 1805 Ireland

died: 1858 (intestate)

married: Catharine, she b. NY

children: R.A. (f) b. abt 1832, Courtland (m) 1835-1864 MI 22nd Infantry, William, Eliza M. (married Reynolds), George H (note Geo born 1842 in **Ontario, Canada!**, d 1906 in Saginaw)

he had a land patent, 1833, 18-2-10, **next to Elizabeth Gillespie**

This Thomas Greer died 23 July 1858, intestate. Probate document lists his heirs as: Augusta (is this his daughter?, assigned administrator), Courtland (m), William, Eliza, George, then I just have the note "children". Film reference is **973912**. Don't really find any of these characters in 1860 or after; they must have moved away or been assigned a guardian somewhere else? Need to follow up a bit more - not sure what happened to the wife either. Courtland and George did serve in the Civil War and enlisted from Pontiac.

Michigan Land Patents

Here is a summary of Greer land patents in early 1830s Michigan. It should be noted that nearly all these are noted as “of Orange County, New York”.

John Greer	34-3-8	White Lake	
John Greer	33-3-8		
Joseph Greer	31-2-10	Bloomfield	
William Greer	28-1-11	Royal Oak	this family is actually GREEN
James Greer	26-8-8	Genesee, twp of Richfield	
John Greer	20-2-10		
John Greer	20-2-10		
Thomas Greer	18-2-10		
John Greer	17-2-10		
Joseph Greer	17-2-10		
William Greer	7-2-10		
Isabella Greer	7-2-10		
John Greer	7-2-10		
William Greer	7-2-10		
James Greer	7-2-10		

Note that Section 7 is north of Section 18, the first has a lot of Long Lake

Section 17 is the east

Section 20 is south of Section 17 – looks like that's where John Greer's big homestead was, including the Greer School and a graveyard

It should also be noted that the land patents for all these Greer families accounts for a great deal of land, and as far as I can tell, they paid cash for it all. I don't find any land sales in New York, so I can only think that they came to America with available cash.

Montgomery, Orange, New York

My guess is that the Elder John and Martha Grier emigrated to the U. S. after the War of 1812, although that is not quite established. There are two U.S. federal census' where Elder John Grier appears, at least where we can identify him as such because of his age (born abt 1765). In both cases, he appears in Montgomery, Orange, New York. Here is the household makeup of each census:

1820:

Males	Females
1, 10-16	
3, 16-26	2, 16-26
1, over 45 [John]	1, over 45 [Martha]

1830:

Males	Females
1, 20-29	2, 20-29
1, 60-69 [John]	1, 50-59 [Martha]

So let's see if we can intuit who might be in the John Grier household based on who showed up in Michigan. I do not include here James Greer who arrived with Jane already married and with children as he was always enumerated in his own household.

Joseph. I don't find Joseph enumerated in 1820 in his own household. He would have been 29 years old, which puts him outside the age group of the 3 males living in the John Grier household. In addition, Joseph didn't start having children until 1821 (there's a chance he was in the military from 1814-1819). Joseph was definitely not part of John's household in 1830, as he was already enumerated in Michigan Territory with four children under 10.

John. He would have been abt 19 in 1820, so he could have been with John and Martha then. But we should remember that his oldest child was born around 1830 in Mass. So I checked and found him enumerated in 1830 census in Amesbury, Essex, Massachusetts. It does not appear that John came to Michigan until slightly later, 1835 or so.

Robert. He would have been about 17 in 1820. The 1850 and 1860 census vary widely in the report of his age, but his gravestone says he was 58 when he died. It should be noted that Robert is the only one of the group who does not appear to have gotten a Michigan land patent.

William P. He would have been abt 15 in 1820. William's age also seems to vary on the census', but his gravestone says he was 69 when he died.

Thomas. He also would have been abt 15 in 1820. It can be noted that both William and Thomas received their MI land patent on the same day in 1833.

So it appears to me that all four of these Greer's might have been living in the Elder John Grier household in 1820 Montgomery, NY: John, Robert, William P. and Thomas. But what about the females? The obvious choices are, in what I believe to be age order, Rebecca, Olivia, and Fannie. Rebecca is buried in the Pine Lake Cemetery with all the other family. But I've not been able to find much at all on the other two. Research continues.