

New Insights into the Parentage of Jesse Strang, Loyalist, Bedeque, PEI

Jesse Strang came to the Island of Saint John in July 1784 with a group of Loyalist headed by William Schurman. He is listed as “Jessy Strange” on the “Muster Roll of the following Disbanded and Discharged Soldiers & Loyalist who with their families arrived from Shelburne at Charlotte Town Island of Saint John 26th July 1784”¹ Others in this group included Joseph Silliker, whose wife was Mary Strang, and William Wright and family.

Very little information is known about Jesse's early life. It is generally accepted that he was born ca 1763 in Westchester County, New York. Several years after his arrival on the Island of Saint John Jesse would marry Sarah Wright, daughter of William Wright, by license dated 24 Oct 1787. They would have eleven, possibly twelve children. Jesse died in June 1836. Much more information on the life and posterity of Jesse and Sarah is available in several secondary sources.^{2 3 4}

Jesse is listed as “late of Westchester County ... New York” in the deed for the land granted to him as a Loyalist. This would mean he was most likely connected to the Strang family of Westchester that descends from Daniel Streing and his wife Charlotte Le Maistre. This couple were Huguenots and escaped from France following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes on 18 October 1685 by King Louis XIV. After a brief sojourn in England, they emigrated to New Rochelle, New York. This Strang family was documented in a series of articles by Charles Alfred Strange titled *The Strangs of Westchester*⁵ (still the most authoritative publication on the early Strang lines).

The earliest information on the parentage of Jesse Strang is from George Leard's *Historic Bedeque*:

“ He [Jesse Strang] and Joseph Silliker at Silliker's Brook, Lower Bedeque, shared a mother (they were half-brothers) ... Jesse Strang's father is presumed to have been Daniel Strang (a British recruiting agent shot as a spy with the approval of General Washington) whose widow married Jacob Silliker shortly before they came to the Island.”⁶

However, in one of his articles, Charles A Strange includes the above quote from Leard's *Historic Bedeque* but then goes on to say:

“The present writer doubts the identification of Mary (Strang) Silliker as Jesse's mother for two reasons. In his will, Daniel [father of Daniel Strang the recruiter] referred to Mary Silliker as his daughter, and the tombstone inscription of Joseph Silliker, as reported by J. W. Strang of Bedeque in April 1968, shows Joseph to have been born in 1775 or 1776, thus prior to the death of Daniel Strang [the recruiter].”⁷

So based on family tradition and the limited available facts, Jesse Strang has since been identified as the presumed son of Daniel Strang, the British recruiter hung in 1777, by an unknown mother.

In 2010 Arthur Owen was helping Christina Henderson and her father, Theodore Francis Strang, with their Strang ancestry. Their Strang line traced back to a William Strang (b. Ca 1838 PEI) who married Lavinia Caroline Beckwith (b.14 Dec 1838) on Prince Edward Island on 7 Sept 1858.⁸ While it seemed reasonable that this William was a descendant of Jesse and Sarah, there were no sources to prove this. The most reasonable connection was that their William was the William Strang Jr enumerated in the 1861 census for Lot 4 and shown as W Strang on the 1863 Lake map on the Halloran Rd in Lot 5, PEI, just down the road from W Strang Sr. The later William Strang was almost certainly William Wright Strang, son of Jesse and Sarah, who was listed in the 1861 census as living in Lot 7. It

was suggested that they have a Y-DNA test done to confirm that their line was in fact part of the Jesse Strang posterity.

The use of DNA testing for genealogical purposes has become fairly common and in particular Y-DNA testing can be used to test the Y chromosome which is passed from father to son. At that time there are Y-DNA test results for three apparent Westchester Strang descendants on the Strong, Stronge, Strang, Strange, & LeStrange DNA Study Results Page.⁹ Kit 121477 is a descendant of Solomon Strang, a brother of Daniel Strang the recruiter, Kit 6611 is a descendant of another Daniel Strang, a cousin of Daniel the recruiter, while a third, kit 194281, has not provided their ancestry or does not know it. All three kits match each other on the first 12-markers and kits 6611 and 194281 differed by only one on 37-markers. Kit 121477 has not extended their 12-marker test at this point. The Y-DNA haplogroup assigned to these three kits was I1. This haplogroup is associated with Nordic ethnicity but is reasonably common in northern Germany which would include Luxemburg, origin of the earliest Strang ancestor.

The authors were not aware of the Y-DNA test results for Theodore Strang until the fall of 2011. When his results were examined on the Strong, Stronge, Strang, Strange, & LeStrange DNA Study Results Page (kit 176758) it was obvious that Theodore Strang did not have a patrilineal descent from the Strangs of Westchester! His haplogroup was R1b1a2 and his 37-marker test alleles (values) bore no resemblance to those of the other kits related to the Strangs of Westchester. This indicated a non-paternal event somewhere on his line or at least a different ancestry than Jesse Strang.

In late Dec 2011 several Strang researchers (Arthur Owen, Colleen Houlahan, Gail Stewart and Viola/Francis Kramarski) decided to have a Y-DNA test done on a known descendant of Jesse Strang. Since none of us were suitable candidates (either female or on a female branch of the Strang family), Danny Strang of Malden, NB was recruited to provide the DNA sample. Danny is the 3xgreat grandson of Jesse and Sarah by their son Gabriel. His 37-marker results indicate that his haplogroup is R1b1a2 and are a perfect match for the values obtained from Theodore Strang's test. The conclusion of these results are two fold:

1. Danny and Theodore share a common male ancestor, most likely Jesse Strang; and
2. Jesse Strang is not likely the son of Daniel Strang the recruiter (if he was it would imply that this Daniel would have a non-Strang father) and definitely not a patrilineal descendant of Daniel Strang, father of Daniel Strang the recruiter.

So, if Jesse is not a male line Strang descendant, who is his father and mother? Given the lack of available historical records we may never know for sure, but we can speculate a little.

Jesse definitely went by the surname Strang so if his father was not a Strang, maybe his mother was one and Jesse was born out of wedlock. It seems likely that he was raised in the family of Daniel Strang and Elizabeth Galpin parents of Daniel Strang the recruiter for he travelled with the Silliker family to PEI and Mary (Strang) Silliker was also in this family. Also, this Strang family was the only one who had loyalist tendency during the American Revolution.¹⁰ He would have been about 13 years old at the start of the revolution and about 21 when he arrived in PEI. If Jesse was part of one of the other Strang families, would they have allowed him to travel to British North America as a loyalist.

While we are not familiar with the customs of the day, illegitimate children in the 1800's in the maritime provinces of Canada were generally brought up by either the mother or a member of the mother's family. This would suggest that one of the daughters of Daniel and Elizabeth may be Jesse's

mother. Their known daughters are Elizabeth (b.1752 given as 1782 by Strange) m. Major John Ward another Westchester Loyalist and a founding father of Saint John, NB; Esther (b. 19 May 1763); and Mary m. Joseph Silliker.

Since Elizabeth and Esther are too young to be Jesse's mother, that leaves Mary. Mary's birth date is not given by Strange, but is given as 1745 by some current web sources and 1756 by others. In the 1784 Muster Roll, the Jacob Silliker party is listed as a man, a woman, two children over 10 and 3 children under 10. There is limited other information on the birth dates for these Silliker children.¹¹ Based on the Muster Roll, the eldest child would then have been born ca 1771/1772. Since there is no record of Jacob having any other wife other than Mary, we will assume that all the Silliker children are Mary's. This would indicate the eldest was born when she was about 15 if the 1756 date is correct or 26 for the 1745 date. The sixth child (William) that is documented for this couple was born in 1787, or when Mary was 31 for the 1756 date or 42 for the 1745 date. While possible, the 1756 date appears to be too late (Mary is a bit young for the first child and would be expected to have had other children past an age of 31) and thus the 1745 date is a more reasonable one. Based on that date, Mary would have been 18 when Jesse was born (1763 birth date). So from a chronological view, Mary b. 1745 could be the mother of Jesse, prior to her marriage to Jacob Silliker.

Finally we come back to the item from Leard's Historic Bedeque that Jesse Strang and Joseph Silliker were half-brothers. Where Leard said Mary was the wife of Daniel Strang the recruiter which we know to be false, the statement is consistent with Mary Strang giving birth to Jesse before her marriage to Jacob Silliker.

As to Jesse's father, the Y-DNA test results do provide some clues. Danny Strang's test results as with Theodore Strang's results had a complete 37-marker match and several matches with a genetic distance of 1 on 37 markers with kits for various Tompkins/Toms families. In looking at the Tompkins DNA Project website¹² several of the kits which match or closely match the Jesse Strang results indicate a Westchester Co, New York origin and at least one is a Tompkins Loyalist who went to Carleton County, NB.¹³ While more research would be required, it is clear that there were like minded Tompkins families living in the vicinity of the family of Daniel Strang and Elizabeth Galpin with their daughter Mary, and the Y-DNA test results indicate that Jesse's father could be a Tompkins.

To sum up, recent Y-DNA test results have shown that Jesse Strang does not have a patrilineal descent from the Strangs of Westchester County, New York but that a member of the Tompkins family could be his father. As well, to explain why Jesse came to the Island of Saint John with the Silliker Family and the statement in Leard's book, it is likely that Mary Strang, daughter of Daniel Strang and Elizabeth Galpin, is his mother.

- 1 Editors Orlo Jones, Doris Haslam, *An Island Refuge: Loyalist and Disbanded Troops on the Island of Saint John* (Publication Information United Empire Loyalist Association Charlottetown, PEI FC2621.I84 Published: 1983), p.362
- 2 *Ibid.*, p.283-289
- 3 Doris Haslam, *The Wrights of Bedeque Prince Edward Island: a Loyalist family* (Summerside, Prince Edward Island: Privately Published, 1978).
- 4 Arthur Owen, *Our Maritime Ties* (ourmaritimeties.com)
- 5 Charles Alfred Strange, "The Strangs of Westchester", *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* V98 #4 p.199
- 6 George A Leard, *Historic Bedeque: The Loyalist at Work and Worship in Prince Edward Island* (Bedeque, Prince Edward Island: Bedeque United Church, 1948 amended in 1973), p.26
- 7 Strange, *op. cit.*, V100 #2 p.82
- 8 Prince Edward Island, Marriage Register, Book 7 (1856-1863): p.148, Strang-Beckwith, 1858; Public Archives and Record Office, Charlottetown.
- 9 Strong, Stronge, Strang, Strange, & LeStrange DNA Study Results, (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~donegalstrongs/dnaresults.htm>)
- 10 Strange, *op. cit.*, V99 #3 p.166
- 11 Jones, Haslam, *op. cit.*, p.271-273
- 12 Tompkins DNA Project, y-results (<http://www.worldfamilies.net/surnames/tompkins/results>)
- 13 United Empire Loyalist' Association of Canada (<http://www.uelac.org/Loyalist-Info/extras/Tompkins-John/John-Tompkins-family-genealogy.pdf>)