

# THE RIGGS FAMILY

The Riggs family seems to come from Yorkshire and Lincolnshire on the northeastern coast of England. One member of this family, Edward Riggs, was one of the very early settlers at Boston, Massachusetts. Edward Riggs was a Puritan and like many others of his faith, chose to escape persecution by sailing to America. Like most Puritans, he chose the Massachusetts Bay Colony and landed in Boston. His descendents later moved to the New Haven Colony and then were later original founders of Newark, New Jersey. My particular branch then moved to Morris County in New Jersey and then, in the middle 1700s, went to north-central North Carolina and then later into Tennessee by the 1780s. In Tennessee, my Riggs line (Sarah Riggs) married into the Ellis Family (James Ellis) and their daughter, Hulda Ellis married John Neece. These families are all part of my Jones Family heritage.

I will begin with Edward Riggs, the first of the family that I have any information on.

## EDWARD RIGGS I

Edward Riggs was the immigrant to America landing in Boston early in the summer of 1633.

He was born in England in about 1590. Most sources state that the family was from Lincolnshire, but I have been told that his marriage record is in Nazine, which is in Essex County, adjacent to London. In Boyd's Marriage Records, we find that Edward Riggs married Elizabeth Holmes in Waltham Abbey, Nazine Parish, Essex in 1618. He was accompanied to the new world by this first wife Elizabeth Holmes and two sons and four daughters. They settled down to farming in the town of Roxbury which is today a part of Boston. Roxbury was originally settled by families from the area of Nazine in Essex County. This fact seems to lend credence to the idea that this was the area that Edward did come from and not from Lincolnshire much further up the English coast.

The family of Edward Riggs was one of the original families that founded Roxbury and they owned a forty acre farm in that community.

Very shortly after arriving, a daughter, Lydia, died in August of 1633. Her death was the first recorded in the old Roxbury Church records. She was buried at the Roxbury Church. The Church still remains today, but there is no Riggs stone in the small graveyard that exists today.

Another daughter, Elizabeth, died in May of 1634, a son, John, died in October 1634 and Edward's wife Elizabeth died in August of 1635.

Edward remarried and his second wife was also named Elizabeth, her last name being unknown. We know nothing of her except there were no more children and she died on July 2, 1669.

Edward Riggs wrote his will on September 2, 1670 and he himself died on January 5, 1671/72. I do hope you paid attention earlier in the main body of this work when I explained the *'slash'* years and the old calendar. He was survived by a daughter, Mary Riggs, who married Benjamin Twitchell and a son, Edward II, from whom my line descends. There was another daughter who married an Allen, but the reference in Edward's will was to the children of his deceased daughter,

Mrs. Allen.

## **EDWARD RIGGS II**

The second Edward Riggs was born in England, probably in Essex County around the year 1619. He was christened October 17, 1619 in Nazeing Parish, Waltham Abby, Essex. He came with his family as an eighteen year old man to America. On April 5, 1635 he married Elizabeth Roosa, a young girl who had come with her parents from England (originally from Holland) a short time earlier, and who was living in Roxbury at the time.

By 1637, the Pequot Indians were terrorizing the settlers along the Connecticut River in what is now just north of the Hartford, Connecticut area. Edward Riggs served as a sergeant in the subsequent Pequot War. He became quite famous for rescuing some 12 fellow soldiers, including his commanding officer, who were pinned down by the Indians. This war virtually wiped out this tribe of Indians. Edward was referred to as *Sergeant Riggs for the rest of his life*.

It would seem that the soldiers were offered bounty lands in the area of Wethersfield in the Connecticut Colony. By 1640, Edward and his family were landowners living in Milford, Connecticut just south of New Haven. This was part of the New Haven Colony which held firmer to the old Puritan virtues than did the more liberal Connecticut Colony surrounding Hartford. The family remained there until about 1655 when Edward Riggs and a few other families bought land from the Indians some dozen miles up the Naugatuck River and established a new Puritan settlement at Derby, Connecticut. His original land is today still referred to as *'Riggs Hill'*.

The English Province of the Jerseys was established in 1664. The English had just acquired the area from the Dutch and were quite anxious to settle the land with Englishmen as fast as possible to secure their hold on the area. In 1665, Edward Riggs and a few others from the Derby Settlement visited the area and made arrangements to acquire a great deal of land in what is now Newark, New Jersey.

In 1666 Edward Riggs moved to the area and his was the first white family to live there. His son Samuel retained the family holdings in Derby, but the other sons, Edward and Joseph, went with him to the new colony of the Jerseys and founded Newark as a Puritan colony.

Edward Riggs II died two years later in 1668. His widow Elizabeth remarried around 1670 to Caleb Carwithie. Edward Riggs had at least four children that I have a record.

### **Samuel Riggs**

Samuel Riggs was born about 1640 and married Sarah Baldwin daughter of Richard Baldwin. Sarah died and Samuel married again to a widow, Sarah Washburn. Samuel's family remained in Connecticut.

### **Joseph Riggs**

Joseph Riggs was born about 1642 and married Hannah Browne, daughter of John Browne. After Joseph died in 1689, his widow married her second husband, Aaron Thompson.

## **Mary Riggs**

Mary Riggs was born in about 1644 and she married George Day.

## **Edward Riggs III**

The last child was Edward Riggs (III) born about 1636. It is from this third Edward that my line comes down.

## **EDWARD RIGGS III**

This Edward was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts in about 1636. There is no remaining record of his marriage. His wife's name was Mary and I believe her last name was Munn, but that seems to be all that is known. Not much is known of this Edward. He was a large landowner in the Newark area and many of the deeds listed him as Planter. The last mention made was on a deed in 1700. We do not know when or where either he or his wife died.

Some of his children moved inland in New Jersey, but Edward may not have gone along with them. Tradition indicates the following children:

## **Anna Riggs**

Anna was born about 1662 married a J. Gage.

## **James Riggs**

James Riggs was born about 1664.

## **Mary Riggs**

Mary Riggs born about 1666 married Joseph Lindsley.

## **Edward Riggs**

Edward Riggs was born about 1668 married Aphia Stoughton. He moved with Samuel to Morris County, New Jersey and this is where, I believe, he remained.

## **Joseph Riggs**

Joseph Riggs was born about 1675, was married and had a large family. Joseph died in Orange, New Jersey on September 11, 1744.

## **Martha Riggs**

Martha Riggs was born about 1677. She married S. Freeman.

## **Elizabeth Riggs**

Elizabeth Riggs was born about 1678, and married John Lyon.

## **John Riggs**

John Riggs was born about 1679 married Frances Colburn.

## **Samuel Riggs**

Samuel Riggs was born about 1681. This is my lineage, and Samuel is treated in the next section.

## **Charity Riggs**

Charity Riggs was born about 1685. She married John Bowers.

## **SAMUEL RIGGS I**

The first Samuel Riggs was born in Newark, New Jersey in about 1681. Sometime around 1708, he and his brother Edward, moved inland to Morris County, New Jersey. He originally settled near Morristown as he is mentioned in the records of the Hanover Church in Morristown. He later moved to Basking Ridge. He was married at the time, but I have no proven name for his wife, but some feel it was Keziah Baldwin. Samuel settled near a locale known as Bottle Hill.

Nothing more is known about Samuel Riggs except that by tradition he is deemed to be the father of the Riggs families who went to North Carolina. Likewise tradition gives him four sons: Edward, Timothy, Samuel and Reuben. I have the feeling that Samuel took his family down to North Carolina and died down there.

Several Riggs families went into North Carolina and I am descended from one, but I am not absolutely certain which one. My ancestor, Sarah Riggs, is thought by most to be the daughter of Timothy. I think she is the daughter of Edward. Coin flip time again folks.

In the 1760s a whole bunch of families from northern New Jersey traveled down the Great Wagon Road to the northwestern frontier of North Carolina and established the '*Jersey Settlement*' in old Rowan County. This area is now located in the present Davidson County area. As the kids grew up, they separated along the North Carolina border into what is presently Surrey, Rutherford and Tyrone counties.

The following is what I have been able to find out about the four sons of Samuel Riggs. All these sons, and I believe the father as well, traveled to the northern border of North Carolina in the early part of the 1760s.

# THE NORTH CAROLINA RIGGS FAMILIES

Lets jump ahead a little. My direct ancestor was the Sarah Riggs who married James Ellis in what was then Greene County, Tennessee in about 1780. What I now have to determine is who her folks were. Not so simple. Most people say it was Timothy. I think it was Edward Riggs.

There were four separate Riggs families in North Carolina about the same time before 1770, but were in different areas. The following is what I know of these families, all headed by sons of Samuel Riggs.

## TIMOTHY RIGGS

Timothy Riggs was born about 1723 near Newark, New Jersey. He moved with his family to Morris County and was married there. There is a record of a Timothy Riggs marrying Sarah Dunkham in Morristown on September 4, 1757.

Timothy Riggs was listed as a Justice in Tyrone County, North Carolina in the time period 1769 to 1777. Timothy Riggs then appears on a land grant in what is now Lincoln County, North Carolina in 1775. This sounds like a lot of hopping around, maybe we are talking of more than one Timothy. I do not know for certain.

Later he seems to have acquired more lands in Surrey County, North Carolina. One of his sons, Zadok Riggs, was sheriff of Surrey County in 1788. Timothy Riggs died in what is now Rutherford County, North Carolina in 1805. He and Sarah are both buried there.

By the early 1800s his family had spread west into Kentucky, Tennessee and beyond.

There are twelve children attributed to Timothy Riggs: **William, Zadok** (born 1753), **Sarah, Silas, Daniel** (born 1765), **Timothy junior** (born 1760), **Reuben** (born 1770), **Jacob, Hannah, David** (1749-1837), **Israel** and **Clisby Riggs**. These may be his children or they may simply have been children of the next generation in North Carolina and attributable to any of the four sons of Samuel Riggs.

## EDWARD RIGGS

Edward Riggs according to one source was born on February 7, 1720 in Newark. He married Jane Buckley there in New Jersey, probably in Morris County.

The earliest references in North Carolina I find for Edward are that he was appointed Overseer of the Road laid out from The Shallow Ford on the Yadkin River at the Ford called Elkin Ford on April 17, 1767. On August 11, 1769, he and William Potter were appointed Overseers of the same stretch of road.

On March 2, 1769, he (or some Edward Riggs) acted as Bondsman in Rowan County for the marriage of Reuben Riggs and Mary Crawford. I assume that Reuben was his brother, but have no proof. In the section on the Ellis Family, I mentioned the '*Jersey Settlement*' of old Davidson

County. I think this was the area that this Riggs family lived, as at the time it fell under the control of Rowan County and all the early records were there.

In the 1787 to 1788 period, Edward Riggs received three North Carolina Land Grants for lands in what was Greene County, Tennessee. These were for 445, 1000 and 200 acres respectively, all on the southern banks of the Holston River along Dumpling Creek. A Jesse Riggs received a grant for 70 acres on the Holsten along Fall Creek in the same general area.

The Riggs family shows up on marriage records in Jefferson County, Tennessee by 1800. As Jefferson County was formed out of Greene County, I would assume that Edward probably settled originally in what is Jefferson County now, but was part of Greene then.

I am still working on this Edward Riggs and his family as I feel he, rather than Timothy, was the father of Sarah Riggs who is my line. In fact some Edward Riggs acted as bondsman for the marriage of Hulda Ellis in her marriage to John Neece, again on my line.

At any rate, sometime around the year 1780 Sarah Riggs married James Ellis. Most folk place the marriage in Jefferson County, Tennessee. I think they were married in Rowan County, North Carolina as both families seem to have been in North Carolina until much later in the 1780s. So far I cannot find any records. Tennessee was not available for settlement due to Indian problems until the late 1770s.

Sarah and James Ellis's daughter Mahulda married John Neece in Jefferson County, Tennessee on May 31, 1800. Their lives have been told in the preceding section on the Ellis Family. I know nothing of any other children with the exception of possibly Jesse.

## **REUBEN RIGGS**

Reuben Riggs was born in 1725 in Newark and married Sarah Carter in Morris County on August 16, 1750. She must have died as I mentioned above the marriage in North Carolina of Reuben Riggs to Mary Crawford on March 2, 1769. This bond was signed by Edward Riggs and David Crawford. Again, I may be talking about two separate Reuben Riggs. Perhaps the second marriage was that of a son named Reuben. Since they all named their kids the same things get *VERY* confusing.

That's it for what I know about Reuben. I assume he moved west to Tennessee or even Kentucky. A large group went up to Warren County, Kentucky from Rowan. Then to make things worse, an entirely different Riggs family from Maryland moved to Kentucky about the same time. Things must have been confusing, I'm glad they aren't my folks.

## **SAMUEL RIGGS II**

Samuel, the second, and his descendents remained in the Surrey County area for many generations. The bulk of what I know about Samuel comes from a descendent, Verna Gorg of Fullerton, California.

Samuel II was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1728. He moved with his parents to Morristown and there married Elizabeth Tompkins on January 5, 1749 at the Hanover Presbyterian Church. They moved to North Carolina shortly afterwards and their children were all born there.

According to Mrs. Gorg, they were all born at Mitchell River, Surrey County. Personally I wonder if the family may have gone to the Jersey settlement in Rowan first for a few years.

Samuel died near Dobson, Surrey County, North Carolina around 1800. His will was written on September 12, 1798. Elizabeth died there in 1812.

The following is what I know about their children:

**CHLOE RIGGS** was born in 1758 and married a Scott.

**ELIZABETH RIGGS** was born in 1760 and married a Snow.

**SILAS RIGGS** was born about 1762.

**MARY RIGGS** was born June 4, 1764, she married Ezekiel Wilmouth.

**LOTT RIGGS** was born in 1765. He was married about 1792 to a Peggy. Lott died on February 25, 1813. Their children were Mary, Sarah, Elizabeth, Abigail, Silas, Mahala, John, Rial, Jesse and Daniel.

**ZADOK RIGGS** was born about 1766.

**EUNICE RIGGS** was born about 1768. She married a Lasswell.

**HIRAM RIGGS** was born about 1770.

**ABIGAIL RIGGS** was born about 1772 and married a Snow.