

The Jay Family Index

For over forty (40) years, the Jay Family Index (JFI) has been the most-quoted reference in the study of the Jay family in America. It is for that reason the Jay Family Association feels it important to discuss its origins, strengths and its inherent weaknesses.

Background...The greater part of this manuscript was copied from the Workbook of Cassius Milton Jay (1886 - 1953). It is his index to the Jay Family in America, mostly covering descendants from William Jay and his wife, Mary Vestal.

However, it is actually more than this, for it is a compilation of the work Eli Jay before him (1826-1911), whose lifetime accumulation of data was turned over to Cassius on Eli's death. It was Eli Jay, the staunch Quaker, the educator, pioneer, professor of mathematics at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, and historian of the Pearson and Jay families, who first set about Jay genealogical work.

Next to follow in Eli's footsteps was Cassius Milton Jay, who was a prominent member of the California State Society of the Sons of the Revolution and a one-time Editor of their Magazine, "The Bulletin". He was very active in this Society and was considered by them to be an excellent genealogist. He possessed a valuable and extensive private library containing a large number of genealogical research papers, which the Society had expected to receive on his death. Cassius had retired before his wife died, and for two years before his own death he suffered from heart trouble and lived the life of a virtual recluse.

Publishing of the Jay Family Index...In 1963, ten years after the death of Cassius Milton Jay, the Jay Family Association chose to publish the notes as they were, with the hopes that others would carry on the work of documentation.

The JFI as a Research Tool...The bulk of his work, while voluminous and informative, concentrated on the Quaker Jay descendants of William Jay and Mary Vestal who migrated northwest out of South Carolina. This specific group were the ancestors of Eli and Cassius Jay. It is only logical that this portion of their research is far more complete and documented.

Unfortunately, Mr. Jay's research was conducted from a location and during a period where he had limited access to the family histories and records required to accurately document the Southern Jay lines. As a result, it is understandable that Southern US Jay researchers find the document very limited and containing a multitude of documented errors.

Researchers are cautioned to not use the Jay Family Index in place of standard genealogical proof. Southern Jay researchers will find minimal benefit, if any, from the document.