

Johann Jacob Rührschneck (Rierschneck, Rasnic, Rasnick, or Rasnake)

Born in the tiny village of Irsingen, Aufkirchen District, Ansbach on 17 Dec 1752, Jacob was the second child of farm servants Johann Georg and Anna (Schwanzer) Rührschneck. His birth record states that was “weakly” and was christened at home on the same day he was born.

St. Johannis Church in Aufkirchen was less than a mile from the Rührschneck home. The church, built in 1514, contains “one of the oldest precious and magnificent Baroque organs known from 1663”. Church records indicate that water from the church spring was taken to the home for his christening.

The district Aufkirchen was first mentioned as a fortified town in 1188. It lies at the foot of the southern slope of the Hesselberg Mountain, which is the highest point in Mittelfranken.

At the time of Jacob’s birth, the family already had one child – twenty month old daughter, Anna Catharina. Nothing more is known about the family until 1786 when father Georg shows up about twelve miles to the north in Deffersdorf. A records check has determined that the family did not live in Deffersdorf before this sighting in 1786. However, at least by 1777, they were obviously living somewhere nearby within the Waizendorf District of Ansbach when Jacob, who would have been living with his parents, was taken by officials of the Ansbach Army.

According to the book, *Some Descendants of John Counts of Glade Hollow*, by Elihu Jasper Sutherland: “*Jacob Rasnake was German. When about 18 years old, he was conscripted by his ruler, probably in Hesse-Cassel, and hired to the British as a soldier in the American Revolution. Family tradition is that he was threshing wheat when seized by military officers. Failing to secure his release, his mother gave him a German Bible for use in the far-away land. He came to America with the Hessian Troops, was captured at the Battle of Saratoga in October, 1777, and held as a prisoner of war – most of the time in the Valley of Virginia. When the war was over, the Hessian prisoners were given the option of being returned to Europe or denouncing their rulers and remaining in America. He chose to stay in the new world. He had already found many Germans, blood and speech of his own, in the Shenandoah Valley and the year after peace brought his release from the war prison, he married one of them...*”

In *History of Virginia, v. 5, 1924, p. 484*, we find, “*He was captured at the battle of Brandywine and like many of his compatriots, he decided to cast in his lot with the colonists and remain in this country.*”

The *Heritage of Lee County, Virginia 1792-1992*, carries that idea a bit further. Laferne L. Kraft of Dayton, Ohio, Mrs. Fred Jones of Jamestown, Ohio, and Mrs. Kenneth Carver of Bellbrook, Ohio submitted the following which appears on page 371: “*He was given a choice of being returned to Germany or declaring allegiance to the new country.*”

In *Journey in Virginia: A History of 300 Years*, by Polly Ryan, there is yet another version of the story. It contends that Jacob was wounded and left on the battlefield. Rev. Counts and his daughter came onto the battlefield bringing water and trying to care for the wounded. As they approached they heard Jacob calling, “Muter, Muter” [German for Mother]. They removed him from the battlefield and took him to Rev. Counts’ house and nursed him back to health. This is a very romanticized version and highly doubtful for many reasons. The closest battlefield to the Counts’ cabin was

many miles away and it is highly unlikely that he would have taken his young teenage daughter onto the battlefield.

The stories above and other versions are examples of getting the concept essentially correct, but they do not actually rely on facts.

As subsequent research has shown, the first version is closer to the truth than all the other. As an example, prisoners of war from the Battle of Saratoga were not held in the Valley of Virginia.

More German sources are being made available for research and being translated into English. A major event in genealogical research into the descendants of Hessian soldiers occurred in 1976 with the publication of the *HETRINA (Hessische Truppen im Amerikanischen Unabhangigkeitskrieg)*. This is a compilation of the names of soldiers by Dr. Inge Auerbach of the Staatsarchiv (State Archives) in Marburg (Hessen), Germany. The late Mr. John Merz of Canada did extensive research for our family name and determined that no where in the *HETRINA* is there a reference to any spelling of Rasnake.

In *Mercenaries From Ansbach & Bayreuth Who Remained in America*, by Clifford N. Smith, he lists soldiers from the Ansbach and Bayreuth regiments of German soldiers who (for whatever reason) remained in America after the Revolutionary War. On page 36 of that book is the following entry: “*Reuhrschneck, Johan. Private. Ansbach Regiment. 1st Company. Mentioned on a muster roll of June 1783.*”

In the German source *Die Ansbach-Bayreuther Truppen 1777-1783*, Dr. Erhard Staedtler lists soldiers who returned to Germany, who died through sickness or war action, or who remained in America. He mentions Ruehrschneck only once and that is under the deserters and settlers in America.

In the German source *Ansbach-Bayreuth Deserter List with Places of Birth*, Johann Ruehrschneck is listed as a “*musketier – born in Watzendorf*”.

One point of concern in all of this research was the listing as “Johann Ruehrschneck” rather than “Jacob”. Genealogists and other German researchers explained that it was the German custom to receive two first names. The first name was typically the father’s name. The second name was typically the “calling” name but the first name would have been recorded in the military records. Thus, his actual legal name was probably Johann Jacob Ruehrschneck.

This abundance of evidence led to the conclusion that Jacob was not “Hessian” with allegiance to the Duke of Hess, but rather an Ansbacher with allegiance to the Markgraff Carl Alexander von Ansbach-Bayreuth.

At this time, Germany was not a unified country but rather over 300 small principalities and city states, each with their individual ruler. Several of these principalities carried enormous debts and possibly facing bankruptcy in 1776, rulers in six principalities agreed to rent their soldiers out to the King of England to help fight against the rebellious colonists during the American Revolutionary War.

Because the majority of these auxiliary German soldiers came from Hesse-Cassel, they are commonly referred to as “Hessians”. However, many, like Jacob, came from other Germanic principalities and various city states. Often thought of as mercenaries, they were not true soldiers of fortune. They more accurately referred to

themselves as “Hilfstruppen”, or “Helping Troops”. In English, they were also known as “Auxiliary Troops”.

According to the laws and rules of the time, all able bodied men between ages 17 and 40 were on conscription lists and required to serve in a military regiment of their ruler. They had to be a minimum height of five feet, six inches tall and had to be free from infectious diseases. If a man failed to report for conscription, he could have been forcibly taken by soldiers.

This lends possible credence to the tradition that our Jacob was forcibly taken into service. Regardless of how he was pressed into service, Jacob was one of those chosen to cross the ocean to fight for the British against the American colonies. Thus, we know that he was of at least average height and in good health at the time of his conscription. Jacob entered military service as a private and trained as a musketeer in the Leibkompanie (Colonel’s Company, or Company 1) of the Ansbach Regiment of the Ansbach-Bayreuth Troops. He was under the command of Colonel Friedrich Ludwig Albrecht von Eyb from Jun 1777 until Jun 1778, when he was put under Colonel Voit. The Ansbach-Bayreuth units were attached directly to the British army commanded by General William Howe and General Henry Clinton.

On 3 Mar 1777, Jacob was among two infantry regiments consisting of 2,500 men who marched down the road out of Ansbach amid many tears and weeping by the people, leaving the city and his family behind – never to see them again.

The troops marched to the next harbor on the River Main, where, on 7 Mar 1777, they embarked at Ochsenfurth and spent the night on board one of several ships. The men were cold, hungry, and crowded. The poor conditions resulted in a riot, with some soldiers deserting before they even sailed. The Margrave was called in to intercede and the soldiers were re-embarked. They sailed on, arrived at Mainz, and then continued their trip down the Rhine River. They arrived in Holland, where on 25 Mar 1777, they marched onto the great square at the castle in the city of Nijmegen and were sworn into service for the British crown..

Jacob was No. 84 to take the oath of allegiance to King George III of Great Britain. Then the Articles of War were read to all the soldiers.

A few days later they went aboard an English transport ship and sailed off into the North Sea towards England and an uncertain future in America. After enduring very poor conditions during a harrowing trip by sea, the ship anchored on the afternoon of 3 Jun 1777, but the soldiers didn’t disembark until two days later. Jacob and the others first set foot on American soil at Staten Island after having spent twelve weeks and three days traveling on both the “large and small waters”.

During the war, the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops participated in the battles at Philadelphia, Newport, Springfield and Yorktown. They were part of General Cornwallis’ Army that was surrendered after their defeat in the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781, and Jacob, along with the others, was taken captive.

Between three and four o’clock on the afternoon of 19 Oct 1781, Brigadier General Charles O’Hara led the British and German troops in a procession of surrender in front of their enemies. Carrying their knapsacks and equipment, the troops marched along Williamson Street in Yorktown among great pomp and circumstance, to a level place where the Hussars of the French were drawn up in a circle. There they laid down

their weapons and armor, surrendering to the French and American troops under the command of General George Washington.

Ansbach muster rolls name Jacob among these prisoners, listing him as “Jean Ruhrschneck”. This is because the documents were written in French, which was the diplomatic language of the day. “Jean” is the French equivalent of the German “Johann”. His name appears on all fourteen muster lists, spelled variously as Ruhrschneck, Rührschneck, Rierschneck, Riehrschnack, and Ruhrschneck. The following is one entry: “*Jean Ruhrschneck*” Prisoner: 19 October [1781]. *The German troops spent the day after the surrender recovering from their “many exertions and sleepless nights that occurred during the siege”.* This debunks the myth of Jacob being taken prisoner at Saratoga.

The captives watched as the Americans raised a large flag “on the water battery at Yorktown”. The flag had thirteen stripes, which represented the thirteen provinces of the United North American Free States, which was to become Jacob’s new home. At three o’clock on the afternoon of October 21st, the able-bodied prisoners broke camp and began their march into captivity. They were escorted under a guard commanded by Brigadier General Robert Lawson, whose brigade of Virginia militia had also fought at Yorktown. Jacob and the other prisoners marched along for days in steady rain and snow, lacking adequate food and water, and sleeping out under the open sky at night. They did, however, report that they enjoyed much freedom along the way.

They marched through Williamsburg and Fredericksburg, heading north for a prison camp in Winchester, Va. On November 1st, the group was made to cross the Rappahannock River barefoot, where the waters came up to their thighs. They proceeded on, coming in sight of the Blue Ridge Mountains on November 3rd. On the 4th, they were made to wade barefoot again for nearly a quarter of an hour across the ice cold waters of the Shenandoah River, where the current was so swift that they had to be careful that it did not carry them away. This crossing in cold water caused all sorts of sickness. Finally, after marching two hundred and forty grueling miles in sixteen days, Jacob and the others arrived at their destination of Winchester, Va., on 5 Nov 1781.

The exact location where the Hessian Barracks at Winchester once stood is currently unknown. Unlike other prison camps, no formal barracks ever existed in Winchester – only an uncompleted main structure and a number of temporary huts. By the time Jacob arrived, the Barracks was in shambles, still incomplete and with only enough huts to house about eight hundred men. About a thousand prisoners were obliged to “camp out”, and another five hundred of the British were granted permission to occupy a church in town. Winchester officials were unable to cope with the housing and feeding of the increasing numbers passing through the camp. This caused many to be furloughed out into the countryside where they lived and worked with the local farmers. The dimensions of the prisoners’ huts, or cabins, were fourteen feet square, which was more or less the standard size for a soldier’s log hut during the Revolution. This space would have been adequate to house ten to twelve men per hut. However, as many as 32-36 “Hessians” were, at times, forced to squeeze into them.

Stephen Popp was a German prisoner held at Winchester along with Jacob. In his diary he described their arrival at the camp as follows: “*We came to Winchester. It is supposed to be a city, but looks quite bad. It is also inhabited by Germans. We*

marched out of Winchester some four miles into the woods. There was an old tumbledown barracks, called Frederick's Barracks. It lies in the midst of deep woods – a witch's place. There we were quartered. We were amazed when we saw it. My flesh creeps yet to think of it. I will describe it briefly. It was built of wood. The gaps were now filled in with laths, but everything was wrecked. Yes, everything was extremely rotted. The roof was still covered in some places with bark. We were not safe from the rain nor the dripping. The snow had free entry, just like the wind on the public street. The fireplace was in the middle of the hut. We couldn't remain near it, because of the smoke. We were therefore under the necessity of renovating our appointed hut in the worst winter weather. If only we could have a little protection against the rain. Some of our people went to the farmers and borrowed mattocks and saws. Some got picks and shovels, and so everybody went to work. In several days we accomplished it and made things quite comfortable. In each hut there were 32 to 36 men. In all we were twenty days on the march [Döhla stated they marched for sixteen days]. From Yorktown to Winchester are two hundred forty Virginia miles. So far into the country they shipped us. Provisions were short on that march. We received no bread, only flour to make it with. Once in a while we also got some rough and hard bread. But this happened seldom. Twice we received some salt meat on this march, also a little fresh meat and a little salt. We couldn't complain about the command. They gave us as much freedom as possible. Many of the prisoners went out of the barracks into the surrounding territory and went to their work without a pass. The commandant, Colonel Canada, also permitted us to go into the city free and unhindered. The best of it here then was the freedom. If only the provisions had been better. But on account of the poor provisions we often had to buy what we needed, because it often took a long time, until our supplies came. Hunger and cold we had daily in abundance. Now let us close this year. For in this year we had much to endure.”

Another prisoner held at Winchester, named Johann Conrad Döhla, gives this account: “5 November. [1781]. We arrived Winchester... We marched through the place and another four Virginia miles, over two hours farther, to an old and large barracks with two levels, called the New Frederick Barracks, where both our regiments were lodged on the lower level. The English troops still with us were placed on the upper level. If this is to be our winter quarters, may God have mercy upon us: numerous wretched huts built of wood and clay, most of which have no roofs or poor roofs, no cots, only poor fireplaces, neither doors nor windows, and lie in the middle of a forest. We already had many sick and fatigued people, which was not surprising. During this move we spent sixteen days and made a march of two hundred forty Virginia miles... 6 November. We were divided among our barracks, twenty or thirty men in a hut, where we did not have room enough to stand. We were also locked in like dogs, and our rooms were worse than the pig stalls and dog houses are in Germany. 8 November. We began to improve our barracks a bit. We made cabins and cots therein, for which we had permission from the Americans to get wood from the nearby forests. We closed the roofs and filled all the holes in the walls with wood and clay to protect ourselves from the cold. The worst evil in the huts was the constant smoke from the fireplaces, which often was such that it was impossible to see one another. We also

collected bulrushes in the forest and cut grass, which served as mattress filler. Many of our people, with the permission of the American commanding officer, went, with or without passes, into the surrounding region to work for the residents threshing, spinning, cutting wood, or whatever the people had to do, in order to ease the hunger and to earn a shirt to put on their backs. We were allowed...to go into the city of Winchester and outside the barracks, five or six miles, without being stopped. This permission was undoubtedly the best part of our captivity. However, the rations were therefore that much worse, and they were meted out to us very sparingly and of poor quality. We received absolutely no bread except for an occasional uncooked Indian bread from the escort, which was even worse than pumpernickel. And instead of bread, which was to have been furnished according to the surrender agreement, we received a little raw and half-cooked oatmeal, from which we occasionally bake bread pancakes, for which the ever-present stewpot served us.”

Conditions at Winchester were so dire that a month after the Yorktown prisoners arrived, a conference was called with George Washington in Philadelphia regarding the “safe-keeping and cheap feeding” of the prisoners. By the end of December, a report indicated that there was an “absolute necessity” for breaking up this post. It was decided that they would be ordered out of state in January – the British would go to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and the Germans to Frederick, Maryland.

When the commander of the guard, Colonel Joseph Holmes, received instructions to march the prisoners, he wrote a sensitive letter to Colonel James Wood, Superintendent of Prisoners in Virginia, urging consideration for the prisoners’ welfare at such a harsh time of year: *“I have given the necessary orders, and Disposition of March for the Guard and British Prisrs: they Are to Move to Morrow morning exactly at the hour of 10 OClk, the British in One Column the Anspach in Another. The extreme coldness of the season have enduced Me to refer to your Consideration, the hardship& difficulty both Guard and prisrs must encounter on the March, Many are almost as naked as the hour they were born, & not an ounce of animal food. Whither you could not with propriety detain them a few days, Or One half of them, then there might be a chance of getting into some sort of Shelter at night. It seems to shock the feelings of humanity to drive out of a warm habitation a poor Creature stark naked in Such a season.”*

The letter Colonel Holmes wrote prompted Colonel Wood to delay the departure for only twenty-four hours. The prisoners would be divided into two divisions, which would march a day apart. The second division would encamp on the ground left by the first. The British prisoners marched from the Barracks on the morning of January 26, and the Germans left the next day. Some had been sick or injured at the time the main group departed. Others had been dispersed out into the countryside, as far away as York, Pennsylvania, and could not be collected back in time to join the march. Private Döhla’s diary describes the prisoners’ march from Winchester to Frederick, and the conditions at the new barracks once they arrived: *“27 Jan [1782]. Early around nine o’clock our two regiments marched from the New Fredericks Barracks...we camped under open skies and had to lie down in the snow. Then we had to endure severe cold and frost the entire night... 28 Jan. Although it was so cold we had to cross over the Oh-Pekoh, a creek or small river, and wade through the water, so that at night we believed*

the marrow in our bones and feet would freeze. One could hardly believe what men can endure. [Lieutenant Pretchel recorded in his diary that three British soldiers froze to death on the night of January 28th.] 29 Jan. Our march went another nine miles further to a small town called Shepherds-Town, which is on the Potowmack River. Here we had to be transported across by boat, but it was very cold and the river was half frozen over, so we remained on the bank overnight. We made a very large fire but because of the great cold could not close our eyes. God pity us, both for our bad clothing, so completely tattered and fallen to rags, as well as the great cold, which we had to handle not as men but like dogs... 30 Jan. This past night the Potowmack was so heavily frozen over that one could ride and drive across it with wagons and horses, so severe was the cold, and we had to take our night quarters under open skies... 31 Jan. ...At sundown in the evening we arrived and were completely tired and exhausted from the long march. We were led by our escort through the city, and about a half hour beyond, on the east, we were directed into a barracks. These barracks, similar to a barracks compound, are two stories high, built of stone, and have a regular roof...The company received two floors, one upper and one lower, for quarters. Two barracks have been built here, and more than one hundred huts in which many English prisoners lay. It was very cold and drafty in our quarters."

The Hessian Barracks at Frederick, Maryland, was more like a real barracks than the camp at Winchester. There were two L-shaped, two story stone structures situated with the short end of the L's facing each other, forming a courtyard in between. The rooms were plain, rectangular in shape, with no interior passageway, and the common walls between each two rooms were fitted with fireplaces, back to back. Two sets of wooden stairs inside and out connected the two levels. The state of Maryland was overwhelmed and unable to handle the impossible task of properly housing and caring for the great influx of so many prisoners. The bitter cold and the acute lack of supplies continued to make conditions critical all winter long. The captors were unable to obtain suitable beef, pork, flour, firewood, clothing, shoes or blankets for their prisoners. Compounding matters was that the Germans' baggage and back pay were five months late and wouldn't arrive until April 1782. Because of these dire circumstances, some of the prisoners were allowed to go to work out in the country for a time while many were forced to sell their clothes and possessions for food.

According to Döhla: "*Frequent epidemics occurred, and bugs and lice in great numbers appeared in our tattered clothing...At present, we receive poor rations, raw bread, almost rotten and stinking, salted meat, and occasionally stinking herring fish. Many of us prisoners went barefoot and half naked; most no longer had a shirt on their body, and many went with only a rag, which was full of bugs.*"

These poignant accounts serve to help us understand the great hardships and sufferings that our Jacob underwent as a Prisoner of War. Negotiations continued for the end of the war and in April, 1783, the Continental Congress resolved to arrange for liberation of all prisoners. At noon on 13 May 1783, the last of the German captives left the Frederick Barracks. They had endured fifteen and a half months in confinement before gaining their freedom with the signature of the Treaty of Paris. Those who had not died, deserted, been lost along the way, or purchased their freedom departed

western Maryland to head north to Long Island to board ships for their return home. Private Johann Jacob Rührschneck was not on board.

At one time, it was thought likely that Jacob deserted either during the march to Winchester, or along the march from Winchester to Frederick, Md., but further investigation of his military records proved this not to be the case. According to Ansbach musters, Jacob was present and accounted for from the time he left Germany until the time of the next to the last muster, which encompassed the dates of 25 Jun 1782 through 24 Dec 1782. This confirms that he was present at the POW camps at both Winchester, Va., and Frederick, Md.

In the last semi-annual pass-in-revue muster dated 25 Dec 1782 through 24 Jun 1783, however, Jean Rührschneck is noted as “encore absent”, or “missing again”, so it appears that he escaped sometime within the six months between Christmas 1782 and 24 Jun 1783. As the last of the Yorktown prisoners left the “Hessian” Barracks at Frederick, Md., in the middle of May heading for Long Island, he could have escaped during the march at that time, if not sooner. Once free, he apparently wasted no time making his way into the freedom and beauty of the Shenandoah Valley.

It should be noted at this point that Johann Jacob Rierschneck completed his military service honorably and courageously through the end of the war and in the face of many hardships. He did not desert the German army as is often stated, but rather escaped his captivity while being held as a prisoner of war when the opportunity presented itself. Jacob’s escape route would have taken him out of Winchester into the Shenandoah Valley along the main migratory route known as the Great Wagon Road, which in earlier days had been old Indian trail. Today, U.S. Highway Route 11 generally follows the same route.

Just a few months later, Jacob appeared at the farm of John and Mary Counts (Koontz). The old Counts homeplace and farm were located about three miles NW of the town of Luray and about one mile south of the mouth of the Hawksbill Creek, in present day Page County.

The circumstances of how he came to find and stay with the Counts family are unknown. He would have been in the Winchester, Va., area approximately three months and then in the Frederick, Md., area another five. As noted above, the German soldier prisoners were “loaned” out to area farmers to earn part of their keep and/or to obtain food for the prison camps. Winchester is located in Frederick County and the county next to that is Shenandoah.

Life in Shenandoah County must have suited him well enough as he decided to stay with the family. He quickly started making a new life for himself. Early researchers have cited the *1783 Shenandoah County Tax List (page 28, line 5)* showing Jacob under the spelling “Reversnuck”. However, recent researchers believe that spelling is “Revercomb” and that it is actually someone else. That name appears again in the *1785 Shenandoah County Tax List*, with the person owning two (2) horses and two (2) cattle. Further research is underway to try to resolve this new discovery.

In about 1789, Jacob and his family left Shenandoah County and moved to Russell County, settling in Glade Hollow – a few miles from the place where Mary's parents later settled. Here Jacob and Mary became vital citizens of the county.

Jacob purchased land:

- On August 17, 1790, a deed was recorded for 195 acres sold by Edward Smoot & Mary to Jacob Rarsnake. It was located in the Glade Hollow on the waters of Cedar Creek, a branch of Clinch River. It began along a conditional line of marked trees made between Jacob Rarnesnake [note variation in spelling] and Zachariah Hendrix including the south side of the said track of land which was granted to Edward Smoot by patent dated June 20, 1785. Jacob paid 85 pounds “current money of Virginia” for this property.
- On August 23, 1796, two deeds were recorded for land sold by Zacheriah Hendrix of Botetourt Co. to Mary and Jacob Rarsnake. The first was for 164 acres on both sides of the Glade Hollow on the waters of Clinch River. It was originally land granted to Zacheriah Hendrix by patent dated March 14, 1792. Its beginning corner ran to a tract of land surveyed for Edward Smoot to the top of a spur of Copper Ridge, then crossing the Glade Hollow. The second deed was for 195 acres in the Glade Hollow on the waters of Cedar Creek, a branch of Clinch River. It began along a conditional line agreed upon between Zachariah Henricks & Jacob Rarsnake including the north side of the tract of land granted to Edward Smoot by patent dated June 20, 1785. [NOTE: When this deed was recorded, it was noted in the Deed Index book under Jacob “Rausnake”]
- On July 24, 1804, a deed was recorded for 100 acres sold by David Calhoon & Fereby to Jacob Raresnake. It was located on both sides of Glade Hollow, a branch of Sinking Creek, the waters of Clinch River below Edmund Smoots and Richard Hendersons land. It began at Richard Henderson’s line and crossed the Glade Hollow.
- On 2August 1808, a deed was recorded for 150 acres sold by Jacob Raresnake & Mary to Joseph Shoemaker. It was in the Glade Hollow on the waters of Cedar Creek, a branch of Clinch River. It began on a line of the tract patent dated December 23, 1795, with a corner to a line between Jacob Raresnake & Shoemaker, then a corner to Smoot and crossing Glade Hollow. It was also part of a tract Raresnake bought of Zachariah Hendrixon by patent dated June 20, 1785 including a small field and still house agreeable to a line made between Raresnake & Shoemaker.
- On 23 November 1811, a deed was recorded for this same 150 acres back to Jacob & Mary from Joseph Shoemaker and Elizabeth.

Jacob also performed his civic duty in the county.

- He served on grand juries at the Court of Quarterly Sessions on 26 November 1793, 22 April 1794, 24 June 1794, 28 June 1796, 26 April 1797, 26 June 1798, and 25 September 1798.
- He served on grand juries of inquest at the Court of Quarterly Sessions on 28 June 28 1803, 23 April 1805, 2 September 1806, 2 June 1807.
- He served as a surveyor on roads 25 June 1799.
- He was appointed (with two others) to appraise the slaves & personal estate of John Cowan 27 November 1799

- He was appointed (with three others) to appraise the estate of William Gillespie 3 April 1805.
- He also provided information for court presentments against other road surveyors for not keeping the roads passable: (1) on the bank of Little Cedar Creek by Shadrick Williams, 24 May 1803; (2) public road from the Copper Springs to Russell Courthouse, 23 April 1805, (3) from the Courthouse up Copper Creek to where John Hackneys precinct begins, 2 September 1806.
- He was paid for 2 days as witnesses for the Commonwealth vs. William Moore 4 September 1805.
- He was paid bounty for killing one old wolf 1 October 1805.
- He served as one of two securities for the will of Lawrence Vanhook, deceased, and was granted a certificate for obtaining probate 2 June 1807.
- He was the plaintiff when he brought suit against John Candler & James Sergent for debt, 1 September 1807.

Personal property had to be paid based on the number of white males in a household. All males over 16 had to be counted. Males had to begin paying taxes once they turned 21.

Russell County, Va., Personal Property Lists On Which Jacob Rasnake Appears
(Names are transcribed as appears in original records)

Date	Name	District Location	Commissioner	# of Tithables
1790	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		1
1791	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Weir, John	1
1792	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Weir, John	1
1793	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		1
1794	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		1
1795	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Webb, Will	1
1796	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Webb, Will	1
1797	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		1
1798	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		1
1799	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		1
1801	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Smith, Henry	2
1802	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Browning, Jesse	2
1810	Rasnack, Jacob	None given		2

In addition to personal property taxes, land taxes had to be paid. The table below presents the Land Taxes paid by Jacob Rasnake.

Russell County, Va., Land Taxes Paid by Jacob Rarsnake (Names are transcribed as appears in original records)

Date	Name	District Location	Commissioner	Land size
1790	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Weir, John	200 acres
1791	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		200 acres
1792	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Weir, John	200 acres
1793	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District		200 acres
1794	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Webb, Will	200 acres
1795	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Webb, Will	200 acres
1796	Raresnake, Jacob	Upper District	Webb, Will	200 acres

The **1815 Russell County Tax List** assess Jacob Rarsnake, Senr., as follows:
"one farm of 54 acres, having thereon one dwelling house of wood, one story, 25 feet by 19 feet, one barn of wood, two stables, one loomhouse, one smoke house, one corn house, one spring house, one blacksmith's shop, valued at \$500".

1820 Russell County, Va. Census (page 21):

Rarsnake, Jacob, Sr.

- Males under 10: 0
- Males 10 and under 16: 0
- Males Between 16 and 18: 1 [**NOTE:** This Male between 16 and 18 is the same male listed in the between 16 and 26 means the child would have been born between is highly likely that this child is Jonas.
- Males 16 and under 26: 1
- Males 26 and under 45: 1 [**NOTE:** This Male between 26 and 45 would 1784, we can use John, Jacob Jr., and Elijah as Jacob, Jr., appear in the 1820 census as heads of category. This also means that he may be older than what we have thought to date.]
- Males 45 and over: 1 [**NOTE:** This Male over 45 is obviously Jacob, Sr.]
- Females under 10: 1 [**NOTE:** This Female under 10 would have been born after 1810. Since we have no birth information for Mary or Nancy, it could be one of them. It is almost impossible that it is Christina because we have one of her own children being born circa 1812.
- Females 10 and under 16: 0
- Females 16 and under 26: 1 [**NOTE:** For this Female between 26 and 45, we can use the same rationale as for the Males above. This would require a birthdate around 1784. Again, since we have no birth information for Mary or Nancy, it could be one of them.

Written by Frieda Patrick Davison (Jan. 2019). Adapted from research by Marie Rasnick Fetzer, Lynn Thompson, and Frieda Patrick Davison.

However, there is also a John Robinson in the 1820 Russell County census. In that household is 1 male under 10, 1 male over 45, 2 females under 10, and 1 female 26 to 45. This John Robinson could be Mary's husband but we don't know for sure. The female in the Rasnake household might also be Margaret as we have only a "circa" date for her. We don't know when she married Samuel Miller and we have no further information on either of them.

- Females 26 and under 45: 0
- Females 45 and over: 0
- Foreigners Not Naturalized: 0
- People in Agriculture: 2 [NOTE: These 2 people in agriculture would be Jacob, Sr., and whichever son is the 26 to 45 age bracket. As stated above, it could be Elijah.]

One problem with this 1820 census is that there is obviously no accounting for Mary (Mollie). We believe she was born around 1764 so she would definitely be over 45 years of age. Where was she?

According to one source, Jacob Rasnick is said to have kept a wine cellar, as was the custom of some Germans. He is also said to have taught German to people in the community who wanted their children to speak their "home" language. This source also claimed to have seen the first *Teacher's Certificate* ever issued in SW Virginia (probably Russell Co.), which was issued to Jacob Rasnick, although it was unclear if this was Jacob, Sr., Jacob, Jr., or some other Jacob down the line. It is not known when Virginia began issuing Teacher Certificate so more research is needed on this fact.

Transcription as written of WILL OF JACOB RASNAKE

Russell County, Virginia

Will Book 4A, Pages 272 - 273

Executed 02 Jan 1827

Virginia, Russell County, November 24th day in the year of Christ 1826.

I Jacob Rasnick senior of said County on this day make my last will and testament in the manner and form following, to wit:

1st that is to say I direct my executor as soon as practable after my decease see on a ceadit as he may think best all my personal property.

2ndly I direct my funeral expenses be by my executor paid out of my estate

3rdly that all my just debts be paid out of my estate

4thly that my beloved wife Mary Rasnick receive of my executor out of my estate a reasonable support dureang her natural life to the house and ground reserved to me & her in the contract between George & David Cowand & myself in the sale of my land to them that my executor give to here as she may need for her own support.

5thly After the death of myself and wife I give to my son Jones Rasnick the sum of fifty dollars cash in addition to what I have allrady given him.

6thly that all the balance of my estate after the death of myself and wife be by my executor after paying all costs of administration and a reasonable allowance to my executor for his truble be eaqually divided between my daughters of the following names Christeana Fuller Nancy Fields and Polly Robinson

7thly and lastly that I apoint and constitute my friend Benjamin Sewell executor of this my last Will and Testament given under my hand and seal this day and date above writen

in the presence of

his

John Sewell Jacob X Rasnick Senr. (Seal)

mark

his

William R Robinson

Mark

Virginia,

At a court held for Russell County the 2nd day of January 1827.

This instrument of writing was exhibited in Court as and for the last Will and Testament of Jacob Rasnick Senr. deceased and proven by the oaths of John Sewell and William Robinson the two subscribing witnesses thereto and ordered to be recorded and on the motion of Benjamin Sewell executor therein named he made oath together with William Nash and Samuel G. Gibson his securities entered into and acknowledged a bond in the penalty of \$2,000 conditioned as the law directs certificate is granted the said Benjamin Sewell for obtaining letters testamentary in due form.

Teste

James P. Carrell C.R.C.

Of all of his sons, only Jonas is mentioned in Jacob's will. According to our current information, Jonas was born in 1803 and would have been about 23 years old when Jacob, Sr., died. We have Jonas' first child being born in 1832, so Jonas may have still been single when his father died. All the other sons were married with their own households. All but one of Jacob's daughters are mentioned in his will. Margaret (wife of Samuel Miller) is not listed in the will. Further research is required to determine possibilities as to why.

Both Molly and Jacob are buried on their home place in Glade Hollow where a marker, dedicated by their descendants on 16 Oct 1977, honors these early pioneers and reads as follows:

*In fond memory of Jacob & Mollie Counts Rasnake, Hessian Revolution War Soldier,
and the parents of all Rasnicks, Rasnakes, and Rasnics. Their children were*

John

Jacob Jr.

Elijah

Written by Frieda Patrick Davison (Jan. 2019). Adapted from research by Marie Rasnick Fetzer, Lynn Thompson, and Frieda Patrick Davison.

*Margaret
Lazarus
Mary
Nancy
Jonas
Christina*

POSTSCRIPT:

In 2017, Rasnake descendant Alfred Lloyd Patrick took Jacob's story and turned it into a novel. This work of fiction is titled *Hessian Soldier, American Pioneer : A March to Destiny*. It can be purchased through the author's website at www.alfredpatrickbooks.com. Hardbacks are \$15; Paperbacks are \$10.