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Using Welsh manorial records to prove identity and origination: Robert Davis/Davies

Stephen B. Hatton

Abstract: The article sets out to discover from where in Wales a nineteenth-century American originated. Because of not being able to match the more commonly used identifiers such as marriage and baptismal data, more infrequently used identifiers are sought and analyzed. This requires a thorough search of U.S.-based records in government and society archives, careful correlation of data, and resolution of conflicting data. These records are used to learn as much as possible about the immigrant to ascertain clues and form hypotheses. The FAN (friends, associates, neighbors) method is used to progress. Researching an ancestor's friends, associates, and neighbors often leads to discovery of evidence that enables one to overcome obstacles encountered when focusing solely on the ancestor. After the immigration year, birth month, and association with the Watkin family are determined, the Watkins are backtracked to Llanerfyl parish in Montgomeryshire, Wales. Focusing on the fact that the immigrant was a farmer who likely rented in his early years in the U.S., the article turns to Welsh estate manorial records to find and prove an identity match using land status, age, immigration year, and association with the Watkins. This leads to the discovery of the specific geographic origin of Robert Davis who after his move lived in Radnor Township in Delaware County, Ohio.

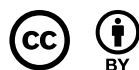
Introduction

According to a U.S. oral family story, passed down from the author's grandmother to his father and aunt, Robert Davis immigrated to the United States from Wales. However, no known U.S. record source documents from where in Wales he came. Research has been conducted to determine birth years and months for Robert, his wife Jane, and their children. The first three and probably four children were born in Wales. None of the baptisms of Robert, Jane, or their four oldest children have been located in Welsh records, including online databases. Also, the marriage record of Robert and Jane has not been located.

Another approach is required to prove the specific location of their residence prior to moving to Radnor Township in Delaware County, Ohio. This article determines the immigration year, establishes a birth month, studies Robert Davies' associates, and learns about his occupation, ownership of land, and religion. A combination of these identifiers results in an identification of one Robert Davies in Wales using manorial records, and leads to a specific geographic location in Wales. These set the stage for future research to determine Robert Davies' parents, and Jane's surname and her parents.

Immigration year

When did Robert Davis migrate to the U.S.? No ship's records have been found to answer this question. No naturalization certificate could be found at the Delaware County Records Center, Delaware, Ohio¹ though there is indication that he became naturalized.² U.S. census records suggest an immigration year range of 1815–20. Robert Davis and family were in Radnor Township, Delaware County, Ohio by 1820 because he appears in the 1820 census there.³ He was not there before June 1815 because in the 1850 census his daughter Elizabeth, living with her parents, is listed as thirty-four and born in Wales.⁴ She was counted twice in that census, the second time in the household of her sister, Gwenn (Davis) Jones, in Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio.⁵ That enumeration, taken in the autumn, lists her as thirty-five years old. Thus, her birthday was between 1 June 1815 and 11 October 1815 (when the later census was taken, and assuming the census taker did not follow



instructions to record data as of June 1). The Columbus, Ohio enumerator overused ditto marks and recorded her birthplace as (dittoed) Ohio, following the children of her sister Gwenn Jones who were listed as born in Ohio.

Tax records support a *terminus ad quem* of 1819 because Robert was taxed for one cow that year.⁶ At that time, tax lists were created for odd-numbered years only. He does not appear in the 1817 tax list (though a David Davis does), suggesting that Robert was not there as of early spring that year, or did not own a horse, cow, or real property, or lived with someone else, perhaps David.⁷

A Bible owned by Robert Davis survives and is in the author's possession (Figures 1 and 2). It is a large-format book written in Welsh, published in Wales in 1816, edited by Congregationalist minister D(avid) Davies, and commonly called Beible Dafis Abertawe.^{8,9} It measures 10½ inches high, 8⅝ inches in width, and 4½ inches thick, and is bound in calf leather. A first edition was published in 1815 in forty parts, and a third edition appeared in 1817. This specimen is a second edition, its covers are warped, scuffed, and split, and its front pages are torn. The inside back cover contains a small carved "R." The top of the inside front cover of the Bible contains the name of Robert Davis written in large cursive letters. The name is repeated in a different hand at the bottom of the inside front cover. On the inside back cover is written "Robert Davis Holy Bible Book." This is evidence that its original owner, Robert Davis, was Welsh. It is reasonable to think he purchased it in Wales, thus providing a *terminus a quo* of 1816 for his immigration year to the United States. Putting these data together, he arrived in the U.S. in 1816 (because he presumably bought the Bible in Wales that year) or 1817 or 1818 or early 1819 (because he was taxed in Radnor Township in 1819, though that tax list was likely prepared based on his 1818 residency). A scrap of paper found inserted in the Bible documents a specific year of arrival in the U.S. The document lists his surviving family members as of 1854 when the list was created. Above the list of names, in handwriting the same as the first "Robert Davis" on the inside front cover of his Bible, are the words:

Robert Davis
Y flwddyn y deuthum o wlad fy nhadau

which may be translated: "The year I came from the land of my fathers."* Following this is written a year, the first two digits of which are crossed out, and the last two digits of which are both crossed out and ink-blotted. Someone, probably a subsequent owner of the Bible and family list, pasted a thick paper backing to this document, apparently intending to preserve the family list which is worn and torn. Forensic analysis yields a specific year of immigration. By holding the document with the attached backing to a bright light cast on the back, it appears at first that the year was 1857, obviously incorrect because the document was created in 1854, and there is ample proof that Robert Davis and his family were in Ohio long before then. Closer examination reveals both the originally written and intended year. The 7 is boldly written as an emphatic correction of an underwritten 4 which upon close scrutiny can be seen. It also appears that there was an unsuccessful attempt to change the third digit from a 5 to a 1, a more difficult task. Thus the writer (Robert Davis) absentmindedly and automatically wrote 1854 because that was the year when the document was created, and then changed the 5 to a 1 and the 4 to a 7. The year Robert intended to write (and tried to correct so that it read) was 1817, but with all the overwriting, crossing out, and ink-blotting, it is not clearly written. Nevertheless,



Figure 1. The Bible owned by Robert Davis.

*This and all translations from Welsh to English herein were made by Fiona Gannon, PhD. Dr. Gannon is a native Welsh speaker, earned a BA in Welsh, and a PhD in dialectology and sociolinguistics. She is a full member of the Welsh Association of Translators and Interpreters, and is qualified as a European Union Welsh interpreter.

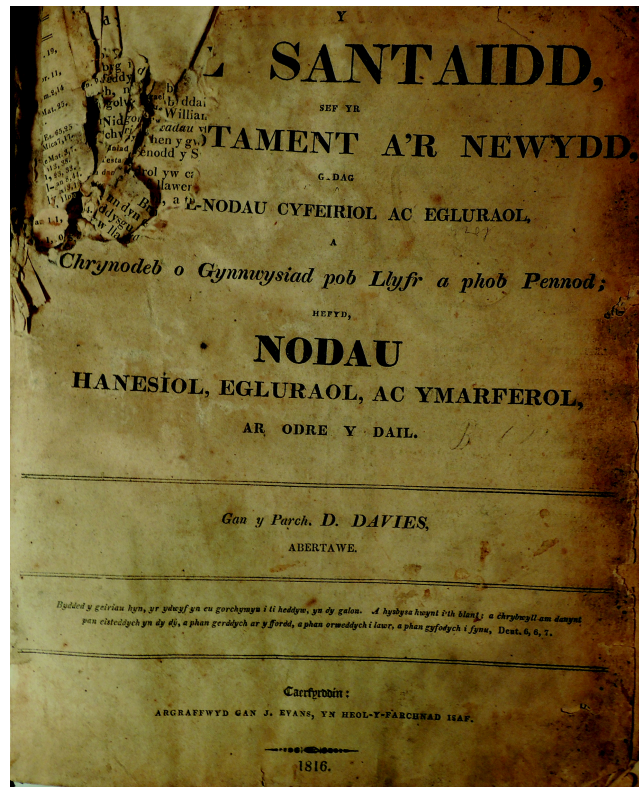


Figure 2. Title page of the Bible.

forensic analysis supports a reading of 1817. This is consistent with the narrowed immigration date range of 1816–19. The conclusion is that this family arrived in the U.S. in 1817.

Robert Davis birth date evidence

In the 1854 family list Robert Davis wrote that he was sixty-eight as of December 1853. He then overwrote both the age and the year so that it read that he was sixty-nine as of December 1854. That made the ages consistent with the others of his family members, all of whom were aged as of their birth month in 1854. This provides evidence that the list was likely written early in 1854. Regardless of the explanation, both writings calculate to a birth month of December 1785. That was Robert Davis' self-reporting, and there is no reason to doubt its accuracy.

The 1820 census counted Robert Davis in the 26–44-year-old range,¹⁰ implying a birth year range between 1774 and 1794, while the 1830 census counted him in the 40–50-year-old range,¹¹ implying a birth year range between 1779 and 1790. Similarly, the 1840 census counted him in the 50–60-year-old range,¹² and thus born 1779–90. The 1850 census reported him as sixty-three years old,¹³ and if one assumes that he was born in December as he wrote, that implies he was born in 1786. The 1860 census put him at seventy-four,¹⁴ and for the same reason implies he was born in 1785. Thus, the 1850 and 1860 censuses support different readings of the 1854 family list. His gravestone reports that he died on 11 February 1870, aged eighty-eight years,¹⁵ and thus born in 1781, assuming that in 1854 he correctly self-reported his birth month but not year. That age of eighty-eight may have been given to the engraver by his son, Watkin, who was the only close relative in Clay County, Indiana where Robert was buried. The best evidence is that he was born in December 1785. Indeed, the sloppy crossing out of the age ironically strengthens the argued interpretation of his birth year because it shows his recalculation required by the year (1854) in which he wrote and which formed the baseline for his statements of ages of the rest of his family. He may have made mistakes in stating the ages of some of his family members but it is less likely that he erred in stating his own birth month and age.

Cows, horses, and land – occupation and financial growth

Cows, horses, occupation

Prior to 1825, property taxes were assessed in Delaware County, Ohio in odd-numbered years. Beginning in 1825, tax lists were created annually. Robert Davis appears in all tax lists 1825–63.¹⁶ In all of those years, he paid tax on personal property, and from 1835–63, also for real

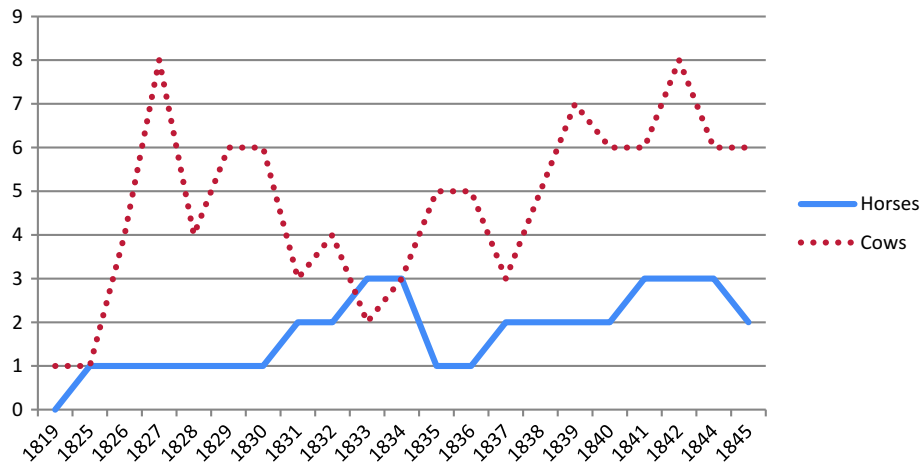


Figure 3. Number of cows and horses owned by Robert Davis over time.

property. Delaware County personal property tax records list the number of horses and cows for heads of household through 1845. In spite of missing and incomplete data for 1821 and 1823, several inferences may be drawn from these data.

The number of cows owned by Robert Davis rose in the mid 1820s, dropped until 1833, and then rose again into the 1840s. The trend (see [Figure 3](#)) suggests that Davis raised cows as an important part of his occupation. The decrease in the number of cows in 1833 is coincident with the short-term increase in horses in 1833–34, and also nearly coincident with his first purchase of land (see “Land” section below). The number of horses he owned began to rise in 1831, reached its zenith in 1833–34, dropped in 1835, and then gradually increased again into the 1840s. While the one horse he owned until 1831 may have been used for transportation, the greater number of horses owned after that date may signal that he farmed plant products, with work horses needed for plowing and cultivating the fields for crops. The short-term drop in the number of cows may have served to finance the increase in horses, and also the purchase of land that occurred in 1834 (see “Land” section below). The land provided pasture for cows, and acreage for growing crops. The 1860 U.S. census confirms that Robert Davis was a farmer.¹⁷

Evidence supports believing that he worked part-time as a carpenter, perhaps constructing or repairing houses but also making furniture. On the obverse of a sheet of paper with a three-line quote of a hymn followed by a line about a boatswain is a bill with his name on it for sawed lumber, as well as a receipt for partial payment.¹⁸ It included 180 feet of oak gale boards and 115 feet of side boards (perhaps for furniture), as well as 496 feet of ash (sometimes used for the bent parts of chairs, furniture, and tool handles) and 506 feet of elm (same uses as for ash). He bequeathed tools to his grandson Robert conditioned on his grandson traveling to Indiana to get them, though the kinds of tools were not specified in his will.¹⁹ In 1851, he moved just to the south-west outskirts of Delhi town right next to William Watkins (see “FAN” section below). Watkin Watkins²⁰ and William Watkins^{21,22} were carpenters, and Robert interacted with both (see “FAN” section below). William Watkins had just completed building his house in the center of Delhi in 1850. The engraved stone above the front door reads “W. Watkin 1850.” The house sits on the north-west corner of Radnor Road and Route 203 in Radnor, Ohio.

A few Radnor buildings from the 1850s still survive, including the International Order of Odd Fellows (1854) (with an engraved stone set in an exterior wall reading “I. O. O. F 1854” and including both the heart in hand and chain [symbolizing friendship, love, and truth] symbols), and a Methodist Episcopal church (1858) (the engraved stone in an exterior wall of the building reads “M. E. Church A. D. 1858”).

It was more convenient for Robert Davis to relocate closer to where he could apply his skills while still owning enough land to continue farming. William Watkins was a master cabinetmaker. He made the doors and woodwork of his house that later became the Delhi House tavern and hotel in Radnor, Ohio.²³

Land

On 8 August 1834, Robert Davis purchased an 83-acre tract of land in range 20, township 6 (Radnor), section 2 in Delaware County, Ohio.²⁴ This land (lot 22) was in the south-west corner of section 2 (part of the military district). Its western boundary was the Scioto River. He purchased it for \$250. Based on research done on the people listed near him in the 1820 U.S. census, this land was near where he first settled.

This lot also bordered land owned to the north by David Davis, whose property is shown on an 1833 plat map (see “David and John Davis, Radnor Township” section below for a discussion about David).

Robert sold that lot on 20 May 1851,²⁵ and on 19 June 1851 bought land in range 20, township 6 (still Radnor), section 4, the west one-half of lot 3, tier 4.²⁶ (There is a series (from one to thirteen) of four like-numbered lots in section 4 that run east to west. Tier 4 is the westernmost [north–south] “column” of those same-numbered lots in section 4.) This was close to the town of Delhi, renamed Radnor in the 1870s.²⁷ (It was still called Delhi in 1875.²⁸) Section 4 is the south-east section of Radnor Township. He sold three-fourths of an acre of this plot to his son, Watkin, on 6 May 1856.²⁹ On the same day he was a witness to a deed of sale of land by his son, Watkin, and daughter-in-law, Rebecca. He was also a witness to a deed of sale of land by Watkin and Rebecca Davis, on 29 August 1856.³⁰

On 20 March 1863, Robert sold land to Evan J. Roberts.³¹ Watkin Davis sold land that same day, also to Evan J. Roberts.³² Twelve days later, on 1 April 1863, Watkin Davis bought 200 acres in Clay County, Indiana.³³ That is where Robert Davis died on 11 February 1870. He is buried in Center Point Cemetery, Center Point, in Clay County, Indiana.³⁴ Robert wrote a will on 31 July 1868, and in it he referenced promissory notes of Evan Roberts to whom he had sold his Radnor Township land in 1863.³⁵

In summary, from 1834 to 1851 he owned 83 acres of land next to the Scioto River, and from 1851 to 1863 he owned 75 acres close to the main township town. From 1817 until he bought land in 1834, he may have rented land or used the land of David and/or John Davis (possibly his brothers or other relatives – see the next section) to support his cattle. Acquisition of land and a general upward trend in the number of cows and horses he owned indicate a modest financial betterment for Robert Davis. His part-time occupation of carpentry also contributed to his income.

David and John Davis, Radnor Township

In the 1820 U.S. census, Robert Davis, David Davis, and John Davis appear in that order one immediately after the other. There is also a second John Davis who appears three names after the first one. David Davis first appeared in Radnor Township records in 1817. He was taxed for one horse and one cow. By 1833, he owned land. As mentioned earlier, Robert purchased land in 1834 that adjoined the land owned by David.³⁶ (According to some of these deeds, David’s wife was named Rachel, and he had a sister named Jane Davis.) According to the 1830 U.S. census, David was between thirty and forty years old which calculates to a birth year between 1789 and 1800. Because he was taxed in 1817 he cannot have been born after 1796, so if the census is correct his birth year range was between 1789 and 1796. No death, probate, or burial record has been found for him. A David Davis Sr. who died on 17 February 1844 at age seventy-five is buried in Radnor Cemetery.³⁷ A David Davis was taxed for personal property beginning in 1846.³⁸ Although several facts support the possibility that Robert and David were brothers or other relatives, nothing known definitively confirms it.

- There is evidence that both arrived in 1817.
- They are listed immediately next to each other in 1820.
- They owned land immediately next to each other in about 1834.
- They are of similar age assuming the census is correct.

A John Davis first appears in Radnor Township tax records in 1819 when he was taxed for two horses, two cows, and a house valued at \$150. Examination of tax records initially appears confusing, but careful examination enables one to reasonably distinguish the two John Davises (see [Table 1](#)). Analysis shows the following:

- The “C” of John C. Davis is not a middle initial but an abbreviation of “cooper.”³⁹ This is how this John was distinguished by the auditor from the other. Note how John Davis the cooper owned three horses and three cows in 1832, the same numbers as John C Davis owned in 1833.
- The “R” of John R. Davis is not his middle initial but an abbreviation of “river.”⁴⁰ This is how this John was distinguished from John the cooper. This John was John-who-lived-by-the-river. Based on this John’s auditor-designated residence, this is the John listed immediately after David Davis in the 1820 census. Robert, David, and John “R” Davis all lived next to the Scioto River. A John “R” Davis is listed in Delhi town in 1861 where he was taxed for personal property at the same time that John “R” Davis was taxed for real property at his usual river location.⁴¹
- With the exception of years when John C or John R appear separately taxed, and also 1829 when two Johns were taxed, John (without an initial) was John-who-lived-by-the-river. John owned zero, one, or two horses, and one or two cows (but three in 1837). John the cooper sometimes owned three horses, and three, four, or eight cows.

- John (without the initial, occupation, or geographic designation) was John-who-lived-by-the-river for 1819, 1825, 1826, 1827, one of the 1829 entries (for one horse and two cows), 1830, 1831, 1832, and 1833. He is John the cooper in 1828, one of the 1829 entries (one horse and four cows), and 1834.

The John nearest to Robert is listed as between thirty and forty years old in 1820, and so born between 1789 and 1800. However, he owned land in 1819 so was born between 1789 and 1798. It should be noted that in 1838, John Davis is taxed with Watkin Watkins for the same property, suggesting a close association.⁴²

- John the cooper was first taxed in 1826. Prior to that, he may not have owned a horse or a cow or it could be that he did but is missing from the incomplete (non-surviving) 1821 and 1823 tax records.
- If this reasoning is correct, the 1819 John is John-who-lived-by-the-river, and thus is a credibly possible relative of Robert. If so, this John owned a house so may have had more money than David or Robert when he arrived in the U. S.

Table 1. John Davis in Radnor Township tax lists.

year	John		John C.		John (cooper)		John R.		John (river)	
	horses	cows	horses	cows	horses	cows	horses	cows	horses	cows
1819	1	2								
1825	0	2								
1826	1	1	0	2						
1827	1	1	1	2						
1828	1	8							1	1
1829	1 & 1	4 & 2								
1830	1	1								
1831	1	2	2	4						
1832	1	2			3	3				
1833	2	1	3	3						
1834	1	2					1	1		
1835			2	2			1			
1836	2	2	2	3			1			
1837	2	3								

Religion

On 23 May 1829, Robert Davis joined a Presbyterian church located in the western part of Radnor Township, not far from where he lived.⁴³ The church was on the Joseph Dunlap farm.⁴⁴ He was admitted upon examination, one of twenty-four such people admitted on that day as well as one other whose membership was restored.⁴⁵ One of those admitted was Benjamin W. Chidlaw, a minister born in Wales who later lectured about early Radnor Township history.⁴⁶ In the written version of that history, Chidlaw stated that twenty-six people joined that church in 1829, and that most had been members of the Welsh Congregational church that disbanded shortly before.⁴⁷ In another version of the story, Chidlaw wrote that he and twenty-four others joined the church.^{48,49} This is strong indirect evidence that Robert Davis belonged to the Welsh Congregational church before he joined the Presbyterian church.

In 1848, a new Presbyterian church was established in the town of Delhi. Robert and his daughter, Elizabeth, joined at that time.⁵⁰ He was an elder in that church.⁵¹ His membership in two Presbyterian churches, probable membership in a Congregational church, possession of a Bible edited by a Congregational minister, and his quotation of a hymn by a Calvinistic Methodist⁵² suggest beliefs similar to Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, and also suggest he was a Nonconformist in Wales. In his will, he bequeathed a large Bible and "Life of Christ Dadudge in one book" to his granddaughter Elizabeth.⁵³ "Dadudge" may have referred to Philip Doddridge, a Nonconformist theologian who wrote many expositions about the Bible, including a gospel harmony and life of Christ.⁵⁴ Thus, there is evidence found in the U.S. that suggests Robert Davis was a Nonconformist when he lived in Wales. His gravestone has engraved on it part of the hymn "Death of the Righteous" by Anna Laetitia Barbauld:

Life's duty done, as sinks the day
 Light from its load the spirit flies;
 While heaven and earth combine to say –
 How blest the righteous when he dies!

Other transactions

In 1834, while living in section 2, he was sworn in as a township supervisor.⁵⁵ In that role, he helped to review a proposed road layout.⁵⁶ He also performed township work in 1835 and 1836.⁵⁷

On 26 March 1838, he declared his intention to naturalize.⁵⁸ Though “issued” is noted in the margin of the Common Pleas journal, no other record of naturalization has been located. No separate document supporting that he completed the naturalization process has been found, though other naturalization certificates in Delaware County from that era have survived.

In 1859, he signed bonds for his son, Watkin Davis, to become the guardian of Phebe Jane, Elizabeth Ann, and Robert, minor children of Robert Davis’ son, Robert Davis Jr., who had died in 1855.^{59,60} Analysis of the signatures on the bonds confirms that the author of the 1854 family list was Robert Davis.⁶¹ Also of interest and relevance is that he used two styles in writing the initial “R” of Robert, a simple flourish with separation of the left vertical part from the other parts of the letter, and a somewhat fancier style, similar to the two styles seen on the 1854 family list, corroborating the conclusion that Robert was the author of that list. His grandchildren Phebe, Elizabeth, and Robert were listed as living with Robert and Jane in the 1860 census.⁶² Phebe Jane was born on 5 November 1844, Elizabeth Ann was born in December 1845, and Robert was born in January 1850.^{63,64} Albert, another son of Robert Jr., chose William Evans as guardian.^{65,66}

Another definitive identity connector to Delaware County is that his Indiana will named “Gwin Jones,” clearly Gwenn named in his 1854 family list, to whom he bequeathed ten dollars.⁶⁷ Also, he named Phebe Jane, Elizabeth Ann, and Robert Davis, the three grandchildren who lived with him in 1860 in Ohio.⁶⁸

Where did the Davises originate?

Country of origin

Evidence is convincing that Robert Davis migrated to the U.S. from Wales. He owned a Welsh Bible and wrote notes in Welsh. He likely attended a church in which Welsh was spoken. He also lived in a community that predominantly comprised Welsh immigrants. Discovering where in Wales he lived prior to his migration to the U.S. is more difficult. No records found in the U.S. directly point to a specific location where he lived prior to 1817. The author did much research in digitized original church registers and relevant bishops’ transcripts looking for data that matched known facts found during record searches in the U.S. These included the marriage of Robert Davies and Jane –?, and baptism records for Robert, Jane, and for each of their older children, Gwenn/Winifred, Robert, and Elizabeth.

Marriages between a Robert Davies and a Jane in Wales in the relevant time frame included on www.findmypast.com were marriages to:

- Jane Jones in Ruabon, Denbighshire, on 12 June 1805;
- Jane Pugh in Llanwddyn, Montgomeryshire, on 8 February 1808;
- Jane Hughes in Ruabon, Denbighshire, on 11 February 1811;
- Jane Davies in Llanfyllin, Montgomeryshire, on 4 February 1811;
- Jane Savage in Wrexham, Denbighshire, on 25 April 1812; and
- Jane Evans in Llanfaelog, Anglesey, on 22 October 1813.

None of these fit.

The author found seventy Robert Davies baptisms on www.findmypast.com from 1781 to 1787. None were born or baptized in December 1785. www.findmypast.com contains twenty-one Janes who were born in June 1784, including Jane Davies who was baptized on 23 June. As noted earlier, a woman by that name married a Robert Davies. However, she may be eliminated because they married in 1811 and because Robert marked (not signed) his name in the Llanfyllin parish marriage register.

The author also searched extensively in a database that indexes Welsh baptisms and marriages. Because the evidence that Robert worshiped in Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches is strong, absence of his children’s baptisms may be explained by his Nonconformist beliefs and practices in Wales but also perhaps by a loss of records.

FAN

FAN (friends, associates, neighbors) analysis⁶⁹ shows association with some Watkins family members, particularly William Watkins. When Robert’s minor orphaned grandson chose William Evans as guardian, William Watkins was one of those who signed the bond in 1859.^{70,71} This financial obligation signals a possible close relation to Robert Davis. Eight years earlier, in 1851, Robert Davis bought land immediately next to William Watkins.⁷² Both properties were in range 20, township 6, section 4, lot 3, and tier 4. William owned the east part, and Robert bought the west part. Robert may have moved there to live close to William Watkins. In 1834, Evan Watkins, Robert Davis, and two others met to review a proposed road plan.⁷³ When Robert viewed a road in 1835, Watkin Watkins was a township trustee.⁷⁴ Ann Watkins joined the same

Presbyterian church on the same day as Robert, in 1829.⁷⁵ Jacob Watkins, James Watkins, Roger Watkins, and Watkin Watkins are all on the same 1820 census page as Robert.

How to determine where in Wales the Robert Davis family resided

Because none of the commonly used identifiers (for example, baptisms of Robert, Jane or their older children) can be matched to data in the Welsh genealogy databases (www.findmypast.com, www.familysearch.org, www.ancestry.com and www.library.wales/), less commonly used identifiers need to be used. The more significant ones are:

1. Robert arrived in the U.S. in 1817, so he left Wales in 1816 or 1817. Therefore, he was not in Wales after 1817 (this is a requirement to dovetail with his 1817 arrival in the U.S.).
2. He was associated with the Watkins (plausibly through a marriage between a Watkin and a Davies), and specifically with the Watkins who later lived in Radnor Township, Delaware County, Ohio, or their parents.
3. William Watkins in Radnor Township, Delaware County, Ohio was born in either 1794 or 1795 according to the 1850⁷⁶ and 1860 censuses.⁷⁷ An associated William Watkin in Wales must have a consistent birth date.
4. A candidate should reasonably match with the approximate age of Robert (born in December 1785, married in c.1809 based on the birth of his first known child in June 1810⁷⁸).
5. Hypotheses based on known U.S. events are that Robert was a renter, farmer (perhaps raising cows) and carpenter (perhaps associated with another carpenter), and Nonconformist.

Watkins

A program booklet for an 1898 Watkins reunion in Radnor, Ohio states that this Watkins family emigrated from Llanerfyl parish in Montgomeryshire, Wales.⁷⁹ According to it, Watkin Watkins came to the U.S. in 1801, settled in Philadelphia in 1801, and moved to Radnor Township in 1806. Thomas Watkins arrived in the U.S. in 1818, settled in Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, and then moved to Radnor Township in 1822. Research confirms the Llanerfyl parish origin (see [Figure 5](#) for a partial Watkin family tree). William, one of Robert Davis' close associates in Delaware County, Ohio, was born on 29 April 1795 and baptized on 30 April 1795 in Llanerfyl parish.⁸⁰ That birth year is consistent with his age data from the 1850 and 1860 Ohio censuses (identifier 3 above). William's parents were Evan Watkin and Margaret (Davies) Watkin, who were married in 1794 in Llanerfyl.⁸¹ If Margaret was related to Robert, that would explain the Watkin–Davis connection. Evan, baptized on 30 August 1767 in Llanerfyl,⁸² was a son of another Evan Watkin. The elder Evan Watkin, baptized on 13 January 1744/45 in Llanerfyl,⁸³ married Elizabeth Davies in Llanerfyl on 18 May 1767.⁸⁴ She is another possible explanation for the Watkin–Davies connection.

Evan and Elizabeth (Davies) Watkin had two children who eventually migrated to Radnor Township, Delaware County, Ohio. One was Thomas mentioned above. He was baptized on 21 May 1769 in Llanerfyl,⁸⁵ married Ann Thomas on 14 May 1800 in Carno, Montgomeryshire (the marriage record says he resided in Llanerfyl),⁸⁶ and died in Radnor, Ohio on 5 August 1824.⁸⁷ Ann Thomas may have been the Ann Watkins who was admitted to a Presbyterian church in Delaware County, Ohio on the same day as Robert Davis. The other was Watkin (also mentioned above) who was baptized on 28 November 1772 in Llanerfyl,⁸⁸ married Elizabeth Evans in Llanerfyl on 23 May 1796,⁸⁹ and died on 13 February 1837 in Radnor, Ohio.⁹⁰ A Watkin Watkins reportedly arrived in Radnor in 1817,⁹¹ the same year as Robert Davis. Margaret (Davies) Watkin reportedly migrated to Radnor Township with her children after her husband, Evan, apparently died in Wales.⁹²

Evidence provides a specific geographic location for Evan Watkin and Elizabeth (Davies) Watkin. They lived in Cenewill (sometimes spelled Cynniwill, Cyniwill, Kynewill, Kynewyll, or Kenewyll) Township of manor Caereinion Uwchcoed (sometimes spelled Uchcoed). The larger (super) manor was Caereinion, which was part of the barony of Powys, now part of Montgomeryshire.⁹³ From a religious organization perspective, it was within the parish of Llanerfyl which was part of the diocese of St. Asaph.

The proof follows:

Evan Watkin is listed from 1808 Easter term through 1811 Easter term. Beginning with 1811 Michaelmas term and continuing through 1816 Easter term, Elizabeth Watkin, wo [widow] is listed second. Thus Evan and Elizabeth Watkin were married. The rentals corroborate the identity of the married couple. In 1808 through 1811, Evan Watkin appears, renting a house, garden, and two enclosures on y drim Common. In the 1812 rentals, Evan Watkin's unnamed widow appears, renting the same real properties. In the 1814 rental, Evan's widow was named as Elizabeth Watkin, and she appears renting the same real properties.

A search of Llanerfyl marriages in this time frame finds just one Evan Watkin who married an Elizabeth. That is the marriage previously mentioned, between Evan Watkin and Elizabeth Davies on 18 March 1767. Evan Watkin appears on the Cenewill court roll inhabitants list as early as 1772 Easter term.⁹⁴

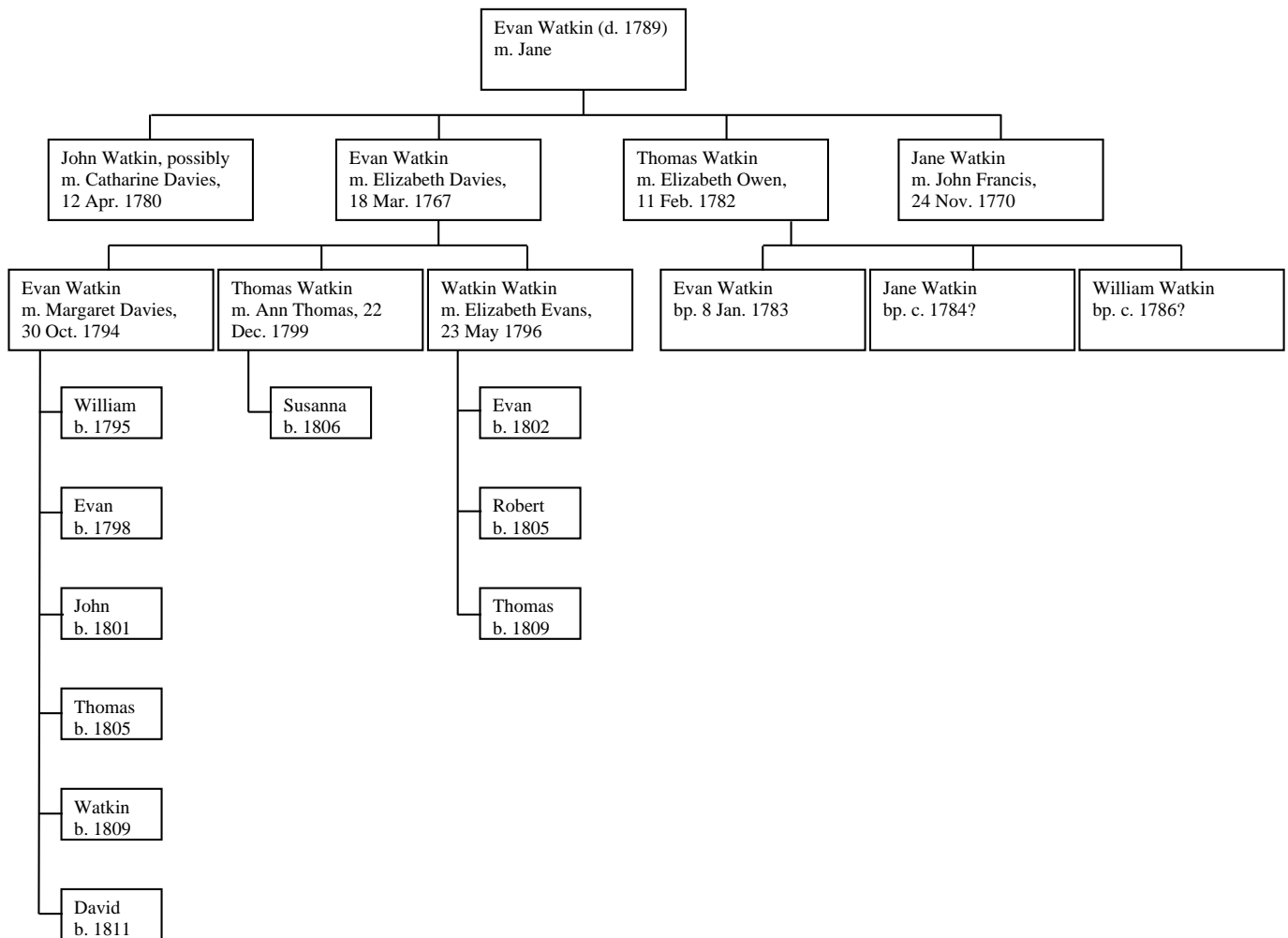


Figure 4. Partial Watkin family tree.

Further strengthening the identity of this Watkin family is the inclusion in Cenewill Township of Thomas Watkin from 1815 Michaelmas term⁹⁵ through 1819 Easter term.⁹⁶ There were two Thomas Watkins. One was a son of Evan and Jane Watkin.⁹⁷ The other was a son of Evan and Elizabeth Watkin. The second of these, baptized in Llanerfyl on 21 May 1769, married Ann Thomas on 22 December 1799, moved to the U.S. in 1818, and died in Radnor, Ohio in 1824. This Thomas may be eliminated as the Cenewill resident because the Cenewill resident lived in Cenewill in 1819 (he was tabulated in the Easter 1818 court roll,⁹⁸ did not appear in the 1818 Michaelmas court roll,⁹⁹ but reappeared in 1819 [as petty constable who signed the presentment]).¹⁰⁰ The Thomas Watkin listed after John Watkin from 1815 on was a brother of Evan Watkin who married Elizabeth Davies. Three sons of the Evan Watkin who died in 1789 (John, Evan, and Thomas)¹⁰¹ apparently lived in Cenewill Township. This is bolstered by a baptism record. Although Thomas married (Elizabeth Owen) in Llanfair Caereinion (on 11 February 1782 in the parish of the bride), he lived in Llanerfyl parish.¹⁰² One of his children, the first-born Evan, was baptized on 8 January 1783 in Llanerfyl.¹⁰³

Robert Davies in Wales – analysis of identifiers

Robert Davies lived in the same sparsely populated Cenewill Township as some of the Watkins including Evan and Elizabeth (Davies) Watkin, John Watkin, and Thomas Watkin. He rented two enclosures on Moel Bentwrch (also spelled Pentwrch and Pentyrch, and roughly translated as “boar’s head hill”). (A *moel* is a round hill, bald promontory, or bald conical hill.)

This satisfies the requirement that he be associated with the Watkins in Wales (identifier 2). He lived in the same township at the same time as Evan Watkin (married to Elizabeth Davies), progenitor of the Radnor, Ohio Watkins, and it is possible that his relation to the Watkins was through Margaret (Davies) Watkin or Elizabeth (Davies) Watkin. Consistent with the frequent role played by women in binding families together in a social network,¹⁰⁴ it is possible that the close association is explained by Robert’s wife, Jane, if she was a Watkin (but that is speculation).

Beginning year of rental

Based on surviving rental records, Robert Davies began renting two enclosures in the second half of 1807. The 1807 rental records are missing, but the 1808 rental states “not before in the rentals,” and he was in arrears by four shillings due Michaelmas of 1807.¹⁰⁵ At that time, the annual rental was eight shillings,¹⁰⁶ thus indicating his rental began in the second half of 1807. The beginning year of his rental is consistent with his known age. The best U.S. evidence supports a birth in December 1785, so his rental began at the age of twenty-one because his rental preceded Michaelmas 1807. If he had been born in December of 1786, he would only have been twenty. Land purchases and rents could only be contracted by someone who reached the age of majority, or twenty-one.¹⁰⁷ This is another indirect support for a birth year of 1785 (identifier 4). The fact that he rented rather than owned real property also confirms the hypothesis formed based on his rental (or living with someone else) of land in the U.S. for his first seventeen years there (identifier 5). The court rolls indicate his enclosures were wasteland (economically unproductive land), often used for pasture. Renting these enclosures is consistent with his occupation of farmer and raising cows (identifier 5), and consistent with his possession of cows in the U.S.

One might think that he began renting in 1807 not because he turned twenty-one then but because enclosures were becoming increasingly rented at that time. During that time, enclosure laws were being enacted at an increasing rate in England and Wales.^{108,109,110} The overall objective for the increasing use of enclosures of arable fields around towns and of common land and wasteland was to increase the efficiency of farms.^{111,112} This changed the use of land and made it more profitable. The net effect was to decrease the availability of wasteland. A subsidiary reason for enclosing wasteland was to increase revenue to the lord of the manor. There was a gradual increase during the very late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century of waste rentals and amercedments for unrented waste use (use of wasteland without permission, or of trespass on pastures of the manorial lord). (There are even cases in which waste enclosures were both rented and amerced!) However, in the years 1800–15, there was not a dramatic increase in enclosure rentals in Cenewill Township (Table 2).

Table 2. Enclosure rentals in Cenewill Township.

Year	Number of people who rented property	Number of enclosures rented
1800	4	2 ¹¹³
1805	5	2 ¹¹⁴
1810	7	6 ¹¹⁵
1815	7	7 ¹¹⁶

The starting year (1807) of Robert Davies’ rentals is better explained by his attainment of the age of majority than by expanded use of enclosure rentals. However, Robert Davies appears in the Easter 1802 court roll inhabitant list (between David Jones and Thomas Jones)¹¹⁷ and continued using an enclosure of 6½ acres of waste for which he was amerced.¹¹⁸ The court rolls for 1798 through 1801 are missing so it is not known when he was first listed as an inhabitant. At that time, an adult could be listed as an inhabitant and amerced, but males became an adult at sixteen years old.^{119,120} This fact has been repeated in studies of Lowestoft,¹²¹ Hereford,¹²² Kirtlington,¹²³ Cossington,¹²⁴ Stonehouse,¹²⁵ and Nottinghamshire.¹²⁶ If Robert Davies was born in December 1785, he would have turned sixteen in December 1801, so the 1802 court roll is consistent with that.

Ending year of rental

It is necessary to determine if the end of his rental fits with his 1817 arrival in the U.S. Analysis of the rental records shows that Robert Davies made a payment of twelve shillings in 1815 to cover the eight shillings due for 1814 and the four shillings due for the first half of 1815.¹²⁷ That is the last cash payment he made for the two enclosures.¹²⁸ He owed four shillings for the second half of 1815,¹²⁹ and another eight shillings for 1816.¹³⁰ The rental records for 1817 are missing. The 1818 rentals show he was one pound in arrears as of the previous Lady Day,¹³¹ indicating he made no cash payment in 1817. By Lady Day of 1818, he was in arrears one pound eight shillings¹³² and by 1820 even further behind.¹³³ The 1820 entry notes that “Thos Lewis is in possession.”¹³⁴ The 1821 entry states “wrote to Tho Lewis the occupier.”¹³⁵ These entries in Wales help narrow his departure date (from these rentals) to 1815–20. This provides a wide window for the departure year but that is because the rental records served the role of accounting books, not censuses, though they did record the real property that was rented. To determine residence, one must consult the court rolls.

Court rolls provide a clearer picture of the end of Robert Davies’ occupancy of the enclosures as well as who lived in the township, which non-residents owned and rented property, and indirect evidence of the relative locations of residents. In the early years of his rentals (1808–10), he was the third named inhabitant following Evan Evans and Evan Watkin.¹³⁶ In the later years, Evan Watkin was replaced by his widow, Elizabeth.¹³⁷ (In 1812 this file lists “Evan Watkins wo” [widow]; in 1814 file RL38, p. 40, lists “Elizabeth Watkin wo.”) The court rolls show that the last time Robert Davies was included as a resident was the Easter session (7 May) 1816.¹³⁸ His name was written in the inhabitants list of Michaelmas (22 October) 1816 but it was crossed out.¹³⁹ This may indicate he left not too long before that date. This dovetails very well with the arrival in the U.S in 1817 (identifier 1).

Two Robert Davieses in Cenewill Township or one?

Robert Davies is listed third in the Cenewill court roll inhabitants lists from 1808 Easter term through 1816 Easter term. There is also a Robert Davies listed ninth from 1808 Easter term through 1811 Easter term and eighth in 1811 Michaelmas term. This would seem to support concluding that there were two men by that name there and then. However, closer analysis shows that there was only one man by that name there and then.

In the 1808 Easter term¹⁴⁰ through the 1811 Easter term,¹⁴¹ two enclosures were listed for Robert Davies in the court rolls. They were listed separately and non-consecutively. One was for six acres and the other was for one acre. It is certain that these two enclosures were associated with the same Robert Davies because the second one logged specifies the “sd [said] Robert Davies,”¹⁴² identifying the second mention of him to the first mention of him. In the 1811 Michaelmas term court roll, both enclosures were written but both were crossed out.¹⁴³ From 1812 Easter term¹⁴⁴ through 1816 Michaelmas term,¹⁴⁵ no enclosures for Robert Davies appeared in the amercement log. Thus the reduction from two Robert Davieses to one Robert Davies coincided with the disappearance of enclosures in the presentments of the views of frankpledge.¹⁴⁶ The only reason two Robert Davieses appeared in the inhabitants 1808–11 is that one Robert Davies used two somewhat geographically dispersed enclosures (or perhaps he resided in one and worked the other or resided away from his enclosures).

This conclusion is corroborated by examining the rentals. From 1807–18, Robert Davies (one person) was charged for the rental of two enclosures. The conclusion is that in the time frame of interest there was one Robert Davies in Cenewill Township in spite of his being listed twice for a few years.

Data analysis: what the sequence of names in the rentals and court rolls reveals

For any given court session (Easter or Michaelmas for each year) and township within a manor, the names listed in the rentals do not coincide with the names listed in the inhabitants lists in the court leet view of frankpledge, and court baron presentments (combined in court rolls for some of the relevant years). The rentals list only those who rented (enclosures, tenements, etc.) land or real estate in the township regardless of their residence. The court rolls list inhabitants (headed by that title) whether they are freeholders, leaseholders, or copyholders.¹⁴⁷ They also separately list some non-residents who had an interest in township real property.

The organization and order of data in the court rolls vary by manor.¹⁴⁸ The Cenewill court rolls have a consistent organization across years naming Robert Davies (1808–16). By comparing locations specified in the rentals, in a survey with evaluations,¹⁴⁹ and in maps of the period,¹⁵⁰ one can determine that the sequence of the renters in the rentals and inhabitants in the court rolls was generally based on geographic location.

The rentals list those accountable for rent payments more or less from west to east. The court roll inhabitants are sequenced more or less from east to west. East to west for Cenewill begins with Pen y Foel, Moel Bentwrch, and Coed y Bank, continues with Pen y Fridd and nearby locations, and ends with Pen Rhos and Gardden. For example, in the Easter term 1808 court roll inhabitants list, Evan Watkin is the second person listed, and Robert Davies is the third person listed.¹⁵¹ By contrast, the 1808 rentals list Evan Watkin last, and Robert Davies is the next to the last one listed.¹⁵² The sequence is almost the reverse between the rentals and court rolls.

This indicates that the order follows relative geographic proximity of residence. Turning again to the Easter 1808 court rolls,¹⁵³ the people geographically closest to Robert Davies (listed third) were Evan Evans (listed first), Evan Watkin (listed second), and John Watkin (listed fourth). All except John Watkin rented. As mentioned, Robert Davies was located on Moel Bentwrch. He rented two enclosures: one of six acres and the other one acre. The fifth person in the lists was Catherine Watkin.

In the Michaelmas 1815 court roll, the order of the first four inhabitants is Evan Evans, Elizth Watkin wo [widow], Robert Davies, and John Watkin.¹⁵⁴ Robert Davies was not amerced at that session. The rental and court roll data show that the association between Evan (or Elizabeth Davies) Watkin and Robert Davies is closer than just living in the same township – they lived closest to each other from 1807 to 1816. This strengthens identifier 2.

It was documented earlier that William Watkins and Watkin Watkins were carpenters in Radnor Township in Delaware County, Ohio, and also that William’s parents were Evan Watkin and Margaret Davies. The marriage bond of Evan Watkin and Margaret Davies was posted by Evan Watkin and his brother Watkin Watkin. That marriage bond specifies that both Evan Watkin and Watkin Watkin were carpenters.^{155,156} This further corroborates the identity of the Watkins in Radnor Township in Ohio with the Watkins in Llanerfyl parish in Wales. But it also suggests the possibility that Evan, father of carpenter brothers Evan and Watkin, may also have been a carpenter. This father Evan Watkin married Elizabeth Davies and was the geographically closest neighbor of Robert Davies (as shown in [Figure 4](#) above). This raises the possibility that Robert Davies learned the trade of carpentry from the Watkins, and this is consistent with his part-time occupation of carpentry (identifier 5 above).

A closer look at more of his neighbors

Who were his neighbors? (This was a thinly populated rural township with no substantial towns, so “neighbors” is a relative term.) Robert Davies was listed third from 1808 Easter term through 1816 Easter term (and it has already been shown that he rented by 1807 Michaelmas).

Evan Watkin is listed second (immediately before Robert Davies from 1808 to 1811, as discussed earlier). Thus, Robert Davies was listed closest geographically to Evan Watkin who married Elizabeth Davies, both progenitors of the Watkins who emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Radnor Township, Delaware County, Ohio. The association of Robert Davis with the Watkins in Ohio began in Cenewill Township of manor Caereinion Uwchcoed. This Evan Watkin, as mentioned above, was baptized on 13 January 1744/45, a son of Evan and Jane Watkin.¹⁵⁷

The Evan Watkin Sr. who married Jane wrote a will in 1788 that was proved in 1789.¹⁵⁸ In that will, he named four children: John, Evan, William Thomas (sometimes called just Thomas in the will), and Jane. He wrote in his will that he lived at Cai'r Bache, Llanerfyl.¹⁵⁹ In 1771 Evan Watkin is listed immediately after Evan Erdnyfed who lived on a tenement called Caer Ty Bach in Cenewill Township.¹⁶⁰ Evan Watkin is listed immediately before Griffith Evans who lived on a tenement called Cae bach.¹⁶¹ A plat map of the township shows the location of Caer Bache.¹⁶² Therefore, this Cenewill Township Evan Watkin is identical to the Evan Watkin who wrote a will in 1788.

If one examines Llanerfyl marriages of John Watkin in the time range reasonable for a son of Evan Watkin (who died in 1789), one discovers two marriages. In one, a John Watkin married Cathrine [sic] Davies on 12 April 1780 in Llanerfyl parish.¹⁶³ In the other, a John Watkin of Llanerfyl parish married Jane Gittins in Llanfair Caereinion on 19 June 1781.¹⁶⁴ To both were born children in Llanerfyl parish in the 1780s, so it is not known which was the son of Evan Watkin (who died in 1789). A John Watkin is listed immediately after Robert Davies in court rolls. This John may have been a brother of the Evan who married Elizabeth Davies. John Watkin's name is followed by Catherine Watkin. If this Catherine was the wife of John, this was the couple who married in 1780, and that would suggest that three consecutively listed households included an adult Davies. That would make this not only a cluster of Watkins but also a cluster of Davieses.

The person listed first (before Evan Watkin) in the inhabitant lists was Evan Evans. Only two Evan Evanses married in Llanerfyl in the time frame in question. An Evan Evans married a Jane Roberts on 19 June 1793,¹⁶⁵ and an Evan Evans married a Jane Davies on 1 December 1800.¹⁶⁶ There are two reasons for believing that the Cenewill Evan Evans was the latter one. First, Evan Evans does not appear in the court rolls until 1808.¹⁶⁷ He does not appear in the 1802 Easter court roll.¹⁶⁸ (Unfortunately, 1802 Michaelmas through the 1807 Michaelmas court rolls are not available for Caereinion Uwchcoed manor.) Second, this Jane Davies was a daughter of Evan Davies who resided just two miles away in Tanglws, Coedtalog Township.¹⁶⁹ This suggests that possibly four consecutive households in Cenewill Township included an adult Davies. Because the aim of this article is to establish the specific geographic origin of Robert Davies and not his parentage, it will not follow up on the relations of these Davieses.

Conclusion

All of this analysis makes a convincing argument that Robert Davis emigrated to the U.S. in 1817 from Cenewill Township, Caereinion Uwchcoed manor, barony of Powys, in present-day Llanerfyl parish, Montgomeryshire, Wales. The argument is complex and requires much care because the usual identifiers such as baptismal dates are not available. Instead, a step-by-step analysis to prove age consistency, departure date, and close association with the Watkins, as well as association with Davieses who were married to Watkins, enables the proof. Robert Davis was a farmer and carpenter, renter, and Nonconformist. This is important because now that Robert Davis/Davies' specific geographic origin is found, the search for his parents and for his wife's surname may be undertaken with more focus. Welsh estate manorial records play a key role in enabling proof of identity even though no direct evidence links to a geographic origin or to parents. However, it sometimes requires detailed analysis of data.

DNA evidence thus far has not resulted in a definitive answer about Robert Davis' geographic origin. An mtDNA test submitted by a known matrilineal (umbilical) descendant has thus far not helped identify Jane's ancestry. A Y-DNA test submitted by a now-deceased known patrilineal descendant of Robert Davies has thus far not resulted in anything other than that there was a connection between the Davieses and Owens. An ancestor of a triangulated atDNA match lived in Llanerfyl parish and in Cenewill Township. That is intriguing but not definitive because of the difficulty of drawing specific inferences so far removed in time using atDNA match data.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen B. Hatton has published articles in print and online genealogy journals. Steve is interested in methodology used to solve difficult family history problems. He lives in Ohio, USA.

Email: StephenHatton@archeopath.info