



## Not So Plain Jane

**B**enjamin Franklin might have had it right when it came to spelling. Then again, maybe not.

The esteemed Franklin proposed a spelling system based on how things were actually pronounced. *For instans, this sentens wood be ritten lik this.* Just think what a boon this would be to genealogists with difficult names—they would all be spelled the same. Or would they?

You folks with Jones and Brown in your family tree admittedly have it tough. But there are equally contentious last names. Try this phonetically spelled name: REE-kard. Old Ben would have spelled it Reekard. Except...sometimes it's pronounced REE-kart. And...some ancestors liked a softer "g" sound, as in REE-gart, while others apparently disliked the hard sound, so they pronounced it REE-hard. And...then there were those who knew of the name's national heritage, and spelled it like the Germans.

My third-great grandmother's name initially appeared rather plain; just plain old Jane Crawford. Of course, that was her married name. When I started to search for her parents, Jane made it particularly difficult to find them. Her last name was apparently pronounced REE-kard, but was never spelled the same. The short basics about Jane are that she was born 19 May 1831 in York County, Pennsylvania;<sup>1</sup> married William Crawford 19 January 1855 in New London, Iowa,<sup>2</sup> delivered eight healthy children, and lived to the ripe old age of 74, dying 22 June 1905 in Des Moines County, Iowa.<sup>3</sup>

Age	Name	Sex	Color	Married	Single	Widow	Divorced
79	John Reecherde	m	w				
47	John	m	w				
45	Mary	f	w				
17	Elizabeth	f	w				
16	William	m	w				
14	George	m	w				
12	John	m	w				
8	John	m	w				
6	George	m	w				
3	John	m	w				

The family of John “Reecherde” appears in 1850 York County, Pennsylvania, with a 79-year-old man called John “Recherde,” giving strong evidence that the census taker took liberties at spelling the family surname.

Jane’s maiden name can be found on several marriage records of her children. On her son Frank’s marriage license, her last name is Record;<sup>4</sup> her son James’ license, Ricker;<sup>5</sup> her son John’s, Regard.<sup>6</sup> On the death record of her daughter, Serena Spahr, she is listed as Reickard.<sup>7</sup>

Checking the 1850 or 1860 York County census is not particularly useful either. The spellings include Richard, Reherd, Recherd, Reechard, Recherd, Richart, Riechart, Richard, and Reichard.

Two secondary sources finally enabled me to take the search forward. Jane garners a mention in a biography on her husband, William Crawford, in a *Portrait and Biographical Album of Des Moines County, Iowa*. Her parents are noted as John and Lydia (Wymiller) Regard. In addition, it mentions her “grandfather, John Regard, a resident of the Pennsylvania colony before the Revolutionary days, and...a soldier in the Revolutionary War.”<sup>8</sup>

Jane B.	3	7									
Jane	3	11									
Jane	4	16									
Jane	19	7									

The first appearance of Jane “Riechart” is in the 1850 York County, Pennsylvania, census, enumerated with the Turtle family.

4. Age next birthday, 27 years. Color, White race, White

5. Place of Birth, Union Twp. Near Burlington Pa

6. Father's Name, Wm Crawford - (Deceased)

7. Mother's Maiden Name, Jane Ricker

James H. Crawford's mother is listed as “Jane Ricker” on his marriage return to wife Maud E. Moore on 31 December 1890.

Then, thanks to some local research by a volunteer at the Des Moines County Genealogical Society, Jane's obituary gave additional information. Now it's her great-grandfather, John Richard, promoted to colonel, who is the Revolutionary War hero. But it's her surviving siblings that really provided the necessary search information: Mrs. George Bercher of Marietta, Pennsylvania, Mrs. Jacob Althouse of Cross Roads, Pennsylvania, and Mr. Jacob Richard of Santa Ana, California.<sup>9</sup>

My next step was to see if I could find Jane's family in York County, Pennsylvania, in the 1850 census. I had to decide how I was going to search for the surname REEKARD. Using all the spellings I had acquired, three things were true in all names:

- The surname begins with “R.”
- There are two syllables.
- There is another “r” in the last syllable, probably, but not certainly, followed by a “d” or “t.”

Similar to the Soundex system, the name can be written R\*-\*r\*, with the hyphen representing the second syllable and the asterisks representing an unknown letter or letters. Any name with this pattern had to be considered.

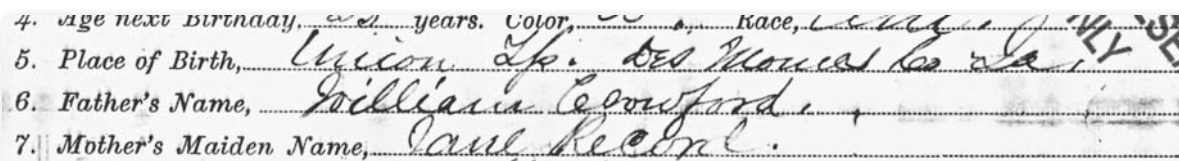
Though I didn't think I had a lot, I was ready to search the 1850 census again. This was no longer a

hopeless task because I now had the first names of Jane's parents, John and Lydia, and one brother, Jacob. Jane was not yet married, about 18 years of age. I was looking for a family that would include John, Lydia, Jane, Jacob, and possibly two or more sisters.

Only one family exists in York County with three of the names, though Jane is missing. John Richerd, age 47, is enumerated with Lydia, 43, Mary Ann, 17, Celinda, 16, Margaret, 14, Jacob, 12, John, 11, William, 8, Joseph, 6, and George W., 7/12.<sup>10</sup> This meets the criteria for at least two sisters, and as an added bonus, the family is enumerated with another John, age 79, perhaps our Revolutionary soldier.

Despite using numerous searches in Ancestry.com's census records I could not find a Jane R\*-\*r\* until I undertook the line-by-line search of York County's 1850 census. Surprisingly, I only found one Jane R\*-\*r\* in York County—an 18-year-old female, Jane Richart, born in Pennsylvania and enumerated with the Turtle family in York Borough.<sup>11</sup> The age—and lack of any other Janes in the census—indicates that this is probably our girl. Unfortunately though, it becomes somewhat irrelevant that this is our Jane, because she is not enumerated with *her* family. In fact, it is a mystery why Jane would be with this family at all.

Still, having now determined where Jane's family comes from, I needed to connect Jane to John and Lydia Richerd. The 1860 census is absent John, but Lydia is found with two sons, Joseph and Wesley.<sup>12</sup> Presumably, both Johns in the 1850 census have died. Searching



The 28 December 1887 marriage record of Frank W. Crawford and his bride Kittie E. Hathaway lists Frank's mother as "Jane Record."

through York County will books shows two Johns with R\*-\*r\* format with wills probated between 1850 and 1860: John Reahard in 1854 and John Reacker in 1857. The 1854 John is Lydia's husband, his will noting daughters Jane, Elizabeth, Mary and Margaretta, and sons, Jacob, John and William. In addition, the will also makes provision for his father, still living at the writing of his will: "It is my will that if my father wishes to live with them or live with my widdow, and the[y] can agree to live together, that he shall have his home with them." The will solidly links Jane to the 1850 Richerd family.

Additional information can now be collected on this name-changing family. A John Regeart and Lydia Reherd have tombstones near each other at Sadler's Church, a Lutheran cemetery in Hopewell Township, York County. Other surnames meeting the R\*-\*r\* criteria at the cemetery include Rehart and Reheard. The cemetery is also filled with Winemillers, Jane's maternal family line.<sup>14</sup>

Additional research has supported the connection of Jane to John and Lydia, but I was still left with one unanswered question—why are there so many spellings for Jane's surname? Jane does sign her name as her husband's executrix on his probate proceedings, so she's not illiterate.<sup>15</sup> The REE-kards are of German ancestry like the Winemillers, who easily connected to their German roots of Weihmüller. The three-volume set of *York County, Pennsylvania Church Records of the 18th Century* offered hope to me because it was filled with Germans whose names resembled my REE-kards. But a quick tally of surnames was almost as inconclusive as nineteenth-century records, with Riegert and Reigert being the most commonly used of fourteen different spellings.<sup>16</sup>

As relieved as I was to have made it through this research blockage, I'm still left with a dilemma—how

do I spell Jane's maiden name in my genealogy software program? 🌲

## Notes

1. Tombstone, Aspen Grove Cemetery, Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa.
2. Biographical Review of Des Moines County, Iowa (Chicago: Hobart Publishing Company, 1905), 397–98.
3. Jane Crawford Obituary, Burlington Hawk-Eye, 23 November 1905.
4. Marriage Return for Frank W. Crawford and Kittie E. Hathaway, Des Moines County Clerk, Iowa.
5. Marriage Return for James H. Crawford and Maude E. Moore, Des Moines County Clerk, Iowa.
6. Marriage Return for John R. Crawford and Lillie Gearhart, Des Moines County Clerk, Iowa .
7. "Burnett Wallen Burial Records—Book #4 (1924–27)," Des Moines County Genealogical Society Quarterly 25 (no. 1): 7).
8. Portrait and Biographical Album of Des Moines County, Iowa (Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1888), 622.
9. Jane Crawford Obituary, Burlington Hawk-Eye, 23 November 1905.
10. 1850 U.S. Census, Hopewell Township, York County, Pennsylvania, p. 169b, line 18, family 279.
11. 1850 U.S. Census, South Ward York Borough, York County, Pennsylvania, p. 47a, line 30, family 162. Reversing the search in Ancestry.com produced "Sam" Richart in Jane's place in the census. Only a careful analysis of the handwriting showed me that I was right with Jane.
12. 1860 U.S. Census, Hopewell Township, York County, Pennsylvania, p. 372, line 36, family 474.
13. York County, Pennsylvania Will Books, vol. U, p. 194.
14. Elmer W. Orwig, Sadler's Lutheran Church, 1789–1989 (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1989), 176.
15. Probate of Estate of William Crawford, Des Moines County Circuit Court, Iowa.
16. Marlene Strawser Bates and F. Edward Wright, York County, Pennsylvania Church Records of the 18th Century, (Westminster, Maryland: Family Line Publications, 1991), p. 13.