



## 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>

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Color	Married	Single	Widow	Divorced
270	John Reecherde	m	79					
271	Lydia	f	45					
272	Mary Ann	f	17					
273	Elizabeth	f	16					
274	William	m	16					
275	George	m	14					
276	John	m	8					
277	William	m	8					
278	Joseph	m	6					
279	George W.	m	7					
280	John Reecherde	m	78					

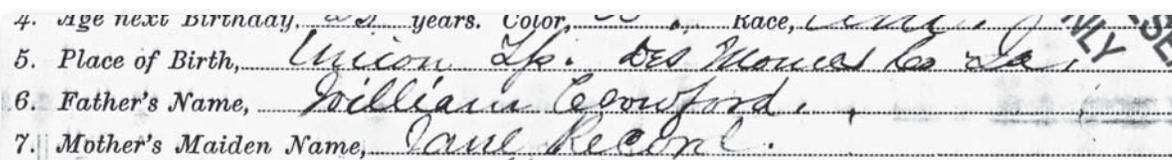
The family of John “Reecherde” appears in 1850 York County, Pennsylvania, with a 79-year-old man called John “Recherde,” giving strong evidence that the census taker took liberties at spelling the family surname.

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>





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.