

JOHN SAXE, LOYALIST (1732–1808) AND HIS DESCENDANTS FOR FIVE GENERATIONS

Compiled by
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“Hang the Tory spy!!” John Saxe could rightly have expected to hear these words when he was in prison in Esopus—now Kingston—New York, in 1779. Then forty-seven years old, he had staunchly maintained his loyalty to the King of England, to whom he had proclaimed his allegiance when he arrived in Philadelphia in 1750. Indeed, John Saxe was already a subject of the King of England, for the young man was born in 1732 in Saxony, in the Electorate of Hanover, which was ruled by the Prince-elector who was also King George II of England.

John Saxe could surely have been regarded as a spy, for he worked for the King’s men—although not in uniform or with an official position in a military unit—and that would be considered spying. Perhaps he actually was a spy, or maybe he was just a German- and English-speaking guide for the Ansbach Jaegers. The truth of the matter will probably never be known, but legend has it that he escaped or was released from prison. Perhaps his employers, the Livingstons, arranged for his release. He was their miller. It is, however, known that Saxe returned to his family in Rhinebeck, on the east side of the Hudson River, and he remained there until after the end of the Revolutionary War. As a “suspected” Loyalist, his property was then confiscated by the state. John Saxe and his wife and their eight sons—one just a babe in arms—and many other families, including some of his kinsmen, then made their way up the Hudson River. They crossed the height of land into the watershed of Lake Champlain, and settled in the wilderness at the northeastern corner of that lake at what was then, and still is, called Missisquoi Bay.

This book is the story of the Loyalist, John Saxe, and of his children and their descendants—some of whom were very successful, while others were ordinary men and women who eked out a living on the frontier. Some settled in Canada and were loyal to the Crown, whereas others were American patriots, heroes in the War of 1812 and the Civil War, and some who were distinguished in public service, law, business, the arts, and government. John Saxe’s most famous descendant was his grandson, John Godfrey Saxe, L.L.D. (1816–1887), a poet and statesman, who wrote about *The Seven Blind Men and the Elephant*, in a book that is still in print today. One of the most mysterious descendants of the Loyalist was his son, Godfrey, who was named for the Loyalist’s father, and about whom very little is known. Godfrey Saxe had a daughter, Anna Maria Saxe, who married Joseph Stockwell and had many descendants—including George Hill, the author of this book. Based on the documents that he discovered, Hill speculates that Godfrey Saxe may have been shunned by his father and perhaps some of his siblings because he had this child out of wedlock, and that indeed the child’s unnamed mother may have been a neighbor and relative. The child, Anna Saxe, grew up in the community of Highgate, Vermont, but after she was married, she moved to New York State, and her descendants have now literally spread all over the world.

Hill’s book traces the descendants of John Saxe and his wife, Catherine Weaver, for five generations. Hill thus updates a genealogy of the Saxe family that was published by John Saxe’s great-great-grandson in 1930. Hill adds much that is new to this earlier *Genealogy of the Saxe Family*. He integrates information about the Saxe family and their relatives from other histories of northern Vermont, and he includes copies of many original photographs and previously unpublished letters and documents. Hill’s book includes footnotes, endnotes, several appendices, and two indexes.

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