

Ewing Settlers of Southwestern Pennsylvania Part 4: Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874)

William E. Riddle (+1 505.988.1092, *Riddle at WmERiddle dot com*)

Several James Ewing of Inch descendants who helped settle the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area just before and after the Revolutionary War have been discussed in previous articles in this series.^{1, 2, 3} These were not the only Ewings to have helped settle this area during this time frame. In this article, we introduce another group of Ewing settlers, focusing on the family of one prominent citizen of Uniontown, Fayette County, Pennsylvania—the Honorable Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874)—who was a distinguished member of the bar.

Were James Ewing of Inch and Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) related? Looking at their heritage helps answer this question.

Many of the southwestern Pennsylvania settler descendants of James Ewing of Inch trace back to his son Alexander (c1691-b1752) who was born in Inch Island (Lough Swilly), County Donegal, Ulster, Ireland. Several of James Ewing of Inch's children were baptized in the Burt Church near Bridgend in Burt Parish, County Donegal, Ulster, Ireland. Alexander and several brothers (John, Henry, Samuel, and, possibly, Thomas) immigrated to the Upper Chesapeake Bay area in the early-to-mid-1720s and settled in Nottingham Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. Alexander's sons, James (1733-1825) and Moses (c1726-b 1798) migrated to the area of Robinson Township, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, circa 1770, accompanied by at least one cousin.⁴



Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874)

(from *History of the Presbytery of Redstone*)

¹ Riddle, William E. Ewing Settlers of Southwestern Pennsylvania, Part 1: Some James Ewing of Inch Descendants, *J. Clan Ewing*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 2007), pp. 21-29.

² Riddle, William E. Ewing Settlers of Southwestern Pennsylvania, Part 2: William, Grandson of Squire James Ewing, *J. Clan Ewing*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (May 2007), pp. 33-36.

³ Riddle, William E. Ewing Settlers of Southwestern Pennsylvania, Part 3: James Ewing and the Founding of the Montours Presbyterian Church, *J. Clan Ewing*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (August 2007), pp. 44-51.

⁴ This information about James Ewing of Inch and his descendants comes from the author's personal research and various other sources including: Fife, Margaret Ewing (ed. James R. McMichael). *Ewing in Early America*, Family History Publishers, Bountiful, Utah, 84101, which is available from www.HigginsonBooks.com and online at www.ClanEwing.org.

The heritage of Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) traces back to his:

parents	William Porter Ewing (1769-1827) m. Mary 'Polly' Conwell (1774-1844)
grandparents	George Ewing (c1738-c1785) m. Mary Porter (1745-1778)
great-grandparents	Nathaniel Ewing (1693-1748) m. Rachel Porter (c1710-a1748)

Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) was born in Coleraine, Ireland. His wife was baptized in the Burt Church near Bridgend in Burt Parish, County Donegal, Ulster, Ireland. He immigrated to the Upper Chesapeake Bay area in the early-to-mid-1720s. His estate was administered in Cecil County, Maryland. His son, George Ewing (c1738-c1785) was deeded land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in the 1760s. His grandson, William Porter Ewing (1769-1827), was born in Little Britain, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and died near Hersterburg, Fayette County, Pennsylvania.⁵

So ... were James Ewing of Inch and Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) related? Almost certainly; but no information has been found that convincingly proves a relationship. Did the families know about each other and, possibly, collaborate in their life events? This seems 100% certain. Coleraine—Nathaniel's birth site—is about thirty miles from Inch Island (Lough Swilly)—James Ewing of Inch family's residence. Both families had an association with the Burt Church near Bridgend in Burt Parish, County Donegal, Ulster, Ireland. People from both families immigrated to the Upper Chesapeake Bay area in the 1720s and subsequently migrated to the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area in the mid-to-late-1770s. It would be amazing if these two families not only knew about each other but also had some sort of biological relationship!

The following relates information about the life of Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) and his family. This begins with an excerpt from a transcription by Virginia Okie of Ewing-related parts of a book in her possession regarding the Presbytery of Redstone in Fayette County, Pennsylvania. This is followed by two articles by Joseph Neff Ewing Jr. which were originally published in the *Journal* in 1996 and 1997.

Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874)⁶

Transcribed by Virginia Ewing Okie (*vokie at digital dot net*)

Hon. Nathaniel Ewing was born in Fayette county, Pa., July 18th, 1794. He was the son of William Ewing, who came into Fayette county as a surveyor in 1790 and settled in the Dunlap's Creek neighborhood, and married Mary, daughter of Jehu Conw[e]ll. He graduated at Washington College under Dr. Matthew Brown, in 1812, with the highest honors of his class. He taught a year in Newark, Delaware, then studied law with Hon. Thomas McGiffin, of Washington, Pennsylvania, and was admitted to the Washington bar in June, 1816. The next year he removed to Uniontown, where he resided till his death, February 8th, 1874, in the eightieth year of his age and the forty-first of his eldership. He united with the church, October 9th, 1825, and February 3rd, 1833, he was ordained as Ruling Elder. In 1822 he married Jane, the second daughter of the late Judge Kennedy, a most estimable lady, who died in 1825. She was the mother of John Kennedy Ewing, a member of the

⁵ This information about Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) and his descendants comes from Fife, Margaret Ewing (ed. James R. McMichael), *Ewing in Early America*, Family History Publishers, Bountiful, Utah, 84101, pp. 188-194. Available from www.HigginsonBooks.com and online at www.ClanEwing.org.

⁶ Transcribed by Virginia Okie from: *History of the Presbytery of Redstone Organized By the synod of New York and Philadelphia, Sept. 19, 1781, and Under its care till 1788; A part of Virginia, 1788-1802 of The Synod of Pittsburg, 1802-1881; And now of The Synod of Pennsylvania, 1881-1889*, published 1889, pp. 121-122, 217-219.

present Session. In 1830 he married Ann Lyon, daughter of the late Rev. David Denny, of Chambersburg. In 1838 Mr. Ewing was appointed by Governor Ritner, President Judge of the Fourteenth Judicial district, to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of Judge Baird. He served the constitutional term of ten years and left the Bench with increased confidence on the part of the people in his integrity and legal qualifications and without a stain on his judicial ermine. One of the Judges of the Supreme Court, himself a great lawyer, said he was the best Common Pleas Judge in the State. After leaving the Bench, he did not return to the practice of law, except in occasional cases in behalf of old friends. He was a fine ecclesiastical lawyer and had great influence in the General Assembly, of which he was a member in 1836, 1837, 1839 and 1850, as Commissioner from the Presbytery of Redstone. Judge Ewing was the most eminent, useful and influential citizen of Fayette county in his day and he also exercised his activity, influence and talents in the cause of Christ. To the very close of his life there was no apparent weakening of his powerful intellect. As in life, so in death, he leaned on God as the strength of his life and his eternal portion, and on a Sabbath morning quietly breathed his last on earth and began his eternal Sabbath in Heaven.

It is proper to add some additional items in regard to Dr. Campbell and Judge Ewing. In the history of Uniontown Church, prepared by Rev. S. S. Gilson, there is this record : "October the 9th, 1825, is a date long to be remembered by this congregation. It was then that the two young men, Dr. Hugh Campbell and Nathaniel Ewing Esq., came for the first time to the Lord's Table. Together they followed Christ with reverence and Godly fear for almost half a century. These men were properly regarded as the pillars of the church in their day, and it is hardly possible now to unduly exalt their influence as Christian citizens. They were also exceedingly useful in the higher courts of the church to which they were so frequently delegates. Indeed, it came to be said in Presbytery in regard to the Commissioners to the General Assembly; 'it was Dr. Campbell one year and Judge Ewing the next.' Dr. Campbell was a member of the famous General Assembly which met in [Pittsburgh] in 1838, at the time of the disruption. A man of far more than ordinary ability, he made his influence felt in that body. During the discussion he arose and made a remark or two which attracted attention. Some Doctor of Divinity made a remark which combed him a little, and wanted to know who is 'this young David?'

"The doctor arose and said: 'I am a very humble elder from a very humble Church and a very humble Presbytery, but I thank God I have the same rights on this floor as the most learned Doctor of Divinity or the greatest lawyer here.' He then proceeded to score his unfortunate antagonist in a speech of wonderful keenness, which electrified the Assembly. He was an excellent and impressive speaker and his addresses on the subject of Temperance were very eloquent."

The following tribute was prepared by his life-long friend, Nathaniel Ewing, and offered and adopted in session: "For more than thirty-five years Dr. Campbell has exercised continuously the office of Ruling Elder in this church with uniform acceptance and eminent ability and faithfulness. During this long period his exemplary walk, the abundance of his benefactions, exertions and prayers, and his diligent and scrupulous discharge of official duty, contributed largely to the maintenance, growth and establishment of the church. By the eminence of his gifts, also, he was enabled to perform effective service for the general interests of the Master's cause by sitting, on frequent occasions, as a member in each of the Superior Judicatories."

These words apply also with equal force to Judge Ewing as descriptive of his life and service. For almost forty-one years he was a member of the Session of Uniontown Church and very often a member of some of the higher courts. The compiler of this well remembers to hear his father speak of a General Assembly of which Judge Ewing was a member. Some knotty question was before the body. Difficulties

increased and no one seemed to know what to do, when Judge Ewing got up and in a few minutes cleared away the difficulties, so that the Assembly finished the business readily and properly. He acquired great influence in the Assembly and perhaps the most important service of this kind ever rendered was a report which he made on the decision of Judge Rodgers, of the Nisi Prius Court at Philadelphia, against the Presbyterian Church. This report is recorded in Full in the Minute Book of the Presbytery, covering six pages.

Judge Ewing acquired large wealth and gave liberally to the Lord without letting his right hand know what the left did. He chiefly gave his benefactions while he lived and was personally attentive to the wants of the poor of this community who were brought to his notice.

He was President Judge of the County Court and a Ruling Elder in the church, and his son, Hon. John K. Ewing, was also President Judge and is a Ruling Elder in the same church. His grandson, Nathaniel Ewing, is keeping up the succession, being President Judge in the county and a Ruling Elder in the church of his grandfather and his father.

Nathaniel Ewing in the Courts

Joseph Neff Ewing Jr. *J. Clan Ewing*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (November 1996), pp. 3-5.

One branch of the line sired by the immigrant Nathaniel Ewing has included more than its share of judges and connections with judges. This branch consists of the following:

Immigrant Nathaniel Ewing (1693-1748)
 George Ewing (1737/8-1785)
 William Porter Ewing (1769-1827)
 Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874)
 John Kennedy Ewing (1823-1905)
 Samuel Evans Ewing (1852-1939) and Nathaniel Ewing (1848-1914)

Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874) was one of the ten children of William Porter Ewing, lived in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and was President Judge of the 14th Judicial District (Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties) of Pennsylvania from 1838 to 1848. In 1801 he married Jane Kennedy, a daughter of John Kennedy (1774-1846), who lived in Cumberland County and was a Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1830 to 1846. John Kennedy married Mary Creigh, a daughter of Judge Creigh of Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

That Nathaniel's only child was John Kennedy Ewing (1823-1905), who also lived in Uniontown and who was President Judge of the 14th Judicial District 1864-1865. He married Ellen Willson, who was a sister of Judge Alpheus Evans Willson (1828-1884), who himself was a Judge and then President Judge of the 14th District from 1873-1883.

Of John Kennedy Ewing's children,

1. His oldest daughter Eliza Willson Ewing married Stephen Leslie Mestrezat (1848-1918), who became a Judge of the 14th Judicial District of Pennsylvania in 1894 and its President Judge in 1898. In 1900 he became a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and served until his death in 1918.
2. His son Nathaniel Ewing (1848-1914) was a Judge of the 14th Judicial District (by then consisting of only Fayette and Greene Counties) from 1887 to 1894 and President Judge until 1898. In 1906 he was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to be a Judge of

the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh and served in that capacity until 1908, when he resigned to become chairman of the Pennsylvania Railroad Commission, predecessor to the Public Service Commission and then the Public Utility Commission. In 1878 he married Sallie Smith, a stepdaughter of William Mitchell, a Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota.

3. Another of his sons Samuel Evans Ewing (1852-1939) served as a Judge of the 14th Judicial District in 1899 but had to resign because his hearing had become so poor he had trouble hearing what was going on in his courtroom.
4. John Kennedy Ewing Jr. married Mary H. Mitchell, a daughter of the same William Mitchell mentioned above as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota.

There are five portraits of former judges hanging in Courtroom #1 of the Court House in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and four of them are of Ewings or Ewing relations—John Kennedy Ewing, the later Nathaniel Ewing, John Kennedy, and Stephen Leslie Mestrezat.

Hon. John Kennedy Ewing (1823-1905)

Joseph Neff Ewing Jr. *J. Clan Ewing*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February 1997), pp. 6-8.

HON. J. K. EWING DEAD

Uniontown's Venerable Citizen and Jurist Killed by 10:02 B. & O. Train
STRUCK AT FAYETTE STREET CROSSING
Train Rushed on Him and He Could Not Escape

So read the headlines of the Daily News Standard of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, on May 25, 1905. The unfortunate decedent was my great-grandfather John Kennedy Ewing, who had been born in Uniontown on December 15, 1823.

Judge Ewing had been looking after some work he was having done at a lot he owned between the railroad and the White school house. He started away from the lot and walked east on Fayette Street, going leisurely along as on his usual morning walks. He was on the north side of the street and was noticed by a bystander, who reported that Judge Ewing had just reached the edge of the track when the shriek of the train was heard. It evidently bewildered the judge, and he made an attempt to jump ahead with the aid of his cane and was struck by the cowcatcher and killed instantly.

Judge Ewing's was the only child of Nathaniel Ewing (1794-1874), who was often referred to as 'The Lawgiver of Western Pennsylvania,' and who served ten years on the bench in the 14th Judicial District (Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties). John Kennedy Ewing's mother was born Jane Kennedy, a daughter of John Kennedy (1774-1846), who lived in Cumberland County and was a Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1830 to 1846, "one of the great jurists" of that Court according to the Daily News Standard.

John Kennedy Ewing spent his early life in Uniontown and graduated from Washington and Jefferson College in 1842 (at the age of 18!). "Rising above the temptation to a life of ease which surrounded his boyhood, he early developed an inclination to work which brought into prominence all the sterling qualities that characterized his future life." He read law in his father's office and was admitted to the bar in 1846 (at the age of 22!). In November 1864 he was appointed to a vacancy on the bench of the 14th Judicial District and served "commendably" until January 1866, when he had to retire from the bench and the active practice of law "on account of impaired health." (My father always said that one of the

impairments was in his hearing and that was in large part responsible for his unfortunate encounter with the 10:02 train.) Upon his retirement Judge Ewing continued with his wide interest in the coal and iron industries of Western Pennsylvania.

In 1847 Judge Ewing was married to Ellen Louisa Willson, a sister of Alpheus Evans Willson, who was also a judge of the 14th Judicial District. In May 1846 Judge Ewing united with the Presbyterian church of Uniontown and was ordained and installed as an elder in March 1860. He was a commissioner to the general assembly at Pittsburgh in 1864 and Omaha in 1887 and was frequently a delegate to synod and presbytery. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1884.

Judge Ewing had eight children, five of whom survived him: ex-Judge Nathaniel Ewing of Uniontown; ex-Judge Samuel Evans Ewing of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania; J.K. Ewing Jr. of Pittsburgh, who married Mary H. Mitchell, a daughter of a Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota; Mary Virginia Ewing, who married Jared M. B. Reis of western Pennsylvania; and Belle Kennedy Ewing, who married Benjamin Betterton Howell of Uniontown. Judge Ewing was pre-deceased by two children who died in infancy and by his daughter Eliza Willson Ewing, wife of Stephen Leslie Mestrezat, a Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Just the month before Judge Ewing's sudden death the Daily News Standard had published an extended and appreciative sketch of his life, in which it said, in part:

Hon. J.K. Ewing is the Nestor of the Fayette County Bar. Applied to him "Nestor" is no misnomer; he is the oldest and the wisest. Sometimes the name of Homer's hero is carelessly applied to one who has outlived his fellows. Judge Ewing is a great lawyer, and, what is rarer, a great jurist. I think his legal brethren will ungrudgingly acknowledge his supremacy in legal learning. He is a high authority on constitutional law.... Constantly battling with ill health, he has lived to the remarkable age of eighty-one. He is therefore truly the Nestor of the Bar. His philosophy and his personality are worth studying.

* * * * *

The history of the Ewings and their forbears is a part of the legal history of the state. Their record of judicial service is unique in legal annals. Judge Ewing's father was a judge. His grandfather was a judge. He distinguished himself in his own short term of service. His two sons were on the bench. Four generations of judges! Is there a parallel to this?

Judge Ewing served for a time as President of the National Bank of Fayette County and "led it up to the bulwark of strength which it now holds" according to a memorial prepared by the County Bar Association. The memorial went on to say:

He saw with prophetic eye the coming riches of the valley lying along the foot-hills of Chestnut ridge and advised and urged the officers of the Pennsylvania to construct the Southwest branch from Greensburg to Fairchance. As the great coke industries developed all along this line, the results have shown the wisdom of counsel.... As director and vice-president of the Southwest Railway company he lived to see his road become one of the richest feeders of the great Pennsylvania system. He engaged extensively and most successfully in the coal and coking industries of his native county.

In his family he was favored as few have ever been. So careful was he in the training of his children that his honored sons are proud to recognize his as the guiding hand that directed them into the prominent positions that they have attained in life. He was truly great.

Always an ardent admirer of the beauties of nature, on a lovely May morning, with the flowers of spring time blooming all about him while on an accustomed walk he was suddenly, almost instantly, lifted from the activities of life into the beyond. We shall miss him.

Joseph Neff Ewing Jr. is a former Chancellor of Clan Ewing (1998-2004). He is descended from Hon. John Kennedy Ewing's son, Samuel Evans Ewing, and a frequent contributor to the Journal of Clan Ewing, providing valuable information about his ancestors and Ewings in general.

Virginia Ewing Okie was born Virginia Ewing Hustead. When she married, she kept her middle name, Ewing, to recognize that she was named after her maternal great-grandmother, Belle Kennedy Ewing, a daughter of Hon. John Kennedy Ewing. Her genealogical research concerns the Evans, Howell, Hustead, Loudon, McClelland, Rowe, Willard and Willson families.

William Ewing Riddle is a great-great-great-grandson of Squire James Ewing (a son of Alexander who was a son of James Ewing of Inch Island). Bill is Web Master for Clan Ewing's web site and Editor of the Journal of Clan Ewing. Outside his genealogical work, he helps organizations certify that their software development procedures satisfy regulatory requirements and lead to high-quality products. He holds advanced degrees from Cornell and Stanford and has worked in academia, industry and government.

Scottish Hospital Wards

An English doctor was being shown around a Scottish hospital. Near the end of his visit, he saw a ward of patients with no obvious injuries.

He started to examine the first patient, but the man proclaimed: "Fair fa' yer honest, sonsie face / Great chieftain o' the puddin' race!"

The doctor, taken aback, moved on to the next patient, who immediately said: "Some hae meat and canna eat / And some wad eat that want it."

The next patient cried out: "Wee sleekit cow'rin tim'rous beastie / O what a panic's in thy breastie!"

"Well," the English doctor muttered to his Scottish colleague, "I see you saved the psychiatric ward for last."

"Oh, no," said the Scottish doctor. "This is our Serious Burns Unit!"

Contributed by Joseph Neff Ewing Jr.