

John West, Jr. of Minerva, New York

(Extracted from “Two John Wests”, Marilou West Ficklin 2024)

John West [Jr] of Minerva--born in Granville, Washington Co., New York (or possibly as a ‘Yorker’ in Vershire, Vermont.)¹

In my theory, John had only to *believe* he was born in New York.^{2,3}

John’s father, John West, Sr. and grandfather, Ebenezer West, Sr., moved to the region of Minerva (Shroon Lake), New York about 1804. John West Sr.’s youngest son, Francis, was born there in 1804.⁴ The Wests were founding members of the Minerva Baptist Church.⁵

John West, Jr. made a name for himself by participating in a legal dispute described in the Minerva Baptist Church records of 1817.⁶ He would have been about 21 years old at that time. He may be accounted for in his father’s household in the 1820 census.⁷ No record has yet been found that John West Jr. married in Minerva.

Then John Jr. disappears from the record.

There was a great westward migration of Yorkers from Vermont and upstate New York to Chautauqua County, NY, in the 1830’s as described in the town history of Minerva⁸ as well as a history of Chautauqua County.⁹ Several of John’s siblings and cousins resettled there according to the 1835 New York State census.¹⁰ New York property records suggest that ***John may have accompanied them.***

¹ Mabel Jones, “John West [Sr.],” “The West Family: Notes taken from the clerk’s records of the Minerva Baptist Church,” typescript, “Minerva.pdf”, Minerva Historical Society, nd, p. 67. (Provided by “Anne” at 23andMe, 2020). See Appendix A – discussion of the work Mabel Jones.

² The 1850 U.S. population schedule for the U.S. census of Johnson Co., IA, enumerates John West of Big Grove as born in New York.

³ Before the Revolution many New Yorkers held Royal (British) grants to land within what is now Vermont. Vermont declared itself a Republic in 1777 during the Revolution. For nearly 15 years New York and Vermont fought for control of the grant land. In March 1791 Vermont won and became a state. From then on a “Yorker” became a person who stubbornly claimed New York residency even though living on land that had become Vermont. John West, Sr. and his family may have been Yorkers. His eldest son William was born in Vershire, VT in 1790 and son Jesse in 1792. Son John, Jr. was born in 1796/7 either in Vershire, VT or Granville, NY.

⁴ Francis West, first child born in Minerva which was founded in 1804. (*French’s Gazetteer 1860 as quoted in “Mabel Jones: John West” manuscript. Op. cit.*)

⁵ “The George Soule Family, Generations V and VI,” *Mayflower Families Through Five Generations*, Vol. 3., ed. Anne Borden Harding, Hist. General, Soc. Mayflower Descendants, 1980. Patriarch of the family was Ebenezer West, Sr. (sons William, Nathan, Joseph, John, Ebenezer, Jr.)

⁶ “History of the Minerva Baptist Church 1807-1957,” typescript, Minerva Historical Society, ND.

⁷ 1820 U.S. Census, Essex County, NY, Minerva, p. 436.

⁸ *Minerva, a History of a Town in Essex County, NY*, Minerva Historical Soc. NY, 1967, p. 32

⁹ Andrew W. Young, *History of Chautauqua County*, 1875.

¹⁰ 1835 New York State Census, French Creek, Clymer, Chautauqua Co., NY

*An earlier westward migration to Niagara Co., NY, included John's uncle Ebenezer West Jr. and his sons*¹¹ *In addition John's uncle, Joseph (twin of his father John, Sr.) may have been the first "West" to buy property in Niagara County. A Joseph West purchased land between 1802 and 1818 in the region of Niagara County known as the "Mile Reserve" from which the town of Niagara Falls evolved. (See **Wests of Minerva Property Records in Western New York.pdf**)*

John West [Jr.] of Minerva may have married during the 1820's, but no proof of marriage has been found in New York or Ohio.¹²

Some Minerva West descendants have said John West, Jr. migrated to Ohio.^{13, 14}

¹¹ Excepting Ebenezer's son Ezra who had joined the migration of Minerva Wests to Chautauqua County.

¹² Perhaps he married a girl named "Clarissa Leonard" who had been baptized in the Minerva Baptist Church. John's brother, William C., married her sister Betsy Leonard and his cousin Ezra B. (son of Ebenezer 3rd) married her sister Sophia Leonard.

¹³ Mabel Jones, "*John West*", *op. cit.* .p.13.

¹⁴ *Minerva*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

DETAILS

2. John West [Jr.] of Minerva

John West, Jr. appears in local histories of Minerva, New York, with his father, John West Sr. John West, Sr. was the son of Ebenezer West, Sr. of Newport, Rhode Island, Vershire, VT and Minerva, NY.

John West, Jr., subject of this report—is referred to as [John West of Minerva](#). He was supposedly born in Granville, Washington Co., NY.¹⁵ **He moved with his father, John West, Sr., to Shroon Lake, NY between 1801 and 1804.** His mother Betsey (Miller) West died there sometime after 1807.

John West, Sr. and family were enumerated in the **1810 census of Essex County, Shroon Lake.**

John West, Sr. is shown also in the **1820 U.S. Census of Essex Co. NY, Minerva.** The household contains an adult woman, John's apparent 2nd wife, as well as a young male child under 10 and an adult son aged between 18 and 25. This supports the claim that John West, Sr. remarried after his wife Betsy died and had a son by his second wife.

The question remains: who was the male aged 18-26 in his household? It could be either Francis (age 18) youngest son (by Betsy), or our subject, **John West, Jr.** (age 24). (See census data in following pages.)

Which one do you think? I prefer to think it was Francis still living at home and that our subject, John West, Jr. had already left Minerva to go west.

The following church record establishes that John West, Sr. of Minerva, had a son, John West, Jr.

Minerva Baptist Church:

The History of the Minerva Baptist Church records the presence of the family of John West, Sr in Shroon/Minerva.¹⁶ *The typescript by Mabel Jones provides further details.*¹⁷

The Baptist Church records show the sons of John West, Sr. as members between 1804 and 1832. One key record dated August 1817 details a dispute involving both John West Sr. and John West Jr. A transcript at the Minerva Historical Society states (verbatim):

*“Aug 2., 1817 – Met at Nathan West’s and he was moderator. **John West** brought the following complaint against Phoebe Tallman: Phoebe Tallman, the wife of Abner Tallman, has reported that **John West Jr.** has taken false oath in a case between Abner Tallman and William West, and that **John West his father and William C. West his brother** did hire the said **John West, Jr.** to do the same. And as the said Phebe is guilty of spreading this report and others that are fals I think it my duty to inform the church of her slanderous conduct in order that the church if they will put a stop to her destroying the carrecters of her fellow creaturs. This I enter as a complaint against said Phebe Tallman to the church to which she belongs.”*

Summarizing this transcript it is apparent that John West Jr. is drawn into the dispute between John West, Sr. and the Talmans. (John West Sr. was 50 years old by this time. His son John Jr. would have been about 20-21 and was a **legal party** to this dispute.)¹⁸

¹⁵ See Appendix A: a discussion of the 1800 U.S. Census, Vershire, Orange Co., VT and Granville, Washington Co., NY.

¹⁶ *History of the Minerva Baptist Church, op. cit.* A transcript of the typescript is available online at the LDS Family Search website.

¹⁷ The Minerva town historian, Mabel Jones, wrote a report on John West, Sr. and John West, Jr on file at the Minerva Historical Society. She refers to family sources claiming “John West” fought in the War of 1812 and received bounty land in Ohio. *I believe she was mistaken.* (See Appendix A, Mabel Jones).

John West [Jr.] of Minerva

Any other explanation? Obviously there are only 2 sons total born between 1795 and 1810 living in John West Sr's household.

Is the census marshal or family historians wrong? Does it matter?

John West [Jr.] of Minerva

Census of Essex County, NY 1820, Minerva (p. 346)

John West [Sr.]--males:

1 < 10 [a son by 2d marr aft 1810?]

0 [10- 15] [missing: Francis West b. >1804, age < 15]

0 [16-18]

1 [16-25] John West Jr. b. 1796/7, age 23-24 or Francis West b. 1804? age 16¹⁹

0 [26-44]

1 45 + [John West Sr. b. 1766/7]

--females

0 < 10

1 [10-15] Sarah

0 [16-25]

1 [26-44] 2nd wife

[45 +]

John West Jr. may be the male age 16-25 shown in the 1820 Minerva census in his father's household. Alternatively it might be John's brother, *Francis West*, also aged 18-25. It seems likely that John West, Jr. did not remain long in Minerva—or Essex County. The 1830 census for Minerva, next page, shows a John West of the correct age.²⁰

Census of Essex County, NY 1830, Minerva (p.276)

John West, Sr shown as age 70 or over – no other males in household

Jesse West, shown as age 30-39—with one male under 5.

William Carr West, (eldest son of John West, Sr.) shown as age 40-49, with 2 male children and one male of 20-29.

Notice the absence of other members of the family of John West, Sr. The absence of John West, Jr. in this census suggests he already had migrated west before 1830. Ebenezer West, Jr and his sons appear also to have migrated west--to Niagara Co., NY.

Collateral Evidence in local histories:

The Minerva town history claims that residents joined a collective westward migration about 1832 to Chautauqua, Co., NY. The *History of Minerva, NY* names Jesse, son of John West, Sr. and his cousins Spencer West and Ezra Bliss West as migrants to Clymer and French Creek in Chautauqua County. The 1835 New York State Census as well as histories of Chautauqua County confirm such migration. The town of Gerry was originally named "Vermont" due to the migration of "Vermonters." Minerva itself had been originally settled by many from Addison County, Vermont. Some of these then moved on from Minerva to the original Vermonter settlement in Chautauqua County. *The History of the Minerva Baptist Church* also mentions the migration of members of the West family to French Creek and Clymer in Chautauqua in 1832. The migration of some Wests of Minerva may have started before 1820 but most began **after 1832**. Some Wests migrated further *west to Minnesota* much later.

Although several men named John West lived in Chautauqua County at this time, none appear to be John West of Minerva.²¹ It is however possible that he invested in land in that county.

¹⁹ Had John West, Jr. already left Minerva by 1820?

²⁰ John West, Sr. is in the 1850 U.S. Census and the 1855 NY State Census living in **Chestertown**, Warren County, NY (adjacent to Essex County).

²¹ It is conceivable that John went to Chautauqua and met a man named Jehiel Parks in Ellery. The relationship between John West of Solon and a "Jehiel/Jehial Parks" is discussed in Appendix E

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