

BAXTER

The earliest Baxters to arrive in America came from England, Ireland and Scotland in the 1600's. No connection to these early settlers has yet been established.

James Baxter and Deborah Westerfield

4g-grandparents

James Baxter was born about 1765, possibly in Kentucky as indicated on the 1880 census record of his daughter Catherine. The names of his parents are unknown.

Deborah Westerfield was the daughter of Jacob Westervelt and Maria Demaree. The Mormon Church's "Ancestral File", a repository of data notorious for the uneven quality of its information, says she was christened in 1768. Her family migrated west in 1780 but was attacked by Indians near the end of their journey. Deborah's father and two sisters were killed in the attack; her mother and three siblings escaped unharmed. Deborah was taken by the Indians and sold to the French near Fort Detroit but eventually gained her freedom and returned to Kentucky.

On June 17, 1784, James and Deborah were married in Lincoln County, Kentucky. Kentucky had joined the union as the 15th state just two years earlier.

In 1785, Madison County, Kentucky was formed out of a part of Lincoln County. There, in 1793, James Baxter was a witness to the marriage of his sister-in-law, Catherine Westerfield, and John Brazelton.

Through the years, James and Deborah had nine or ten children, the birth dates of which have not all been determined:

- James Baxter, born in 1787
- Samuel Baxter
- Rebecca Baxter, born about 1791
- William Baxter, born in 1797
- Elizabeth Baxter
- Catherine Baxter
- Kennedy Baxter
- Robert Baxter
- Nancy Baxter
- Kelly Baxter (questionable – this may be a nickname for Catherine)



*Lincoln, Madison and Jessamine
Counties, Kentucky today*

Some time after the wedding in 1793, James and Deborah moved their family to Jessamine County, Kentucky as James is on the tax records of that county in August of 1800. The family was still there for the U.S. census in 1810.

In 1824, James and Deborah sold their land in Kentucky and moved to Indiana. Many of their children moved their families as well.

Two years later, by August 26, 1826, James died in Jefferson County, Indiana. He was about 60 years old. His estate included a large bible and inventories of corn at various locations. Also included were other books, "several English." If this means that the books were published in England, it suggests that James may not be too far removed from the immigrant Baxter.

Deborah was apparently illiterate (not unusual for women of the time) since she acknowledged receipt of property from the estate the following January by signing with an "X". Within six months, she also died (by June 22, 1827).

The final settlement of James Baxter's estate was reported in 1830:

"Administrator makes final settlement and distribution and it is agreed by the heirs that Robert Baxter, a lunatic, shall have \$100.00 over and above his equal share, and heir Kennedy Baxter claims nothing from said estate."

The locations of the graves of James and Deborah (Westerfield) Baxter are unknown.

Sources and Related Information

- Maurice Baxter
- Donald D. Flick report "The Baxter Family of Jefferson and Dubois Counties, Indiana"
- U.S. census – 1810, 1880
- Lincoln County, Kentucky vital records
- Madison County, Kentucky vital records
- Jessamine County, Kentucky tax records
- Jefferson County, Indiana vital records
- "Brazelton Family History" website
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Ancestral File

James (Jr.) and Eliza Baxter

3-g grandparents

"Senior" and "Junior" designations following a name are frequently not part of one's official birth name, particularly 200 years ago. In fact, this James also had a son named James so he may have been known as "James, Jr." early in life and "James, Sr." later on. The "Junior" tag is used in this document as a means of separating this James from his father in the index and elsewhere.

James Baxter was born on March 17, 1787, probably in Fayette County, Kentucky, to James Baxter and Deborah Westerfield. He was the first-born of their many children.

On June 13, 1811, James married Nancy Howell, with whom he had eight children – four girls first and then four boys:

A DECADE IN BRIEF

The 1820's

James Monroe, John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson serve as U.S. President ✎ The Erie Canal opens ✎ Noah Webster publishes the "American Dictionary of the English Language" ✎ English explorers cross the Sahara desert ✎ Beethoven composes his ninth symphony ✎ Louis Pasteur, Florence Nightingale and Jules Verne are born

- Ann Merton Baxter, born in 1814
- Mariah Baxter, born in 1816
- Matilda C. Baxter, born in 1817
- Nancy Baxter, born in 1819
- John Howell Baxter, born in 1821
- James Baxter, born in 1823
- William Baxter, born in 1824
- Samuel Howell Baxter, born in 1828

The first six children were born in Kentucky. It is believed the family moved to Jefferson County, Indiana in 1823 or 1824.

Mother Nancy died at a relatively young age, some time between 1828 and 1837.

On June 4, 1837, James, now 50, married a woman named Eliza Doniga, a widow with at least one child. Eliza may have been Elizabeth Davis, who married Thomas Donica in Jennings County in 1830. Eliza was about 30 when she and James married. The new couple had at least four children, all born in Jefferson County:

- Harriet Elizabeth Baxter, born in 1844
- Isaac Westerfield Baxter, born in 1846
- Sarah Frances Baxter, born in 1848
- Edna Baxter, born in 1853

Jefferson County census records of 1850 show a household comprised of James and Eliza Baxter; Samuel Baxter, a son from James' first marriage; James and Eliza's children Harriet, Isaac and Sarah; and John and Eliza Dunnica, probably children from Eliza's first marriage (but possibly husband and wife, thus the son and daughter-in-law of Eliza).

James Baxter died on December 8, 1859 at the age of 72.

Eliza was living with her daughter Edna in 1870. What became of her after that is unknown although there was a death notice in the *Jasper Courier* for a "Mrs. Baxter" who died in Dubois County in July 1885.

Sources and Related Information

- Maurice Baxter
- Donald D. Flick report "The Baxter Family of Jefferson and Dubois Counties, Indiana"
- U.S. census – 1850, 1860, 1870

Isaac Westerfield Baxter and Melissa Ann Stutesman

2-g grandparents

Isaac Westerfield Baxter was born on March 17, 1847 in Jefferson County, Indiana. He was one of four children of James and Eliza Baxter and the only son of that couple although each of his parents had children from a previous marriage.

Melissa Ann Stutesman was born September 11, 1847 in Trimble County, Kentucky. She was the sixth of eleven children of James Stutesman and Cynthia Monroe. In the 1850's, the Stutesman family moved across the Ohio River to Jefferson County, Indiana.

Isaac, age 19, and Melissa, age 18, were married on July 19, 1866. They moved to a farm near the village of Duff, in Pakota Township, Dubois County, still in southern Indiana. They had six children over a span of 20 years:

- Mack Baxter, born about 1870
- Frank Baxter, born about 1872
- Mell Baxter, born in 1878
- Estella Baxter, born in 1880
- Grant Baxter, born in 1884
- Melissa Ann "Goldie" Baxter, born in 1891

During this time, in 1872, the family fell victim to a house fire. The *Jasper Courier* reported the incident on February 23:

A DECADE IN BRIEF

The 1880's

Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison serve as U.S. President – Garfield is assassinated after 6 months in office ✕ The Brooklyn Bridge opens ✕ The first vaudeville theatre opens in Boston ✕ Lewis Waterman invents the fountain pen ✕ William "Billy the Kid" Bonney is killed by sheriff Pat Garrett

“Fire – On Wednesday of last week while Mr. Isaac Baxter was engaged digging a grave and his family were visiting a neighbor, his residence in Pakota township near Armstrong’s Ferry was entirely consumed by fire. How it caught is not known. All of his household property was also burned. His neighbors, with commendable alacrity, turned out the next day, as he was a poor man, and cut him a set of house logs and put up a house, and then started a subscription for his benefit, which is likely to produce, as it should, enough to replace a good share of the household necessaries destroyed.”

About 1888, the family moved to farm just west of Birdseye, Indiana, still in Dubois County.

Isaac and Melissa appear in the 1900 and 1910 U.S. censuses, but not in 1920. The dates of their deaths and locations of their graves are not known.

Sources and Related Information

- Maurice Baxter
- Donald D. Flick report “The Baxter Family of Jefferson and Dubois Counties, Indiana”
- U.S. census – 1900, 1910, 1920
- Jasper Courier article, February 23, 1872

Melvin Baxter and Estella Comstock

Great-grandparents

Melvin “Mell” Baxter was born in April 1878 in Deputy, Indiana. He was the third of six children of Isaac and Melissa (Stutesman) Baxter.

Estella Comstock was born September 19, 1884 in Uniontown, Perry County, Indiana. Her parents were John and Lucinda (Lanman) Comstock and she had two brothers and two sisters. Estella was about 16 years old when her mother died.

Mell and Estella were married on December 22, 1901. Over the next 15 years, they had four sons:

- George Melvin Baxter, born in 1902
- Novie Baxter, born about 1910
- Paul Baxter, born in 1912
- Maurice Baxter, born in 1916

Baxter Melville	Head	1847	42	MA	English	laborer	Chair factory
Estella	Wife	1864	45	MA	English	none	
George	Son	1902	7	IN	English	laborer	
Novie	Son	1910	10	IN	English	none	
Paul	Son	1912	8	IN	English	none	
Maurice	Son	1916	4	IN	English	none	

The Baxter family in the 1910 census includes sons George and Novie. Melvin’s occupation is listed as “laborer – chair factory”.

Baxter Melville	Head	1847	47	MA	Machinist	Factory
Estella	Wife	1864	55	MA	none	
George	Son	1902	17	IN	none	
Novie	Son	1910	10	IN	none	
Paul	Son	1912	8	IN	none	
Maurice	Son	1916	4	IN	none	

All four sons appear in the 1920 census. Melvin’s occupation is “machinist – factory”.

In addition to keeping house and bringing up her four boys, Estella cleaned houses for others and occasionally worked at a seasonal business that canned tomatoes.

The 1910 U.S. census lists Mell's occupation as "laborer – chair factory"; in 1920, it's "machinist – factory". Both of these labels refer to a chair factory in Birdseye, Indiana where Mell worked until it burned down. Later, he and a partner sold Model T Fords and Mell gained skill and reputation as a mechanic. His son Maurice said he could diagnose a mechanical problem "just by listening to it." The partners attempted to expand the business into Martinsville at one point but that venture quickly failed. Mell worked on automobiles for many years, specializing in Model T's and Model A's, but left the profession when the technology advanced beyond these early models.

Melvin Baxter lived to be about 88, dying in about 1966. Estella survived him by almost 25 years and lived to be 105. She died about 1989 and is buried in Birdseye.

Sources and Related Information

- Maurice Baxter
- Donald D. Flick report "The Baxter Family of Jefferson and Dubois Counties, Indiana"
- U.S. census – 1910, 1920
- Social Security death index

A DECADE IN BRIEF The 1920's

Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover serve as U.S. President ✎ John T. Scopes is fined for teaching evolution in a Tennessee high school ✎ Charles Lindbergh flies solo from New York to Paris ✎ Seven gangsters are killed in Chicago in the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" ✎ The stock market crashes on October 29, 1929



The Baxter family in about 1939: Maurice, Paul, Novie, George, Mell and Estella.



Mell and Estella Baxter



Estella with sons George, Novie, Paul and Maurice