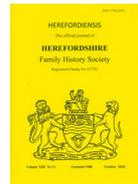


# The Disappearing Tanner

David J Skyrme



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We are all familiar with the problem of someone who seems to disappear from the records just as things are getting interesting. This is a case from my research into the Skyrmes of Herefordshire of someone whose disappearance was noted and who was rediscovered in America with the help of David Hurford, a fellow researcher with Skyrme ancestors.

Amos Jones Skyrme (b. 1788) was one of at least ten children of William Gwatkin Skyrme and Mary (née Jones) of Dewalls Court. William was one of the Skyrmes noted for their herds of Herefordshire cattle. Amos initially trained as a surgeon in Alcester Warwickshire, this profession being listed in the 1818 Hereford poll book. However, a later Pigot's Directory (1830) lists him as a tanner and glue manufacturer at the family tannery in Widemarsh Street, Hereford. But in March of that year he was declared bankrupt. In this matter he appears in no less than five entries in *The Gazette* in the next few months where he is described as a tanner, dealer and chapman.<sup>1</sup> The various mentions relate to calling creditors to come forward, the holding of creditors meetings and determining final dividend pay-outs.

The auction of his stock in trade on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1830 included "upwards of 200 English Crop and Buffalo Hides, dry and well finished, 165 Horse-Hide Butts and Pieces, Calf Skins &c. &c." There follows in the newspaper advertisement a long list of tools, a wagon and cart and to top it all two hogsheads of cider<sup>2</sup>.

Whereas several of Amos's siblings appear in the 1841 census, mostly away from Herefordshire in Monmouthshire, Glamorgan and Gloucestershire, Amos is nowhere to be found. In England the next reference to Amos after his bankruptcy indicates that he had fled to America as the following extract from a notice in the *Hereford Journal* of 30th August 1854 indicates:

"Whereas Amos Jones Skyrme, in or about the year 1830, being then about 47 years of age, left the City of Hereford for America; and was last heard of there in 1839; and whereas his wife Frances Anne Skyrme, late of Wear-End in the parish of Bridstow, died July 29th 1851, having made her Will in which she has named her said Husband a Legatee...And any person who will give any satisfactory information to the said solicitors as to where the said Amos Jones Skyrme is now, or, if dead, when and where he died, shall be rewarded."

He had married Frances (née Jones) at Ross-on-Wye in April 1827. However, when in the USA it seems he married again (bigamously), this time to a Lucinda Johnson in July 1834 in Warren County, Ohio. They had a son George, born in 1835 and were living at Turtle Creek in Warren County at the time of the 1840 census. Their son George went on to become a shoemaker, living initially in Norwalk, Ohio and later in Pasadena, California.

No other records for Amos and Lucinda have yet been found after the 1840 US Census – so it looks as if he has disappeared again!

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<sup>1</sup> The term chapman typically referred to a pedlar or itinerant seller. However, it could mean someone who bought in raw materials and used freelancers to turn them into finished goods. It's not clear which sense is used here.

<sup>2</sup> A hogshead after 1824 was designated as 54 imperial gallons.