

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS ...

PASTOR OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WEST OF THE BLUE RIDGE

**John Gerrard
(c. 1720 – 1787)**

— *Bradley Rymph*

VISITS TO GERRARDSTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA:

July 24, 2010 (with José Baquiran, Albert
and Edna Mae Rymph)
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Rymph.

In the early to mid-1700s, in the years preceding the Revolutionary War, settlers near the Atlantic Coast of the British American colonies moved steadily westward — establishing new towns as they expanded British settlement and dominion. Three of these men (with their families) were the Rev. **John Gerrard**; John Bruce (an immigrant from Scotland; and a frontier captain in the French and Indian War, Jeremiah Smith (*see separate profiles for Bruce and Smith*).

The Rev. John Gerrard was born c. 1720; the location is apparently not known (including whether he was born in Europe, at sea, or in America). In his genealogy book, *Come In and Sit a Spell!*, Levi Rymph references a Gerrard family genealogy report by a Mrs. Lindsey Brien proposing that the family is of French Huguenot ancestry, descended from the De La Garde family who emigrated to America after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in France in 1572.

Around 1740, Gerrard married a woman with the first name of Mehitable. Although the written histories do not agree on the year, at some point in the 1740s or early 1750s, Gerrard migrated probably from Pennsylvania to Berkeley County (then in the Virginia Colony). In *Baptist Virginia Ministers*, James B. Taylor says



Restored log cabin in Winchester, Virginia, typical of homes built by settlers in Frederick County, Virginia, in the mid-1700s. Original home of John Gerrard may have been very similar. (House maintained by Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society.)



that the Gerrard family first arrived in Berkeley County in 1754 and became pastor of the Mill Creek Baptist Church there. (This church had been organized in 1743 as the first Baptist congregation west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.) Taylor states that Gerrard and several other church members became annoyed by Indian assaults and moved south to what is now Loudon County, Virginia, until they returned to the settlement in 1757.

Virginia land-grant records document that John Gerrard received two grants from Lord Fairfax: 227 acres dated December 11, 1762, and 251 acres dated August 29, 1766. He built his home (which no longer stands) on these lands. On May 28, 1770, he purchased 90 acres of land adjoining his existing properties, excluding one acre on which the Baptist meeting house stood and which was deeded to the Mill Creek congregation itself.



HOW WE'RE RELATED

John Gerrard was my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather through my father, Albert James Rymph.

John Gerrard
(c. 1720 – 8/1787)

Mehitable Haugen
(1720 – aft. 5/1779)

Nathaniel Gerrard
(1752 – 3/23/1832)

Mary Lloyd
(1754 – 3/23/1832)

David Washington Gerrard
(1786 – 8/23/1813)

Rhoda Hathaway
(1790 – 1850)

Abner Hathaway Gerrard
(6/1/1808 – 12/25/1850)

Susan Taylor
(9/2/1809 – 8/9/1842)

Samuel Wilson King
(12/10/1827 – 8/14/1905)

Margaret Taylor Gerrard
(2/12/1831 – 3/12/1892)

Albert James Rymph
(11/29/1851 – 7/3/1926)

Luella Maria King
(11/29/1861 – 7/3/1949)

Levi Budd Rymph
(6/10/1901 – 12/8/1987)

Jessie Mae Hershey
(3/26/1903 – 11/15/1991)

Albert James Rymph
(11/9/1925 – 2/16/2019)

Edna Mae Heath
(11/5/1928 – 9/10/2022)

Bradley Budd Rymph
(living)

José Verzosa Baquiran III
(living)

Gerrard House, Gerrardstown, West Virginia. House was built by John Hayes in 1743, and later purchased by the Rev. John Gerrard.



Historical marker noting original site of Mill Creek Baptist Church, Gerrardstown, West Virginia.

Standing on this 90-acre purchase was a two-story, limestone house, set into the hillside. The house had been built in 1743 by a John Hays. John Gerrard himself did not live in this house. However, his son David (my ancestor Nathaniel's older brother) bought this house from his parents in 1779 and made it his home. In this house, David Gerrard laid out the plans for Gerrardstown, which was formally established as a town in 1787 and named after Rev. John Gerrard.



Rev. Gerrard's wife Mehitable died sometime after May 18, 1779 (i.e., after the sale of the house and lot to David). By 1781, John Gerrard had remarried, taking a Mary Gray as his second wife. At his death in September 1787, he had had 11 children by his first wife and three more by his second.

The Gerrardstown Historic District, with several surviving structures from the 1780s and 1800s, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The Hays-Gerrard House had been individually listed on the Register in 1985.

TO LEARN MORE

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Rymph, Levi Budd. *Come In and Sit a Spell!* Wichita, KS: 1973. Basic genealogy of the ancestors of Levi Budd Rymph and Jessie Mae Hershey.

Washington Heritage Trail. Web pages for Washington Heritage Trail: "Gerrardstown Historic District" (www.washingtonheritagetrail.com/bc_26.html); "Hays-Gerrard House" (www.washingtonheritagetrail.com/bc_27.html).