

Biographical Sketches

Elijah Pease, Sr. (1770-Aft. 1850) and Anna Fuller (1775-Aft. 1850)

Elijah Pease, Sr. was born on 12 February 1770 in Somers, Connecticut, a New England town shaped by long-established Pease family roots. In 1795, he married Anna Fuller (whose ancestors have not been identified) in nearby Stafford, beginning a marriage that would span decades of migration, frontier settlement, and close-knit family cooperation. Together, Elijah and Anna raised five sons between 1797 and 1819, all of whom reached adulthood and played roles in the family's westward movement.

For the first three decades of their married life, Elijah and Anna remained in Connecticut, appearing in census records there through 1810. By the early 1820s, however, pressures and opportunities common to many New England families—land scarcity, inheritance divisions, and the promise of new land—began to draw the Pease family westward.

The First Westward Steps: New York (1819–1844)

The Pease family's migration did not occur all at once. Their eldest son, William Pease, was the first to leave Connecticut. After marrying in Tolland in 1819, William moved to Eaton, Madison County, New York before 1821, where he remained for the rest of his life. His early relocation marks the beginning of the family's transition from New England to the frontier.

By the mid-1820s, James Pease (our ancestor), Elijah and Anna's second son, brought his own family to western New York. Evidence from children's birthplaces and land records places James and his household in Napoli (later Cold Spring), Cattaraugus County, by 1824 or 1825. In 1827, James purchased a half-acre parcel with two other men—an early sign of investment and permanence in the region.

Napoli was still raw frontier. Early settlers relied on hunting, trapping, and lumbering, and the first significant road was not built until 1821. That two Pease men appeared so soon after land became available suggests both family coordination and a willingness to accept risk in exchange for opportunity.

By 1830, the family was geographically divided but still closely connected:

- William remained in Eaton, Madison County.
- James and his family lived in Napoli, Cattaraugus County.
- Over the next decade, Elijah, Sr., Elijah, Jr., and David also settled in the same Cold Spring area.

In 1835, James and his younger brother, Elijah Pease, Jr., jointly purchased 140 acres in Cattaraugus County, selling it seven months later at a profit. This transaction suggests both familiarity with land speculation and financial cooperation among brothers. By 1840, James had become town clerk of Cold Spring—evidence of his standing within the community.

Family Clusters and Shared Labor

The 1840 census provides a revealing snapshot of the Pease family's settlement pattern. Elijah, Sr., Elijah, Jr., and David lived near one another in Cold Spring, while James lived slightly farther away within the same town. Mason, the youngest son, was not yet head of a household and lived with his parents.

Although occupational records are sparse, the clustering of households strongly suggests cooperative farming and shared labor. The family's pattern mirrors that of many kin-based frontier settlements, where proximity ensured mutual assistance, economic survival, and social continuity.

The Final Migration: Kane County, Illinois

In the early 1840's, the Pease family joined a powerful stream of westward migration that carried thousands of western New York families into northern Illinois. After establishing themselves in Cold Spring (formerly Napoli) in Cattaraugus County, the Peases followed the dominant migration corridor of the era: traveling by wagon to the Erie Canal, moving west by canal boat to Buffalo, and then continuing by ship across the Great Lakes to Chicago. From Chicago, they completed the journey by wagon into the prairie interior, settling in Plato Township, where multiple family members soon acquired federal land. This route—canal, lake, and short overland travel—allowed the family to migrate together, including elderly parents, while transporting farm equipment and household goods that would have been nearly impossible to move by wagon alone.

The importance of this migration corridor in the Pease family's decision to move to Illinois cannot be overstated. By the 1830s, land in western New York had become increasingly scarce and expensive, while northern Illinois offered fertile prairie at the federal minimum price, often in parcels large enough to support multiple sons. The Erie Canal–Great Lakes system dramatically reduced both the cost and risk of long-distance relocation, transforming migration from a perilous gamble into a practical, strategic choice. For families like the Peases, the corridor made Illinois not merely attractive but attainable, enabling them to exchange crowded, aging farms in New York for expansive new opportunities in Kane County and to reestablish the family as a clustered, cooperative unit on the Midwestern frontier.

Purchasing Land

Once the Pease family reached Kane County, they identified tracts of land to purchase. Land records confirm that David Pease purchased two federal land patents in 1844, with additional purchases in 1846 and 1850. Mason Pease followed with land acquisitions in 1849 and 1850.

The 1850 census places Elijah and Anna, then aged 81 and 77, living in Plato, next door to David and Mason. All were engaged in farming. James and his family lived nearby but followed a different occupational path: James was listed as a blacksmith, suggesting both diversification within the family and adaptability to local economic needs.

This census is the last confirmed record of Elijah and Anna. No death records have yet been located, but it is almost certain they died in Plato after 1850. Claims placing Elijah's death in Vermont are demonstrably incorrect; the 1850 census shows an Elijah Pease living in Vermont while our ancestor is shown in the 1850 census in Plato Center. The weight of evidence supports Plato as their final home and likely burial place, though documentation has not survived.

James and Martha Saloma Pease: Continuity and Adaptation

James and his wife, Martha Saloma Cottrell, initially lived in Plato but moved to Burlington by 1860. Both obituaries indicate a brief residence in Missouri before returning to Kane County, a detour that reflects the continued mobility of mid-19th-century families even after initial settlement. Saloma died in 1880 in Burlington, and James later lived with his brother David before spending his final years with his daughter, Sarah Jane, and her husband, Daniel Cornell Wright. James died in 1883. James was buried beside Saloma in what was then known as North Plato, now identified as Plain (formerly Plane) Cemetery in Campton Hills. The cemetery, now abandoned and largely lost to time, stands as a quiet testament to the family's deep roots in Kane County.