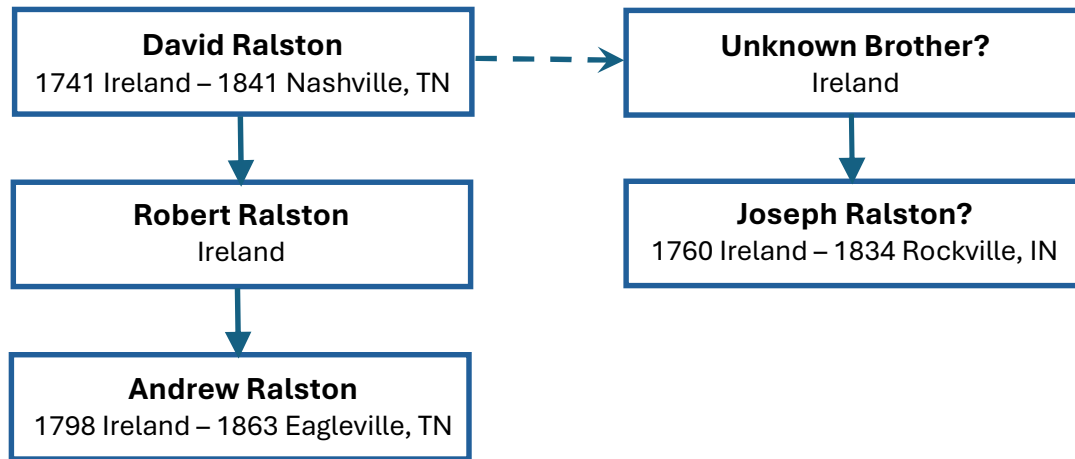


David Ralston's Nephew?

(This article is on davidralston.info)



David Ralston (1741-1832) was born in Ireland and settled near Nashville, Tennessee. It is assumed he was a widower because he left two children in Ireland. One of these children, Robert, had a son, Andrew, who also immigrated to the United States in 1820 and settled in Williamson County, Tennessee. Andrew is the ancestor of the “Eagleville” Ralstons.

David remarried in America to a Scottish immigrant, Mary Reid, whom he met in Pennsylvania. David and Mary had seven sons and one daughter, Alexander 1179, James Reid 1781, Samuel 1785, John 1787, George 1790, Catherine 1793, David 1798, and William 1801. (William, became a Cumberland Presbyterian minister, of significance noted below.)

David's grandchildren had been generally known, except it was unknown if his third son, Samuel, had any offspring. It was known that Samuel had lived in Lincoln County (where his older brother James lived) and that he later moved to Fayette County, in southwest Tennessee. It was also known that Samuel married Susanna Isaacks in 1817 in Lincoln County, who later left him.

Several years ago, DNA matches were discovered between descendants of Andrew Ralston and a descendant of a man named **David Thompson Ralston**. David T. Ralston was born in 1818 in Lincoln County, TN, and later lived in Fayette County. At around 18 years old, he left Tennessee for Missouri where he married and started a family. His wife died and later he moved to Kansas, remarried and had more children.

DNA indicated a high probability that David T. was a descendant of David Ralston, and considering the birth date and the locations in Tennessee where they lived that he was likely the son of Samuel Ralston. But additional information confirms that.



David Thompson Ralston
1818-1890

In 1889 in Kansas, not long before David T. died, he wrote a letter to his son, Daniel, in Oregon. The following is a deciphered transcript of that letter:

You wanted a history of the Ralston family. My grandfather was from Ireland and settled at Nashville, Tennessee, when it was a little Indian fort. He raised a family of boys. They were in Tennessee when the war came up. Since then, I have heard nothing of them. I have never seen a Tennessee Ralston, but what was close kin. Jou [Jos or Joe?] Ralston was a nephew of my grandfather's and went to Indiana in an early day and raised a large family of boys. That is about all I know about the connection. There is an old man in your country by the name of Neill Johnson, a Cumberland preacher that can tell you a good deal about the Ralston family. Him and Uncle William commenced preaching together. If you should see him, I would be glad if you would make yourself known to him.

(There was in fact a preacher named Neill Johnson, born in North Carolina, who studied at Cumberland College in Lebanon, the school and residence of Rev. William Ralston. Neill was preaching in Yamhill County, Oregon, at the time of the letter, about 13 miles from Daniel.)

The letter's description of his grandfather perfectly fits David Ralston, but the mention of a **nephew** is of great interest because no such relationship had previously been known. The letter was hard to decipher, but it was clear the name started with "Jo".

At the time David Ralston lived in Tennessee (between about 1786 to 1831) there was only one other Ralston family in the area. This was the family of Joseph Ralston (1760-1834). Joseph had immigrated from Ireland and eventually came to live in Lebanon, TN. He married Jane Walker in Nashville in 1796. Their children were Jeremiah, Robert, Joseph, Margaret and Matilda, all born in Lebanon, Tennessee.

According to the descendants of Joseph Ralston, he was born in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, and immigrated to Pennsylvania, "where others of his family and name had previously settled and lived there for some four years." According to a family document, "Joseph arrived 27 August 1784. In the following years he moved from Pennsylvania to Kentucky, where he did some Indian fighting under General Anthony Wayne. In 1793 he moved to Natchez Mississippi, then to Lebanon Tennessee."

The younger Joseph lived in Williamson County for a while and was listed on the same 1830 census page as Andrew Ralston. The following land transaction of David's son, Alexander, shows the families knew each other:

1826 (8/469) - Deed from John Roy to Alexander Ralston
proven by Bazel Trail and Joseph Ralston ordered to be certified

(Deeds were "proven" - in lieu of notarization - by two witnesses who knew the identity of the signers.)

The entire (elder) Joseph Ralston family later left Tennessee and moved to Indiana. His son Jeremiah left Indiana and traveled by wagon train to Oregon and is famous for founding the city of Lebanon, in Linn County.



Jeremiah Ralston
1798–1877
Founder of Lebanon OR

So, based on David T.'s letter and coincidental facts, it is a logical conclusion that Joseph, Sr., was the nephew of David Ralston mentioned in the letter.

To confirm this, a descendant of Jeremiah Ralston was recruited to take a yDNA test. In the Ralston Project at FTDNA, there were several "Ralston" men, with ancestors tied to Northern Ireland, shown to be related by yDNA, including descendants of David Ralston. This test did show that Joseph and David were related, but (initially) did not show any closer relationship than to any other ancestor of the descendant's yDNA matches. This was true even after upgrading to the highest-level testing.

However, recently the results for all 37 men were analyzed by a program that uses all the available DNA information and produces a phylogenetic tree predicting how each person descended from their common ancestor. (All 37 have a common ancestor predicted to have been born around 1550.)

From just the DNA information, this program indicated that Joseph and David were, indeed, more closely related. The following is a snippet of a tree based on that analysis:



This analysis supports David Thompson Ralston's letter that Joseph Ralston was the nephew of David Ralston. (The full tree is shown on the next page. All the persons listed on the tree are/were kin.)

