
English Origins of The Gazlay Family

*An examination of the meaning, origin, growth and
distribution of the surname, variations in spelling
and pronunciation, occurrences of the name in early
English records, and possible ancestral links between
American and English families*

THIRD EDITION

Robert Lee Gazlay

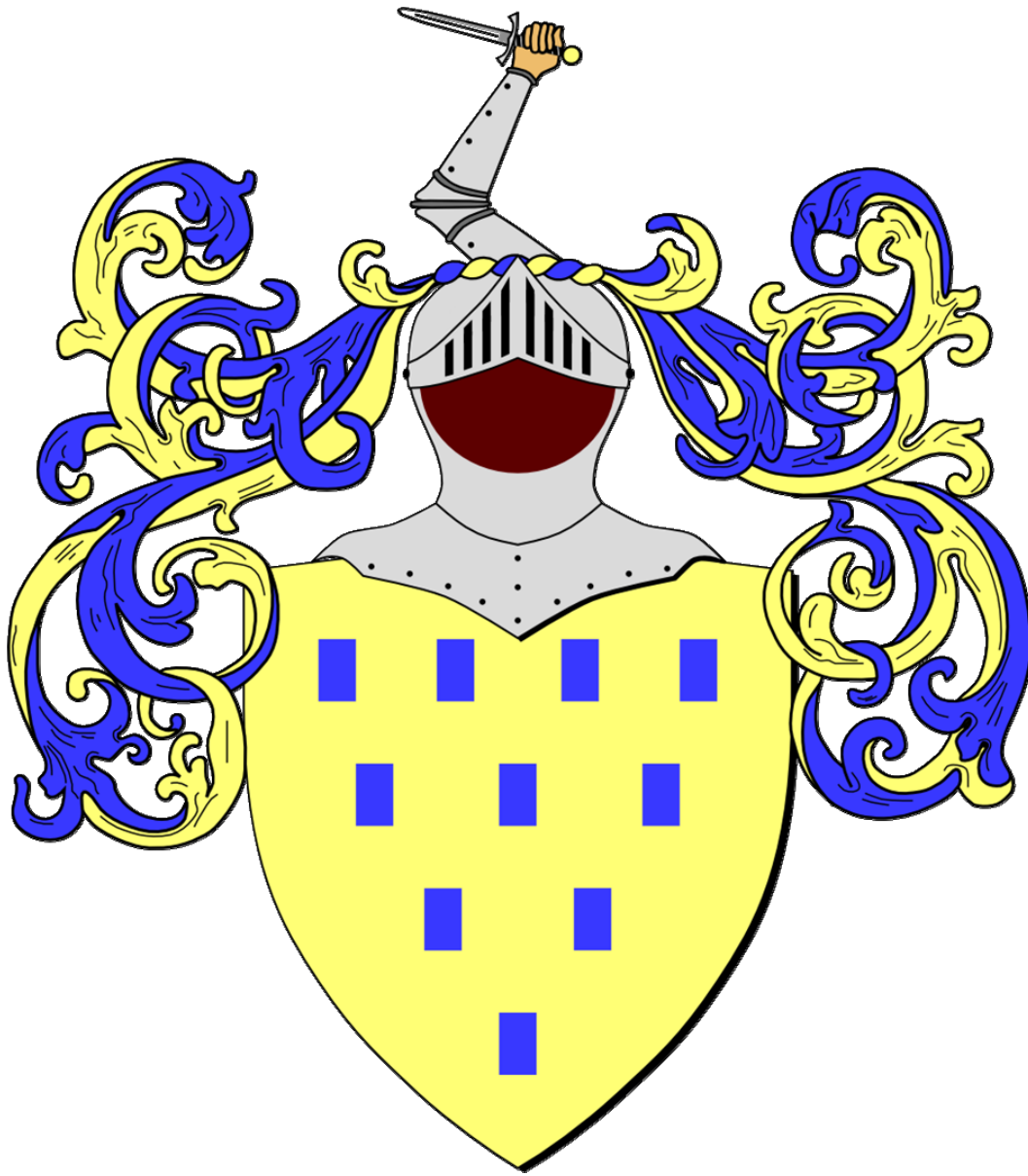


Figure 1. Armorial Bearings of Sir Stephen Gaselee, Knight Bachelor

Arms: Or, ten billets azure, four, three, two and one.

Crest: An arm embowed in armour, holding in the hand proper, a dagger argent hilt and pommel or.

The helm affronté with visor raised is befitting of this rank.

English Origins of The Gazlay Family

*An examination of the meaning, origin, growth and
distribution of the surname, variations in spelling
and pronunciation, occurrences of the name in early
English records, and possible ancestral links
between American and English families*

THIRD EDITION

Robert Lee Gazlay

English Origins of the Gazlay Family

© 1995-2009 by Robert Lee Gazlay

First edition 1995

Third edition

All rights reserved
including the right of reproduction
in whole or in part in any form

Permission is hereby granted to copy and distribute
(but not sell) this work as a complete document
including this copyright page

Robert Lee Gazlay
42900 Overly Square
South Riding, VA 20152
USA

Comments and contributions to this work are eagerly solicited

Contents

List of Illustrations.....	v
Preface.....	vii
Previous Research.....	1
Meaning, Spelling and Pronunciation of the Surname	3
The Parish and Village of Gazeley	9
The Surname in Early English Records.....	10
Growth and Distribution of the Surname in England	14
Traditional American Accounts of the Gazlay Family History	17
Gaselee Coat of Arms	19
Possible Ancestral Families of John Gazlay I	21
Conclusion	23

Illustrations

Figures

1. Armorial Bearings of Sir Stephen Gaselee, Knight Bachelor	<i>frontispiece</i>
2. Male Descendants of John Gazlay I	7
3. A Gazely Family of Norfolk, England.....	21
4. A Gaseley Family of Bedfordshire, England.....	22

Tables

1. Common Ways of Pronouncing the Surname.....	6
2. Spelling Variations	7
3. The Surname in British Records	15

Maps

1. Suffolk County, England	8
2. Surname Migration and Distribution	16

Preface

With the opportunity to live in England during 1992-95, I undertook the task to research the English origins of the Gazlay¹ family. In America, nearly all Gazlay/Gazley families claim descent from a John Gazlay (herein called **John I**) who apparently emigrated from England in 1715 or 1717. Missing from the collective American Gazlay records (and folklore) is the definitive link to England. This work compiles information from numerous published and unpublished sources, and draws some tentative conclusions about the family history and the origins of the surname.

The research indicates that, except in a few isolated cases, clear lines of ancestry and descent among English Gazlay families are difficult to reliably establish before the nineteenth century.

In order that readers fully understand the results of the research contained in this document, the key conclusion demands emphasis:

**John Gazlay I's immediate English ancestors
have not been positively identified.**

Two families, one in the English county of Norfolk, the other in Bedfordshire, have been shown as possible ancestral families, but neither can be claimed as John I's ancestors based solely on the research in this document. It is hoped that additional research will establish a firm connection between American and English Gazlay families.

The surname most likely originates from the parish or village of Gazeley (the modern spelling), in Suffolk County. The name may trace to Norman-French origins or to earlier Anglo-Saxon or Old English origins, with a literal meaning "Gaegi's Leah," (i.e. Gaegi's meadow, wood, or clearing). However, various sources suggest other roots and meanings.

The earliest examples of individuals with names resembling 'Gazlay' are found in English records of the thirteenth century, around the same time that references to the parish of Gazeley first appear. This was a transitional period in surname development. In that time and earlier, a person was commonly known only by a given name, possibly with a modifier indicating place of origin, residence, occupation, etc. The idea of hereditary surnames was still developing, only

¹ For simplicity, the spelling 'Gazlay' is used predominantly throughout this document, except when referring to a particular individual whose preferred spelling is known, or when citing a name from a specific record. At least 50 spelling variations have been encountered, and records often show the surname spelled several different ways when referring to the same individual or family group. It is unlikely that all people bearing this or similar surnames share a common ancestor although most are likely related to each other. The most common spellings today are Gazlay, Gazley, Gazeley and Gazely.

becoming widespread several centuries later. The early name-form ‘de Gaysle’ suggests an individual ‘from Gaysle,’ although **no record has been found specifically showing anyone with a name resembling ‘Gazlay’ as having lived in the parish or village of Gazeley.** By the 1500s the ‘de’ was dropped from the name. Both the surname and the village name show similar variations in spelling over the centuries.

Research in England proved challenging. Documents that mention the surname (and those of similar spelling) generally contain little more than vital statistics (dates of birth, baptism, marriage, death; locations; and given names or initials). No previously published or printed English Gazeley family histories have been found at the Society of Genealogists in London (the primary place where I conducted research). English Gazeley families contacted in the course of research (eight substantial responses out of over 40 mailings) had only relatively recent information dating back a few generations. Still, the information I have collected is worth compiling, since it may contain clues to the overall profile of the family, and may help other Gazeley/Gazlay/Gazley families in tracing their history.

One note is in order regarding the nature of the records consulted. In many cases, only secondary sources (such as indexes or compiled/transcribed summaries) were consulted, rather than primary sources (i.e., original documents or copies thereof). While it is true such secondary sources are sometimes inaccurate, most often they are not, or the errors are inconsequential to the intended use of the information. For example, secondary sources may be adequate to document a family history beyond a reasonable doubt. Primary sources, on the other hand, must be heavily, if not exclusively, used to establish a legal claim based on heredity, where the standard of proof is much higher. From a practical standpoint, secondary sources are usually more accessible and freely consulted (at the Society of Genealogists, for example), whereas original documents can be difficult or costly to consult (such as at St. Catherine House, London). The distinction among sources may not seem significant, but for the serious family historian or genealogist, making the distinction enhances the credibility of the information found. Therefore, in this work, sources are identified where known, so the reader can weigh the information presented here compared to information obtained elsewhere.

The second edition corrects several typographical and factual errors, adds details from a few recently found sources of information, and prints several illustrations in color.

The third edition also makes editorial improvements, and includes completely updated illustrations throughout. Most important in the third edition is the emphasis on the conclusion of the document, that John I’s English ancestors have not been positively identified. Some examples on internet web pages have been found that claim as fact the Norfolk family shown herein as John I’s ancestors. I believe this has resulted from a misreading of previous editions of this document, or because the conclusion has been distorted by simplification while being passed orally from one person to another.

Previous Research

Many people have endeavored to research the origins of the Gazlay family. Stuart Wade, a professional genealogist and at one time Librarian in Charge, Genealogical and Local History Department, New York Public Library, was hired by Aribert Gazlay of Ohio around 1901 to research the family origins and produce a genealogy. Mr. Wade sent post cards and letters to many Gazlay families, soliciting information about the family origins and requesting present-day family histories, photographs, etc. He posted the following query in The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register in January 1902:²

Gazlay.—Stuart C. Wade, 308 West 33rd St., New York city, is compiling a genealogy of the descendants of John Gazlay, who settled at Goshen, Orange Co., N.Y., in 1717, and would be glad to correspond with members of the family.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wade died in 1904 (as indicated in surviving correspondence from Aribert), and his work was apparently never completed. Transcribed notes attributed to Mr. Wade indicate that he believed the family originated in Norfolk or Suffolk Counties, England, with earlier Norman-French roots. The following notes are quoted from “Gazlay History,”³ an unpublished document compiled by Margaret Howe, an American Gazlay descendant:

GENEALOGICAL GLEANINGS

...John Gazeley of Burnham, Thorpe, Norfolk
...John Gaslee--20 acres, 5 negroes—parish register 1630 of Christ Church
July 3 bapty—1678/9

GAZLAY FAMILY

Stuart C. Wade

While there is good reason to believe that the name Gazlay is derived from the Village of Gazely in Suffolk, England, recent discoveries in the records of early England make it extremely probable that the village and the family obtain the name from the Norman-French Gascelin, or Gacelin. In a rare manuscript in the Library of Cambridge University the name appears as early as 1300.

...a Walter Garplee is mentioned in a will in London as early as 1361.
...there is a will in existence of John Garpley of Blythburg, Suffolk in 1564.
...a will of John Gazley of Beccles in the same county in 1594.

The first ancestor traceable in America is John Gazlay, who was in New York State about 1715, settled in Dutchess County, marrying one Elizabeth Sayre and having one son. Neither he nor his son were members of Continental Congress as tradition says. There were however several in the family in the Revolutionary

² The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register, Volume LVI – January 1902, Published by the New England Historical Genealogical Society, Boston, 1902, page 96.

³ “Gazlay History,” compiled by Margaret Howe, 1955-56. This passage is quoted exactly as it appears in her document. Several spelling or typographical errors are suspected in her notes. For example, the village in Suffolk, England today is spelled ‘Gazeley,’ and the names ‘Garplee’ and ‘Garpley’ are apparently cited as ‘Gayslee’ and ‘Gaysely’ in the actual documents. Also, Sir Stephen’s surname is correctly spelled ‘Gaselee.’ Further, although the notes cite Dutchess County as the place John Gazlay settled, most descendants understand that he settled in Goshen, Orange County, New York. His son John II and several of his children did live in Dutchess County, however.

Army. The English Gazelees have sent their pedigree for inclusion in the book of the Gazlays and with it a plate of an oil painting of the Justice Sir Stephen Gazelee, from whom Dickens drew the pen portrait of Mr. Justice Straeleigh in the *Picwick Trial*. There is need for considerable searching of wills, county records, and other documents here and in England to make the book complete. They have the coat of arms, crest and the motto used by the Gaselees in England.

It is desirable to insert in the book of the Gazlays half-tone views of the old Gazlay Cemetery in Ostego County [NY], and the grave yard of the Gazlays on the Pacific Slope. But the greatest need is for a thorough search of the English records to find whence the first John Gazlay came.

—Stuart C. Wade

The fate of Mr. Wade's original research notes is uncertain, although Aribert may have acquired them after Mr. Wade's death. Aribert Gazlay himself endeavored to research the family origins during the same period, soliciting information in a British periodical:⁴

GAZLAY FAMILY. Search is now being made for the birthplace of John Gazlay, an Englishman, who emigrated to America in 1717, and settled at Goshen, Orange County, New York. Family tradition, possibly erroneous, attributes to him a Welsh origin. Major-General Sir Alfred Gaselee is of opinion that there is no possibility of relationship with his family, which deduces a descent from a Gaselee, possibly a continental emigrant, who is found at Portsmouth in 1650. There is, of course, the village of Gasely, in Suffolk, to supply a place-name, and Sir Alfred Gaselee is so kind as to inform me of a family of Gazeley in England. I shall be very grateful for names and addresses of members of this family, or for extracts from church registers, or instances of the occurrence of the name, for an account of the family which I am now printing.

ARIBERT GAZLAY.

Chamber of Commerce Building, Cincinnati.

Although Aribert apparently gathered information from various family sources, he might not have actually published the information. There are a few isolated references to a "History of the Gazlay Family" by Aribert Gazlay, one in an April, 1923, article in *The Houston Chronicle*,⁵ and another in a biographical sketch of Thomas Jefferson Gazlay in Men Who Made Texas Free.⁶ Unfortunately, a copy of Aribert's "History" has never been found. Inquiries with his descendants may reveal the full scope of his research. Margaret Howe's "Gazlay History" may, in fact, comprise the total extent of Aribert's (and Mr. Wade's) research of the family history.

The oldest known Gazlay family history is "Genealogy of the Gazlay Family,"⁷ collated by Theodore Gazlay, and annotated "from old bibles, and older relatives, in the year 1890, at Cincinnati, State of Ohio." It includes a transcribed "Statement by Rev. Sayrs Gazlay—made in 1852, relating to the Gazlay family." The statement outlines the immigrant John Gazlay and some biographical details (but few birth, marriage or death dates) of his descendants in the succeeding three generations. The balance of Theodore Gazlay's seven page "Genealogy" fills in some gaps, including birth dates of early members of the family, and finishes with details of Theodore's family.

⁴ *Notes and Queries*, Ninth Series—Volume IX. January – June 1902, London. Office, Bream's Buildings, Chancery Lane, E.C. by John C. Francis. No. 215, February 8, 1902, p. 108.

⁵ *The Houston Chronicle*, Houston, Texas, April 1923.

⁶ Samuel Houston Dixon, Men Who Made Texas Free, Texas Historical Publishing Company, Houston, Texas, 1924.

⁷ "Genealogy of the Gazlay Family," compiled by Theodore Gazlay, 1890.

Meaning, Spelling and Pronunciation of the Surname

The exact origin of 'Gazlay' and similar surnames is at best uncertain, if the variety of meanings suggested by multiple sources is any indication. However, as Mr. Wade asserted, it seems likely that the family traces to the parish or village of Gazeley in Suffolk, England. Some surname dictionaries infer the link, citing 'of Gazeley' as the meaning of the surname, either standing alone or along with other definitions. Convincing evidence for the village as the family's origin is found in the surname variations of early English records, discussed later.

Before examining the specific meaning of the surname 'Gazlay,' it is useful to note how surnames in general developed in England. An excellent discussion of the subject is contained in The Oxford Guide to Family History,⁸ key parts of which are quoted below:

During the two centuries or so that followed the Conquest [in 1066] most major landowning families and many Knights adopted hereditary surnames, especially if they lived in the south of England, the Midlands or East Anglia. Fashion played some part in this process, for the desire to conform is always strong, but the need to secure hereditary tenure in the uncertain period of Norman rule was probably of paramount importance. For this reason, a high proportion of these surnames were derived from the place where the family had its main residence. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was a common practice for the senior line of a major landowning family to adopt a hereditary surname of this type, while junior branches gradually acquired different surnames. It was not then a matter of prestige or status for junior branches to claim a connection through a common surname with the mightiest of families in the land.

The desire of smaller landowners to ensure the continuity of their property was probably as strong a reason for adoption of hereditary surnames as it was amongst the richer groups of society. Whatever the reason, the fashion spread slowly downwards, taking hold first in the south and in East Anglia, between 1250 and 1350. Even in these prosperous and populous parts of England, however, many people who were assessed for the poll tax in the years 1379-81 were recorded without a surname. Nevertheless, by the fifteenth century the practice had been adopted by almost everyone.

Practically every surname that exists today has its origins among the following categories: personal names; pet names (i.e., shortened forms of personal names); nicknames (i.e., derived from a character or quality); occupations; topographical (i.e., derived from features of the landscape); or locative (i.e., identified with particular places). Of these, only the last two seem to show any potential for the origin of the 'Gazlay' surname. The Oxford Guide elaborates:

Many of the topographical surnames that are recorded between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries are preceded by a preposition, signifying at, under, over, by, etc. or by French prepositions and articles, such as 'de,' 'de la,' or 'del.'

It is always necessary to go back to the earliest recorded spellings of both the surname and the place-name, for either one or both may have been substantially altered over the years. Matching a modern form of a surname with a modern form of a place-name is a dangerous business.

This caution is particularly noteworthy because of the similarity between the English village name (Gazeley) and the surname in all its varieties.

⁸ David Hay, The Oxford Guide to Family History, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993.

So, where does the surname ‘Gazlay’ (and similar) originate? Surname dictionaries and like sources contain some useful information on the possible origins and meaning of the surname. One reference attributes the name to “Gaselee—Local, ‘of Gazeley’”, and gives examples of four individuals bearing this or similar surnames from 1273 to 1669 (Gasele, Gasleye and Gasley).⁹

A popular meaning among some present-day residents of Gazeley is “to look or gaze over the meadow” (gaze: to look over; ley: meadow or grassland). Indeed, the village of Gazeley¹⁰ commands a somewhat higher ground than the surrounding fields and villages. However, this is almost certainly a modern, derivative etymology, as no literature has been found that supports the notion of ‘gazing’ in connection with the surname or village name.

More plausible as an origin of the village name is “Gaegi’s Leah,”¹¹ implying a meadow owned by a person named Gaega or Gaegi. This source also cites several phonetically similar surnames from the 1200s (Gaysle, Gasel[e], and Gaisle). Another reference indicates “Gaegi’s clearing.”¹² Mr. Wade suggests “Gaegi’s wood” as a literal meaning, but without a citation. Pronouncing “Gaegi” with a hard first *g* (as in the word ‘game’), and a short second *g* (as in the word ‘orange’), it’s easy to speculate how “Gaegi’s Leah” may have evolved into ‘Gazeley.’

Other sources suggest Scandinavian and English origins of the surname. One source gives a literal meaning “dweller at the Goose-lea”,¹³ with *gase*, or *ga’s*, a goose (Scandinavian); plus *lee*, or *leah* (Old English), and this source also mentions the village of Gazeley in Suffolk “spelt Gasele in the 13th century.” Another source translates Gazeley to “goose-meadow; local, Suffolk; or French, Gasly; a personal name.”¹⁴

Another possible origin is suggested under a discussion of names derived from animals, specifically the goose, where “Gaze or Gazely may be from a different root again. There is an Old German Gaiso, 6th century, which Först refers to *gais* as an old form of *ger*, spear.”¹⁵

Support for a Germanic origin of the surname is also offered in a family Bible given by Theodore Gazlay to his daughter Hannah in 1867.¹⁶ The Bible inscription apparently says, in part, “Our ancestors as far as known came from England. Our name is supposed to be of Germanic origin. In England the name was originally spelled Gasalee, the first syllable pronounced long.” This is most likely an example of documenting oral history or tradition.

⁹ Charles Wareing Bardsley, M.A., Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, MD, 1967.

¹⁰ The present village is little more than a crossroad. It has a combined general store and post office, a town hall, an elementary school, a medieval church, and a population of 700 in 1992 (down from 710 in 1991), according to the 1991 Census and the Suffolk County Council Planning Department.

¹¹ Eilert Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place-Names, Oxford University Press, London, 4th Ed., 1960.

¹² Wendy Goult, A Survey of Suffolk Parish History, Suffolk County Council, 1990.

¹³ Henry Harrison, Surnames of the United Kingdom, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore 1969.

¹⁴ Surname Book and Racial History, Susa Young Gates, Editor and Compiler, Salt Lake City, UT, 1918.

¹⁵ Robert Furguson, English Surnames and Their Place in the Teutonic Family, George Routledge & Co., London and New York, 1858.

¹⁶ As cited in unpublished notes of Gerard Gazlay, Jr., January, 1980.

Still another origin is proposed: “Gazeley, a local name, Suffolk; and Gossellies, a local name, Belgium or French Gasly; a personal name.”¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, Mr. Wade suggested the Norman-French Gascelin, or Gacelin, as the origin of the family and village names.

Aribert Gazlay doubted an earlier account of John I’s ancestry being Welsh: “Family tradition, possibly erroneous, attributes to him a Welsh origin.”¹⁸ Indeed, examination of the International Genealogical Index (IGI)¹⁹ for all Welsh counties from the 1500s to present shows only one instance of the surname. This, coupled with other research of English records, gives strong reason to discount any claim of Welsh origins for the family. A California Newspaper article²⁰ highlighting the life of Wadham Gazlay claims that “the surname is Scottish,” without elaboration. As with Welsh records, no Scottish records have been found to support this assertion.

The use of ‘Gazely’ as a *given* name is indicated in an index of the parish registers of South Creak, Norfolk, England.²¹ In this index, surnames are listed first, followed by given names. Members of one family group in the mid-1700s, surname apparently “Alexander,” are cited in several baptism entries, a marriage entry, and as witnesses to other marriages. Several of these entries refer to “Alexander, Gazely” implying ‘Gazely’ as a given name. However, this could be a transposition of given and surnames either by the original register recorder or by the person who later compiled the index. Checking the actual parish register would clarify this anomaly.



The study of surnames in general reveals wide variations in spelling and pronunciation even within closely related families, but examining such variations (even if only in the modern context) may be useful in understanding the origins of a surname. The variety in the spellings of surnames often reflects a lack of consistency in record keeping and varying degrees of literacy among family members and record keepers alike, particularly before the end of the nineteenth century. The pronunciation of surnames may be less varied, but rarely is pronunciation addressed in literature. Remarkably, Theodore Gazlay addressed the pronunciation and spelling of the surname in his “Genealogy of the Gazlay Family” in 1890,²² where he said:

The original ancestors of the Gazlay family came to the United States, from England. The name has undergone some changes, in spelling and pronunciation. Where our ancestors first landed, in the State of New York, the name was pronounced with long sound of the letter *a* in the first syllable, as though spelled Gazeley; and is still so pronounced in the East, and in the West it is pronounced, with short sound of *a*, Gazlay; this would seem to indicate the pronunciation Gazeley, came from England, with our ancestors, where they first landed.

¹⁷ Rev. Henry Barber, *British Family Names*, London, 1903, p. 149.

¹⁸ *Notes and Queries*, Ninth Series—Volume IX, February 8, 1902, p. 108.

¹⁹ International Genealogical Index, compiled and published by the Mormon Church. Note that although the IGI is extensive, its coverage of parish register data in the United Kingdom is uneven, but it is a readily accessible source that helps narrow the field of enquiry. Also, few IGI entries are shown for the 20th century.

²⁰ *The San Diego Union*, Sunday, December 3, 1978.

²¹ Rev. J. P. Hill and C. V. Appleton, *The Parish Registers of South Creak, Norfolk*, 1950, pgs. 63-65.

²² “Genealogy of the Gazlay Family,” Collated by Theodore Gazlay.

Nearly all ‘Gazlay’ and like families today pronounce the surname with emphasis on the first of two syllables. The first syllable is usually pronounced one of two ways: with a long *a* sound as in the word ‘gaze,’ or with a short *a* sound as in the word ‘has.’ The second syllable again reflects two dominant variations: pronounced with a long *e* sound as in the word ‘lee,’ or with a long *a* sound as in the word ‘lay.’ All four combinations are in use today. Even the same spelling may be pronounced in several ways depending on the specific family.

		<i>SECOND SYLLABLE</i>	
		Long <i>e</i> (as in ‘lee’)	Long <i>a</i> (as in ‘lay’)
<i>FIRST SYLLABLE</i>	Long <i>a</i> (as in ‘gaze’)	Gazeley, Gazley, Gazely	Gazlay
	Short <i>a</i> (as in ‘has’)	Gazley	Gazlay

Table 1. Common Ways of Pronouncing the Surname

Variations also occur in how the *z* is pronounced, most usually with a hard, raspy sound as in the word ‘zoom,’ though occasionally with a softer *s* sound. Families who spell the surname with an *s* instead of a *z* apparently use the softer *s* sound exclusively. An examination of 1993 residential telephone directories for America (in computer CD ROM format) and England (in printed form) shows that spelling variations using the *s* are extremely uncommon.

A few spelling variations suggest that the name may have been pronounced in some families with an intermediate syllable, pronounced with a short *i* as in the word ‘it.’ For example, ‘Gazily’ probably was pronounced ‘gaze-i-lee.’ Surnames with this form of spelling and pronunciation are also rare today.



Many of the early (thirteenth and fourteenth century) spellings included ‘de’ in front of the name, as in ‘de Gayslee.’ As previously discussed, this seems to imply that people with those surnames came from a place of the same name, and may also suggest a French origin. By the 1500s, the ‘de’ was dropped from use.

A 1993 CD ROM directory for the United States shows the following occurrences of surnames (discounting multiple entries at the same address): 49 Gazlay, 49 Gazley, 35 Gazeley and one each Gasele, Gaseley, Gasley and Gazeli. Practically all American families descended from John I spell their name either Gazlay or Gazley. It would seem, then, that American families using other spellings are probably not descended from John I.

John I²³ had only one child, John II, who in turn had six sons, as shown in figure 2. The descendants of two of John II’s sons (John III and James) use the ‘Gazlay’ spelling, while at least some of the descendants from two other sons (Jonathan and Joseph) use the ‘Gazley’

²³ The suffixes I, II, and III are the author’s devices for differentiating the multiple John Gazlays. The individuals may not have used those suffixes.

spelling. The fifth son (Benjamin) had no male heirs, and descendants of the sixth son (Daniel) are unknown. Sayrs Gazlay said about his grandfather John II, “Losing his father when very young...[John II] ascertained the way his name was spelled by finding a note his father had given and taken up among some old papers.”²⁴ John II’s name is found as Gazlay, Gazley and Gazely in various records of the 1700s. Sayrs also asserted that “our ancestors were English. No Gazlays [are] in this country except descendents of John II.”

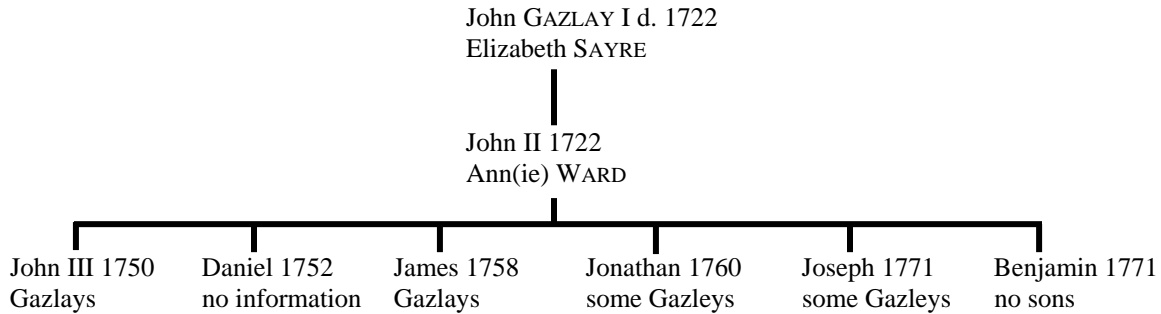


Figure 2. Male Descendants of John Gazlay I

Table 2 shows the variety of spellings for both the surname and village name encountered in American and English records. For many of these variations, only one isolated instance has been found in the records, suggesting that the recorder didn’t know of a standardized form of spelling. This is found particularly in records before 1800. Of the variations listed, only a few are in common use today. This is neither an exhaustive list nor is there any claim that similarity among the spelling variations indicates a common ancestry.

There is no single “correct” way to spell or pronounce the surname. Out of courtesy, one should spell and pronounce it the way a specific family or individual prefers, even if, for example, your family spells it the same way but pronounces it differently.

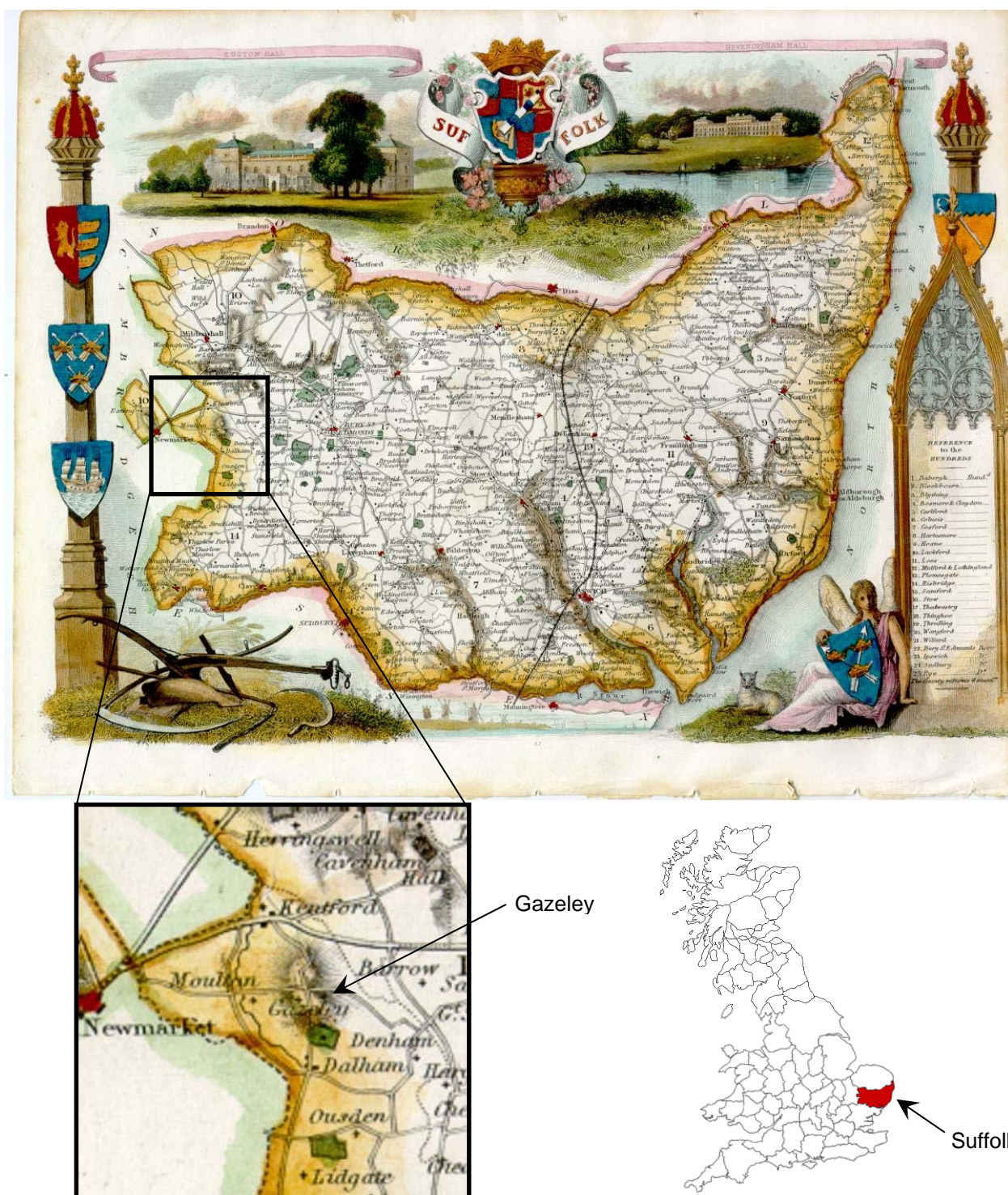
de Gaisele	Gaizley	Gaslee	Gayseley	Gazeli
de Gasele	Gasalee	Gasley	Gaysely	Gazelie
de Gaysele	Gaselae	Gasleye	Gayse	Gazely*
de Gayselee	Gasele	Gasly	Gaysee	Gazilee
de Gaysle	Gaselee	Gaslye	Gayseley	Gazily
de Gayslee	Gaseley	Gasslee	Gazaley	Gazlay*
Gaeslea	Gaseleye	Gassley	Gazelay	Gazle
Gaiesley	Gaselie	Gayesle	Gazelee	Gazley*
Gaisle	Gasely	Gayesley	Gazeley*	Gazly
Gaisley	Gaselye	Gaysele	Gazeleye	Geaslee

* These four account for 97% of all American and English spellings in common use today.

Table 2. Spelling Variations

²⁴ Transcribed statement by Rev. Sayrs Gazlay in “Genealogy of the Gazlay Family,” Collated by Theodore Gazlay.

English Origins of the Gazlay Family



Map 1. Suffolk County, England

A map circa 1840 by Thomas Moule showing the village of Gazeley

The Parish and Village of Gazeley

Gazeley is a parish in Risbridge Hundred,²⁵ Suffolk County, about five miles east of Newmarket, the English horse capital. See map 1. The early history of the parish is sketchy, but perhaps the best account appears in The Manors of Suffolk,²⁶ parts of which are recounted in the following paragraphs.

Nothing appears in the [Domesday] Survey [of 1086] under the head Gazeley, but under the head “Deselinga,” which is Desning Hall in Gazeley, we have one entry. A manor was held here in Saxon times by Wisgar... The Domesday tenant was Richard, son of Earl Gislebert [an early spelling of Gilbert].

The early Manor of Gazeley contained several submanors, including (as above) Desning Hall *al.* Castle Hall Manor, and the Manor of Gazeley Rectory. The main manor is specifically mentioned in the inquis. p.m. of Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, in 1262. The de Clare family held the manor until 1348 when it was vested in Sir Thomas Passelowe. In 1429 Thomas Heigham inherited the manor as heir of Robert Heigham, and in 1827 the manor was vested in Sir James Affleck.

The Manor of Gazeley Rectory was also the estate of Richard, son of Earl Gislebert at the time of the Survey. Roger de Clare, Earl of Hereford, granted the church of Gazeley to the monastery of the village of Stoke by Clare (in southern Suffolk), and in 1225, Pope Honarius confirmed the great tithe of Gazeley to that house.

Minister’s Accounts of “Gazeley Manor and Church” in 1324 will be found in the Public Record Office.

The Gazeley parish registers date from 35 Henry VIII (i.e., the 35th year of the reign of Henry VIII, or 1543-4)²⁷ but no individuals appear in the registers with surname Gazeley or similar.

The Manors of Suffolk generally uses the modern surname spelling ‘Gazeley,’ although other spellings (Gazley and Gazely) also appear. The village is referred to most commonly as Gaysle, but also as Gaysele, Gaisle and Gayslee in other early Suffolk records.²⁸

Maps of Suffolk County show a progression of spellings. A map by C. Saxton and W. Kip printed *circa* 1607, one of the earliest Suffolk maps published, shows ‘Gayesley.’ The spectacular 1614 map by Jonathan Speed shows ‘Gaiesley’ on the map itself and ‘Gaselye’ on the list of villages accompanying the map. A 1695 map by Robert Dorden spells the village ‘Gaysley,’ as does a 1750 map by E. Bowen. John Cary’s 1787 and 1792 maps show ‘Gazely.’ The highly decorative maps by Thomas Moule (1836 and after), such as the one shown on map 1, call the village ‘Gazeley,’ as does the 1860 map by H. G. Collins, and subsequent maps by other mapmakers.

²⁵ English counties are divided into sections called *hundreds*.

²⁶ W. A. Copinger, The Manors of Suffolk, Vol. 5, Manchester, 1909. This authoritative work contains numerous citations to primary sources such as the Domesday Survey, patent rolls, hundred rolls and inquisitions.

²⁷ Kelly's Directory of Suffolk, London, 1937, pg 163.

²⁸ A Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Suffolk 1189-1482, Walter Rye, Ipswich, 1900.

The Surname in Early English Records

Various early English records mention individuals with the surname 'Gazeley' or similar. These records include Charter and Hundred Rolls,²⁹ Feet of Fines,³⁰ wills, parish records and official lists. Few relationships can be established among the individuals mentioned, owing to the nature of the records and the infrequency of 'Gazeley' entries. The exception is parish records, where many family relationships are specified or can be constructed, but surviving parish records seldom predate the mid-1500s. Nevertheless, an examination of the entries in all these records is instructive for two reasons. First, it suggests that the surname originated in the Norfolk/Suffolk area and spread slowly to surrounding counties. Second, frequent use of the 'de' prefix in the earliest records supports the notion that the family traces to a place called 'Gazeley.'

Listed below in chronological order are instances of the surname that have been found in English records. There are undoubtedly others.

- Gaysle, 1219 in Feet of Fines for Norfolk 1198-1202 as mentioned in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place Names.³¹
- Gasel[e], 1248 in Charter Rolls also in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place Names.
- Gaisle, 1254, The Valuation of Norwich.³²
- Alexander de Gasele and Andrew de Gasele (relationship unknown) are mentioned in the Hundred Rolls for Norfolk in 1273, according to the Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames.³³
- Besides mentioning a John de Gaysle "the younger," apparently a landowner, one source³⁴ demonstrates how people's names often reflected the places where they lived. Note the variation of names for several brothers in this account of a land dispute:

Mention has been made already of the dispute in 1300 A.D., between two religious houses of Anglesey and Tonbridge. In the same year the former house also had a quarrel with a land owner in Bottisham named Hugh le Usser, the son of Margaret, the wife of Hugh le Usser, who had been before a benefactor to the house. The following is the account of the pleadings in Assize (plac. 27 Edw. I. m.18.): "The assize comes to acknowledge whether Roger, Prior of Anglesey, brother John de Bodekesham, brother William de Anglesey, Richard the blessed, William de Weston, Peter de

²⁹ A Hundred Roll lists residents in the hundred mainly for the purpose of collecting taxes.

³⁰ Here, "fine" is not the modern "payment of a penalty," but refers to payment or other conveyance to transfer land (primarily) or as compensation for rents due, marriage, freedom from indenture (as an apprentice) or for other services. The "foot of the fine" is the section of a document or deed that is filed for the court's records, and is so called because it makes a final end to a dispute.

³¹ Eilert Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place-Names, Oxford University Press, London, 4th Ed., 1960.

³² The Valuation of Norwich, Ed. W.E. Lunt, Oxford, 1926.

³³ Charles Wareing Bardsley, M.A., Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, MD, 1967.

³⁴ Edward Hailstone, Jun., The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Bottisham and the Priory of Anglesey in Cambridgeshire, Cambridge, 1873, page 248.

Fulburn, Hugh Aluard, John de Cotemore, William, the son of Gilbert le Ken, William Danbe, Henry the son of Walter of the fen, John de Gaysle, the younger, and Alan the Palmer, unjustly, &c., disseised Hugh, the usher of Bodekesham, of his common pasture in Bodekesham which belongs to his free tenement in the same town since the first, &c.” [The text continues with a detailed description of the land at issue and Hugh’s claim to it. The Assize resolved the dispute, finding that] “brother John de Bodekesham, brother William, John de Cotemor, Gilbert le Ken, and William, unjustly &c., disseised him...” [The claim against the others, including John de Gaysle, the younger, was found to be false.]

- Listed in the Feet of Fines for Suffolk is an entry naming a de Gaysele father and son, and an apparent reference to the village: “2 Edward II [i.e., 1309] Gilbert son of Walter de Gaysele v. Robert de Pakenham of Mildenhale and Johanna his wife in Gaysele.”³⁵ Mildenhale (now Mildenhall) is a prominent town a few miles north of Gazeley.
- Meanwhile, in the same year, a few miles west in Cambridgeshire, another de Gaysle is found in the county records: “Isabelle Huberd v. William de Gaysle and Margaret his wife in Swafham Bulbeck.”³⁶
- Willielmus de Gaysle, possibly the same person as above, appears on 21 different dates from 6 May 1319 to 23 April 1343 in the Norfolk Official Lists as a Member of Parliament for Yarmouth.³⁷ He is listed as “William” in the last two entries, and his surname is variously shown as de Gaysele (nine times); de Gaysle (eight times); de Gasele, de Gayselee, de Gaisele and de Basele (once each).
- Norfolk records mention a William de Gayslee in 16 Edward II (i.e., 1323): “Willm de Snoringe and Emma his wife v. William de Gayslee and Cecilia his wife, in Lenn Ep’i.”³⁸
- Jno. de Gayslee is listed in 33 Edward III (i.e., 1359-60) in the Tower Series of the Norfolk Inquisition.³⁹
- Walter Gayslee is mentioned in the will of Johanna Scot, formerly wife of Geoffry, fishmonger: “Bequests also of money or goods to...Walter Gayslee...[and several others]...11 June 1361.”⁴⁰ This is the Walter Gayslee cited by Stuart Wade.
- Geoffrey de Gayslee is listed as an apprentice of Thomas de Bodekesham in Lynn, Norfolk, in 36 Edward III (i.e., 1362-3).⁴¹
- The Feet of Fines for Suffolk lists another pair of Gaysle’s, this time husband and wife: “11 Richard II (i.e., 1388) Reginald de Nauton, Geoffry Polle and Henry Story v.

³⁵ A Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Suffolk 1189-1482, Walter Rye, Ipswich, 1900.

³⁶ Pedes Finium: or Fines, Relating to the County of Cambridge, Edited by Walter Rye, Cambridge, 1891.

³⁷ Hamon le Strange, Norfolk Official Lists, Norwich, 1890, page 174-5.

³⁸ A Short Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Norfolk, Part II 1307-1484, page 264, number 888.

³⁹ Norfolk Records: Being an Index to Four Series of Norfolk Inquisitions, Vol. II, page 58. The specific entry is to “The Tower Series”, No. 43 (2, p. 2160).

⁴⁰ Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London A.D. 1258 - A.D. 1688 [Part II A.D. 1358 - A.D. 1688].

⁴¹ Freemen of Lynn 1292 - 1836, page 15.

William Gaysle and Johanna his wife in Nauton, Whatfeld and Blydeston.”⁴² These three villages are closely grouped about 20 miles southeast of the Village of Gazeley.

- Norfolk records for 13th and 14th Henry IV (i.e., 1412-13) show a fine recorded as “Wm. Gasslee, capellanus, Thos. Waterdene, Thos. Botekysham, Thos. Hunt and Rich. Waterdene, v. Stephen Garlek of Sporle and Margaret his wife, in Lenne Ep’i.”⁴³
- The Manors of Suffolk associates landownership with two ‘de Gazeley’ individuals: “In 1315 Hugh Gorell held the fourth part of a fee (in the Manor of Purowe, formerly called Gorreles or Penowe Hall), and in 1425 Walter de Gazeley held half a fee, which at one time was held by William de Gazeley...”
- A transcript of the will of John Gayseley, written 4 August 1532 and proved 10 October 1532, makes interesting reading:⁴⁴

I John Gayseley of Lawrence Ayot [now Ayot St. Lawrence in Hertfordshire]. To the high alter 3s/4d. To the mother church of Lincoln 4d. 20d. to the church of Ayot, to Knebworth Church 20d, to Caldecote Church 20d. Each of my six children 40/- and 5 yews. To my wife Agnes my two tenements I bought at Knebworth and the reversion to Richard my son, if he die these to Thomas, if he die then to John, and if he die to my daughters. If they all die without heirs I will the tenement to be sold and the money to be bestowed for my soul. My other tenement in Knebworth to be sold and disposed for my soule and my friends and all Christian souls. To Agnes my wife 10/- P.A. after the decease of my father to be paid out of the lande that my here [heirs] shall inherit after the decease of his grandfather. That Agnes my wife shall leve to John my son the tenement called Pages. Residue to my wife Agnes, executrix, and my brother Thomas to be executor and have 5/-. Witnesses: Thomas Horley Clarke, John Gayton, John Ellis. Proved 10 Oct. 1532 by the executors.

- The wills of “Johnis Gaysely de Blithburgh” in 1564 and “Johnis Gazley de Beccles” in 1594 were apparently filed in Suffolk.⁴⁵ These are cited by Stuart Wade. Note the use of the ‘de’ to indicate location (both Blythburgh and Beccles are in eastern Suffolk).
- Stuart Wade refers to John Gaseley of Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk, yeoman, who was an executor named in the will of Sir Calthorpe Parker of Erwarton, Suffolk, Knight, 31 August 1618, proved 26 January 1619 [N.D.], which reads in part:⁴⁶

I do name and appoint [two relatives], and my trusty and assured friends, William Cage and John Gaseley of Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk, yeoman, my true and lawful executors.

Entries of the surname first appear in parish records in the late 1500s starting with Norfolk, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, and spreading later to other counties. The growth and distribution of the surname, based on these and other records, is discussed later.

⁴² A Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Suffolk 1189-1482, Walter Rye, Ipswich, 1900.

⁴³ A Short Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Norfolk, Part II 1307-1484, page 399, number 148.

⁴⁴ Archdeaconry of Hunts, Vol. 4, fo. 91. The transcript is in the Cotton Collection, Society of Genealogists, London.

⁴⁵ Calendar of Wills for Ipswich 1444-1600, compiled by Fredrich Arthur Crisp, 1895, Book XXI folio 336, and Book XXXV folio 491.

⁴⁶ Henry F. Waters, Genealogical Gleanings in England, Vol. II, 1901.



The following examples of non-Gazlay individuals, previously mentioned, further attest to the regularity of surnames developing from location names:

- Reginald de Nauton (Naughton, Suffolk)
- Robert de Pakenham of Mildenhale (Pakenham and Mildenhall, Suffolk)
- Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, and Roger de Clare, Earl of Hereford (Clare, Suffolk)
- William de Weston (Weston, Hertfordshire)
- John de Bodekesham and Thos. Botekysham (now called Bottisham, Cambridge)
- Willm de Snoringe (Great or Little Snoring, Norfolk)

Growth and Distribution of the Surname in England

The Oxford Guide to Family History⁴⁷ gives an interesting discussion of the geographical distribution of surnames:

Even after all the movement of modern times, some of the rarer surnames are found only in certain parts of England. The further back we go in time, the more we find that such names are intensely local in their distribution. Many of these surnames may indeed have a single family origin. Given the small size of the national population at the time when surnames were formed, this conclusion need not surprise us. Tracing the geographical pattern of a surname is therefore an important task for the family historian, for it may well lead towards the original home of the name.

What does the geographical concentration of a surname tell of a family's origin? The Oxford Guide elaborates:

A basic problem is to decide whether a surname has been derived from a place because a family was long resident there or for the opposite reason that a family left, never to return, at the time when surnames were being formed. Many major land owning families acquired surnames from their principal estates and numerous small farmers adopted surnames from their holdings. Equally, however, many families sought their fortunes at a very early period of surname formation. Speaking generally, it seems to be the case if a surname is derived from a farmstead or hamlet and if past and present distributions of the name are concentrated in the neighborhood of that place, then we may assume that the surname has arisen from the residence of the family in that spot when surnames were being formed. If, however, a surname is that of a large village, town or county, or of a district such as Craven or Gower, then it is likely that an emigrant has assumed his surname upon leaving the place and settling elsewhere. Certain families moved considerable distances in the early Middle Ages during the period when surnames were being formed. The various tax returns of the fourteenth century provide numerous instances of surnames that indicate long-distance migration. If a family moved a considerable distance shortly after the surname was formed, the present cluster of the name may not indicate the place of origin, but rather the place where the migrant settled.

The occurrences of Gazeley (and similar) surnames in various British records over the centuries are compiled in table 3. The entries for the 1200s through 1400s are from a variety of records as discussed in the previous chapter. Those in the 1500s through 1800s are primarily from birth and baptism entries in the IGI and in parish registers. The right-most column shows the occurrences of Gazeley surnames in 1994 residential telephone directories of England, Scotland and Wales. Map 2 shows the geographical mean for selected centuries, migrating from Norfolk in the 13th century to near Luton, Bedfordshire in 1994. Although many more British counties are represented in 1994 than in previous centuries, over half of the 1994 entries are located within 35 miles of Luton, still a very compact distribution. Taking into account that each telephone directory entry represents several individuals, and recognizing that some telephone numbers are not listed, the number of individuals with these surnames is probably slightly more than 300. By this measure, Gazeley, *et al*, surnames are relatively rare today. The scarcity of records before the 1500s makes a definite conclusion difficult, but based on the general

⁴⁷ David Hay, The Oxford Guide to Family History, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993.

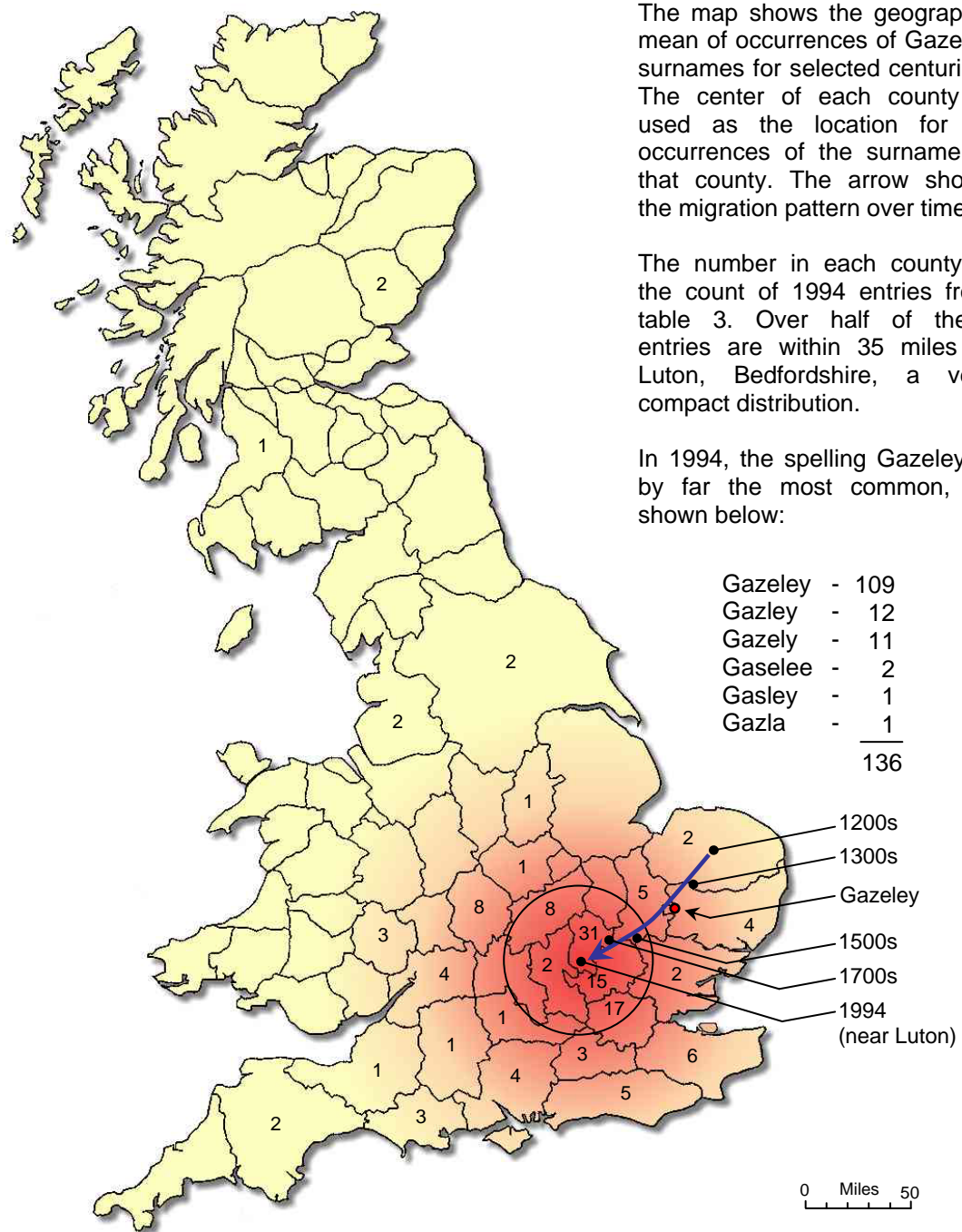
English Origins of the Gazlay Family

migration pattern, coupled with the observation that early ‘Gazlay’ surnames included the ‘de’ prefix, seems to suggest that the family originated in the area around the village of Gazeley.

COUNTY	1200s	1300s	1400s	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	1994
ENGLAND								
Bedfordshire				1	73	38	119	31
Berkshire								1
Buckinghamshire					1		4	2
Cambridgeshire		2					1	5
Devon								2
Dorset								3
Essex						6		2
Gloucestershire						1		4
Hampshire						4	1	4
Herefordshire								3
Hertfordshire				16	20	20	68	15
Kent							12	6
Lancashire								2
Leicestershire								1
Middlesex/London				1	14	42	50	17
Norfolk	4	4	1	5	10	42	3	2
Northamptonshire								8
Nottinghamshire								1
Oxfordshire						2	1	
Somerset								1
Suffolk		2	1	3	2		2	4
Surry							4	3
Sussex							4	5
Warwickshire								8
Wiltshire								1
Yorkshire					1		1	2
SCOTLAND								
Angus								2
Ayrshire								1

Table 3. The Surname in British Records

English Origins of the Gazlay Family



Map 2. Surname Migration and Distribution

Traditional American Accounts of the Gazlay Family History

As with any traditional family story or legend, the early history of the American Gazlay family as recounted over the years is probably a mixture of fact and fancy. Separating the two is difficult at best, but the common elements found in versions from widely scattered branches of the family may point to the facts.

American branches of the family who trace their ancestry reliably to John Gazlay I of Goshen, Orange County, New York, all believe that he emigrated from England in 1715 or 1717. The descent from him is generally well established, although a few present-day Gazley/Gazlay families are still searching for a definitive link to him through his only child John II and any of John II's six sons. Disparity as to the year of John I's emigration is not thought to be particularly significant. The mention of 1717 is only found in Stuart Wade's solicitation for family information, whereas the claim of 1715 is based on supposed mention of him in land records in Orange County, New York, in that year, and in several unpublished family history documents previously cited. There is apparently a record of a John Gazlay buying a farm in 1805 in South Edmeston, New York, from A. Lyon, 181 acres for \$2100, but this must be John III, John I's eldest grandson.⁴⁸ This farm, which was owned in the 1950s by Mrs. Tuttle, a Gazlay descendant, is the site of the Gazlay Cemetery mentioned earlier.⁴⁹ Further research is needed to determine if John I owned any land in New York. John I may have left a will⁵⁰ that could shed some light on his life, but this, too needs to be researched.

The circumstances of John I's emigration are not mentioned in any accounts of the family history. During the early 1700s, principal reasons for passage from England to America were: as sentence for a crime; as an apprentice (usually for a specified period, indentures of seven years being common); as an expansion of already-established wealth; or simply to seek a new and better life (possibly having met with hard times or to escape religious or social persecution). The latter is probably the most common reason.

John I was known to have settled in Goshen, New York. The original Wawayanda Patent, which embraced the greater portion of Goshen, was granted by Queen Anne, 5 March 1703, and the first settlements date from that time.⁵¹ It may be that John I had some knowledge of the new settlement and thus motivated him toward Goshen, but this is only conjecture.

One would suppose that if John's passage were the result of conviction of a crime, at least some family accounts would bear this suggestion. Total lack of such notoriety would tend to rule this out. His name has not been found on any passenger lists that specialize in the transport of criminals, nor in any court records. In fact, few Gazlays/Gazleys/Gazeleys, etc. appear in any published passenger lists, although this is hardly conclusive. Many lists remain unpublished or have been lost through the ravages of time. Published indexes of records of indenture or

⁴⁸ "Gazlay History," compiled by Margaret Howe.

⁴⁹ The Gazlay cemetery in South Edmeston, New York, is well documented. The earliest Gazlay buried there is Aaron Gazlay (1773—1830), eldest son of John Gazlay III.

⁵⁰ Private letter from William Soaper Gazlay, Chicago, Illinois to Ray Gazlay, Gladstone, Michigan, July 22, 1945.

⁵¹ Journal of the Reverend Silas Constant, compiled by Emily Warren Roebling, Philadelphia, 1903.

apprenticeship make no mention of a John Gazlay for the right period. Several others with similar surnames are cited in various records, the ones before 1800 being:

- Edward Gasley, transported to Maryland in 1678.⁵²
- John Gaselee, arrived in Barbados in 1679 with wife Elisabeth and daughter Susanna.⁵³
- Nathaniel Gazeley, 9-12 September 1720: “The following bound to John Dykes for Maryland: Nathaniel Gazeley of Congleton, Cheshire, aged 15, to serve 8 years; William Lalam of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland, labourer aged 19 to serve 4 years.”⁵⁴
- John Gazely, sentenced in a trial in 1757 to be transported to the American colonies for a period of seven years.⁵⁵

Most accounts are silent on whether John made the journey to America alone. One definitive exception paints a specific picture: “We know that a group of brothers came over from England and settled in the U. S. and Canada. We don’t know yet how many brothers or names.”⁵⁶ Indeed, this line of research bears further study, as it may be that Canadian Gazlay/Gazley/Gazeley families have established their link with England, and that their immigrant ancestor can be linked to John I. A search of the IGI for all Canadian provinces shows only two entries of the surname from 1500 to present. Clearly, other Canadian records need to be searched.

Many Gazlay family historians have found John Gaselee mentioned in Barbados records of the 1600s and 1700s. In fact, several people of the same or similar surname are mentioned in those records. However, no traditional family stories make claim to the Barbados Gaselees as ancestors or relatives of present-day American Gazlay or Gazley families, and no specific links have been found. More likely is a connection to the apparently unrelated English Gaselee family.

Aribert Gazlay apparently communicated with the English Gaselee family around the turn of the century, and Aribert indicated that “Major General Sir Alfred Gaselee is of the opinion that there is no possibility of relationship [to the American family descended from John I] with his family, which deduces a descent from a Gaselee, possibly a continental emigrant, who is found at Portsmouth [England] in 1650.”⁵⁷

⁵² The Early Settlers of Maryland, edited by Gust Skordas, Baltimore Genealogical Publishing Company, 1968.

⁵³ Passenger and Immigration Lists Index (series), edited by P. William Filby and Mary K. Meyer, Gale Research Company.

⁵⁴ Peter Wilson Coldham, The Complete Book of Emigrants 1700-1750, 1992, page 258.

⁵⁵ Peter Wilson Coldham, Bonded Passengers to America, Vol. VII, page 37.

⁵⁶ Private letter from Donna (Gazlay) Wirick to Frank Hammond Gazley, March 8, 1975.

⁵⁷ Notes and Queries, Ninth Series—Volume IX. February 8, 1902, p. 108.

Gaselee Coat of Arms

The only known person with a surname resembling Gazlay to be legitimately granted a coat of arms was Sir Stephen Gaselee, one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas, and being conferred as a Knight Bachelor 27 April 1825.⁵⁸ According to Burke's General Armory, Sir Stephen recorded his arms as "Or, ten billets az. four, three, two and one. Crest—an arm embowed in armour, holding in the hand ppr. a dagger ar. hilt and pommel or."⁵⁹

Heraldry has a language all its own. Definitions of the terms used in this written description of arms (called a *blazon*), and a discussion of the various elements of the arms, are found in Boutell's Heraldry:⁶⁰

ar	–	argent (silver or white)
az	–	azure (blue)
billet	–	an oblong figure set upright (usually a rectangle)
or	–	gold (may be represented by yellow)
pommel	–	round knob at the extreme end of the dagger's handle
ppr	–	proper (refers to the natural color of the hand)

The *frontispiece* shows a rendering of Sir Stephen's armorial bearings as interpreted and drawn by the author. Sir Stephen's blazon translates to "A gold shield with ten blue billets arranged in rows of 4, 3, 2, and 1. The Crest is a bent arm wearing armor, holding in the bare hand a dagger with a silver hilt and a gold pommel."

Armorial bearings consist of the shield charged with devices, the helm (helmet), torse (crest-wreath) on which rests the crest, and decorative mantling. (One may also encounter a "trick of the arms," which is a rendering of the armorial bearings in black-and-white, with the colors described by accompanying words.) In heraldry, only the shield, devices and crest are described in the blazon. The helm not only serves as a means of displaying the crest, but also has a significance of its own, since its type denotes the rank of the person bearing the arms. Knights Bachelor are not attached to any order, and their achievement of arms being distinguished only by a visored helm of steel adorned with silver, usually placed affronté (i.e., facing forward), the visor raised. Generally, the crest is laced or bolted on the helm, and to hide the unsightly joint, various decorative means are employed, including the torse, as shown on Sir Stephen's arms. The mantling is added as an embellishment and represents the scarf worn by knights to protect the back of the neck from the sun. One may encounter other versions of Sir Stephen's arms with more or less detail and ornamentation, because in heraldry, considerable artistic license is allowed, as long as the basic elements (arms and crest) are faithful to the blazon.

The motto "Quid tibi hoc alteri" has sometimes been associated with Sir Stephen Gaselee's arms, but this motto has not been found in any official records. In England, no authority is

⁵⁸ Wm. A. Shaw, Litt.d, The Knights of England, London, 1906.

⁵⁹ Sir Bernard Burke, The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland & Wales, London, 1984, page 390.

⁶⁰ Boutell's Heraldry, Revised by J. P. Brook-Little, F.S.A., Frederick Warne & Co., 1978.

needed to use a motto, and it does not form a part of a grant of armorial bearings. A similar motto, “Quod tibi hoc alteri” (“Do to another what thou wouldst have done to thee”) is associated with several surnames in at least one source,⁶¹ but Gaselee is not among them.

A coat of arms can be colorful and eye-catching, and there is often a strong temptation to adopt or adapt another person’s coat of arms for one’s own or for one’s family. However, such arms would not be authentic, and may possibly be unlawful (as under British law). ***An official coat of arms is always granted to an individual, never to a family.*** Many firms purport to sell representations of a person’s arms, simply on the evidence of his surname. Such merchants have neither the authority nor the ability to grant genuine coats of arms. The person usually receives a picture or drawing of a coat of arms culled (often randomly) from any of the numerous books depicting arms, irrespective of whether there is any blood relation to the original grantee. Undoubtedly, the overwhelming majority of coats of arms are obtained this way, or are otherwise invented, and are thus without foundation.

British subjects can be granted legitimate armorial bearings by proving, to the satisfaction of the Officers of the College of Arms, legitimate male descent from some person who received a grant of arms, or to whom the right to bear arms was at some time confirmed. Foreign nationals can be similarly granted honorary armorial bearings by proving direct male descent from a subject of the Crown. In the case of United States citizens, this usually means establishing descent from someone who was living in America before the War of Independence. While it therefore seems possible that descendants of John I could be granted authentic arms, the cost of doing so makes it an unlikely endeavor. As of 2008, the cost is £3,950, or about \$6,500, so it is doubtful that the average American would pursue an official grant of arms. Unless proof of authenticity can be offered, one should regard any “Gazlay Coat of Arms” as an unofficial, decorative fabrication.

Great caution should also be exercised when one encounters vendors purporting to produce a “family history of your name.” For a fee (often exceeding \$25), these vendors will send a generic discussion of the development of surnames, possibly a “definition” of your particular surname, an invented “coat of arms,” perhaps a few random citations from early records of people with similar names (without proof of any relationship to you), and a listing of addresses and phone numbers for people with the same surname. This latter information is easily found in public telephone directories both in print and on the internet. What you will not get is actual genealogical information about you and your ancestors.

⁶¹ Mottos, edited by Laurence Urdang and Ceila Dame Robbins, Detroit, Michigan, 1986.

Possible Ancestral Families of John Gazlay I

Despite considerable research, John I's English ancestors have not been identified. However, by analyzing the various Gazeleys, *et al*, in the IGI listings and other records for English counties, constructing family groupings that are implied in the IGI, and focusing on the key period from the 1660s to the 1720s, two plausible family groups stand out that each contain a John Gazely/Gaseley, either of which could be our John Gazlay I's ancestors. It is of course entirely possible that neither of these families is related to the American John I.

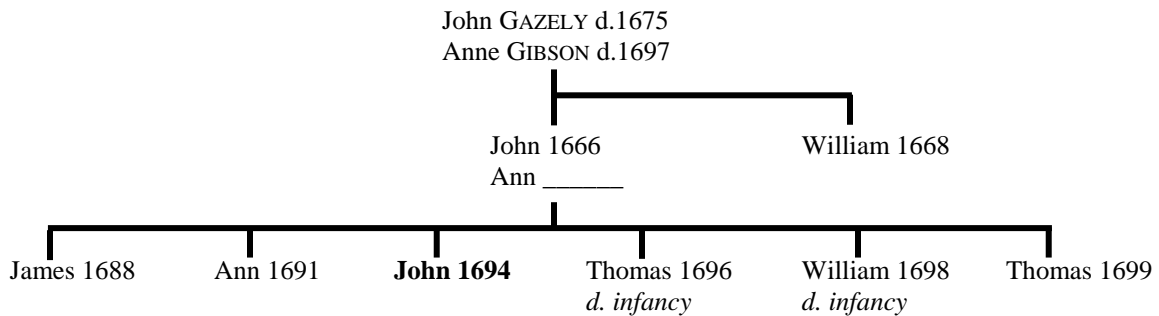


Figure 3. A Gazely Family of Norfolk, England

The Norfolk family shown in figure 3. The first two generations are found in Marsham, a Norfolk County village north of Norwich, and the third generation is found in Blofield, east of Norwich. The family includes a John and at least two brothers who would fit the “emigrant brothers” theory nicely. Of the five males born in the third generation, two (Thomas 1696 and William 1698) died in infancy according to Blofield parish records. Descendants in England after 1715 for the surviving Thomas 1699 could be inferred from IGI, but this would require that he began fathering children at age 12 and his wife at age 14, a possible but highly unlikely scenario.⁶²

The John Gazely above, born in 1694, would have been about 21 years old in 1715, a reasonable age to have immigrated to the Colonies to start a family. Unfortunately, there is nothing to link this John Gazely to our John Gazlay I. No record has been found to indicate when John I was born, how old he was when married Elizabeth Sayre (or Sayres, or Sayrs), or his age when he died in 1722.

⁶² According to The Oxford Guide to Family History, recent research indicates that people married at an older age than was previously thought.

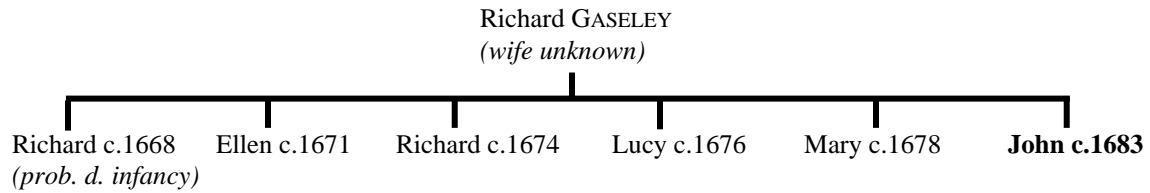


Figure 4. A Gaseley Family of Bedfordshire, England

The Bedfordshire family shown in figure 4 also includes a John and at least one brother. This John born in 1683 would also be of reasonable age in 1715 (about 32 years old) to have immigrated to the Colonies. But again, there is no evidence linking this John Gaseley to our John Gazlay I.

It may be a coincidence that John I's wife, Elizabeth Sayre, apparently descends from an American family that traces their lineage to Bedfordshire in the early 1600s.^{63, 64}

⁶³ Unpublished notes attributed to Gerard Gazlay, Jr., Jan. 1980.

⁶⁴ Journal of the Reverend Silas Constant, Compiled by Emily Warren Roebling, Philadelphia, 1903, page 34.

Conclusion

John Gazlay I was probably counted among the thousands of common, undistinguished, and probably unrecorded people who made the transit across the ocean to seek better opportunities, only a century after the Pilgrims and settling in the British colonies 60 years before the Revolutionary War. It seems likely that his ancestors came from Norfolk or Suffolk, England, and trace to the parish and village of Gazeley (as it is now known). Geographical migration and past and present distribution of surnames, citations in early English records, and variations in surname and place-name spellings, form a convincing argument for this conclusion, even though the evidence is circumstantial. However, it is probably no coincidence that by far the most common spelling of the surname in England today is the same as the current spelling of the village of Gazeley.

No Gazlay genealogies, published or otherwise, have been found, either in America or England, which provide the definitive link to England. However, other avenues of research are possible and may ultimately establish John I's ancestry.



The only definite conclusion that can be reached by the research represented in this document is that **John I's English ancestors remain unidentified.**