

Ancestry and Family

The Jameses

The Jameses were Protestant farmers in Ireland. The oldest known James was William James (1736–1822), who worked a farm near what is now the town of Bailieborough, growing oats, potatoes, and flax. He married the daughter of a rent-collector, Susan McCartney (1746–1824). They had three sons, the second of whom, William, came to the newly-established United States of America in 1789 at the age of eighteen. He had been taught to read and write, and had begun the study of Latin grammar. His place of residence for the first four years after his arrival in America is unknown, but in 1793 he was working in Albany, New York, as a clerk in a store that apparently sold farm products. In 1795 he opened his own produce store in Albany, and thereafter increasingly engaged in successful mercantile enterprises, eventually becoming a banker and a very large landowner. William James had three wives, the first two of whom died in childbirth. He then married Catharine Barber, whose family owned a weekly newspaper, the *Albany Register*. With her he had eight children who survived infancy, the second being Henry, father of the novelist. When William James died in Albany during 1832, he had become one of the wealthiest men in America.

The Walshes

The first of the Walshes to come to America was Hugh Walsh, who emigrated in 1764 from Killyleagh in Ireland. He settled at Newburgh on the Hudson River in New York, eventually built ships and engaged in river trade, amassing a considerable fortune. His son James (d. 1820) became a cotton merchant in New York City and in 1806 married Elizabeth Robertson. They had six children, the fifth of whom, Hugh, became a friend of Henry James, Sr. and shared with him a Presbyterian as well as a mercantile family background, from which, however, they were both withdrawing. In November 1839, Hugh introduced James to his family, living at 19 Washington Square, where James met and was instantly attracted to Hugh's sister, Mary Robertson Walsh (1810–82), whom he married on 28 July 1840.