

Chapter 1

Introduction

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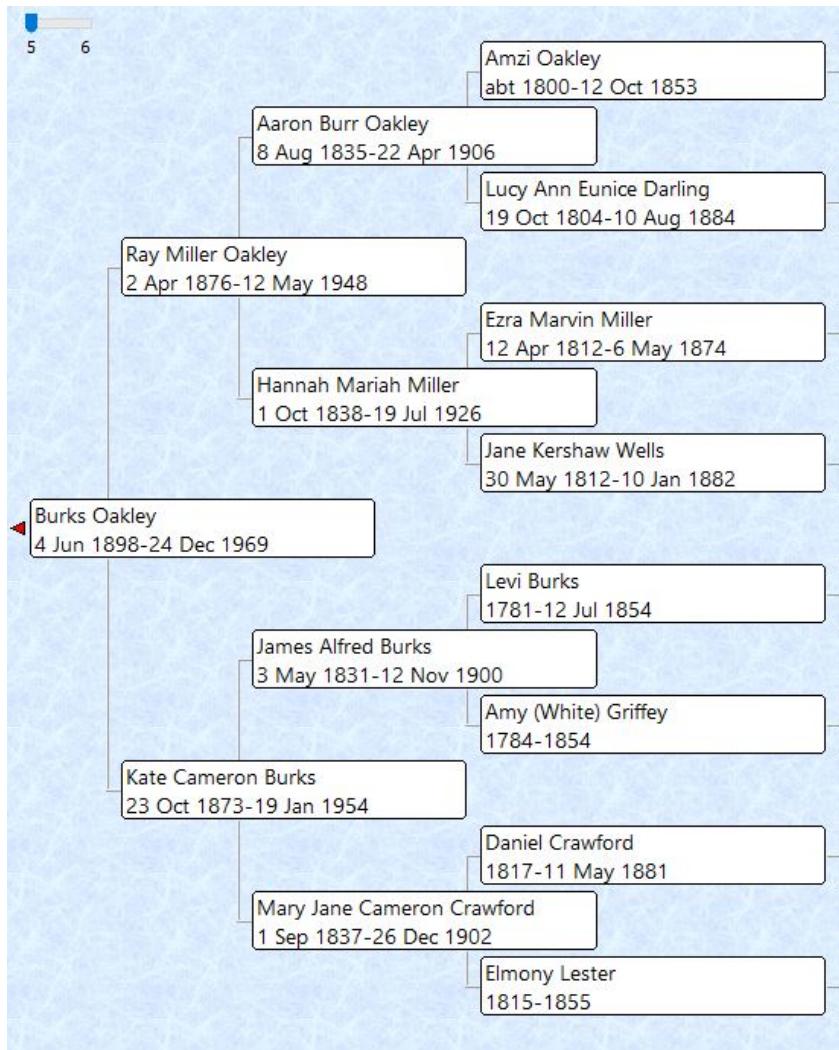
"We all grow up with the weight of history on us. Our ancestors dwell in the attics of our brains as they do in the spiraling chains of knowledge hidden in every cell of our bodies."

-- Shirley Jean Abbott (1983)

Genealogy is the study of families and the tracing of their lineages and history. This word is derived from the Greek γενεαλογία – from the words γενεά, meaning “generation”, and λόγος, meaning “knowledge”. And during the past few years, I have become interested in genealogy – especially the lineage and history of my father’s family. My interest in genealogy has been stimulated in large part by the current ability to use DNA analysis to support connections in family trees.

My father was Burks Oakley (1898-1969), and one of his hobbies was genealogy. I remember taking family vacations when I was a child to travel to cities and towns where his ancestors lived, so that he could conduct primary research, looking at historical records in libraries and county courthouses. Of course, now those records are digitized and I can access them on my computer using websites such as Ancestry.com. I also have great memories of stomping through overgrown cemeteries looking for old family gravestones. And now many gravestones have been photographed and can be accessed online at sites like findagrave.com. And using a technology that wasn’t even known during my father’s lifetime, I now can inexpensively and quickly have my DNA tested, and I can compare my DNA profile with the DNA profiles of millions of other people, and look for DNA matches, as well as common ancestors. Wouldn’t my father be amazed by all this!

In my genealogical research, I have focused on the family lines represented by my father’s eight great-grandparents, shown in the following diagram:



These family lines are: Oakley, Burks, Miller, Crawford, Darling, Wells, Griffey, and Lester.

I should add that my starting point was my father's family tree – and additional genealogical research done by my cousin Harold B. "Hal" Oakley. Their previous work had come up against several "brick walls", where a family line stopped with a certain individual and they were unable to go back farther into the past. Fortunately, I have been able to break through several of these walls using DNA analysis.

Through my genealogical research, I have found that seven out of eight of my father's great-grandparents descend from families that had immigrated to America in the 1600's, while his eighth great-grandparent was descended from a family that immigrated to America in the 1700's. My ancestors on my father's side of the family have been in America for an incredibly long time!

My father's parents, Ray Miller Oakley (1876-1948) and Kate Cameron Burks Oakley (1873-1954), were the first generation of the Oakley family to settle in Quincy, Illinois, and to raise their children there. Multiple generations of the descendants of Ray and Kate have their roots in Quincy, and while descendants of this couple now live literally from coast-to-coast, I refer to the extended group of Oakley descendants as the "Quincy Oakleys". My genealogical research into the family lines represented by my father's eight great-grandparents applies to the extended "Quincy Oakley" family, as well.

I came to realize that my paternal grandfather, Ray Miller Oakley, had four grandparents whose families immigrated to America and settled in New England, while my paternal grandmother, Kate Cameron Burks Oakley, had four grandparents whose families immigrated to America and settled first in Virginia. So I will first discuss the four New England families representing Ray's ancestors, then the four mid-Atlantic families representing Kate's ancestors.

I then will deal with a number of DNA findings, as well as other interesting research.

Each chapter in this work is meant to stand alone, so the chapters can be read in any order. Some chapters are all about family history, some chapters are a mix of genealogy and DNA, while other chapters are all about DNA.

One of my goals is to document my family tree and my genetic matches for future generations, and to have all of my work in one place. This is meant to be an evolving document – I plan to edit various chapters as new information becomes available.

-- Burks Oakley II, Champaign, Illinois, October 2017