

Chapter 40

The Levi Burks DNA Circle on Ancestry.com

[Updated 28 February 2019]

Introduction

I am very interested in genetic genealogy; that is, using DNA to confirm and to extend my family tree. I have my DNA profile and my family tree on Ancestry.com, and I login to this website on a regular basis to see what I can learn from my DNA matches. A few years ago, Ancestry.com brought out a new feature called “DNA Circles”, and I just now have started to investigate this novel way to aggregate information regarding DNA and family trees. Here is a brief summary of DNA Circles (from the Ancestry.com website):

A DNA Circle is a group of DNA members who descend from a single common ancestor. A DNA Circle will form around an ancestor in your family tree if your tree is public and linked to your DNA test, and if two or more of your DNA matches...

- are DNA matches to you and to each other at a 2nd cousin level or further out
- have public family trees attached to their DNA tests; and
- share a common ancestor (according to their trees).

To form DNA Circles, we find cousins of yours among other DNA members, determine whether a common ancestor is listed in each of your trees, and locate cousins of your cousins who list the same ancestor in their trees. In other words, using family trees, we look for an ancestor shared across a group of DNA-related people. The circle is then named after the ancestor, all descendant matches are added to the circle, and the circle appears on your DNA homepage.

I recently learned that I was in the Levi Burks DNA Circle, and the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the details of this DNA Circle, as well as some of its limitations.

About Levi Burks

Let me begin with some background about Levi Burks, who was one of my second-great grandfathers. He was born in 1781 in Orange, Virginia. As a young man, Levi moved west to Kentucky (he was in Kentucky by 1802, and possibly earlier), and he spent most of his adult life in Harrodsburg, Mercer County, Kentucky. Levi Burks died on 12 July 1854 in the Providence Meeting House in Salvisa, Mercer County, Kentucky.

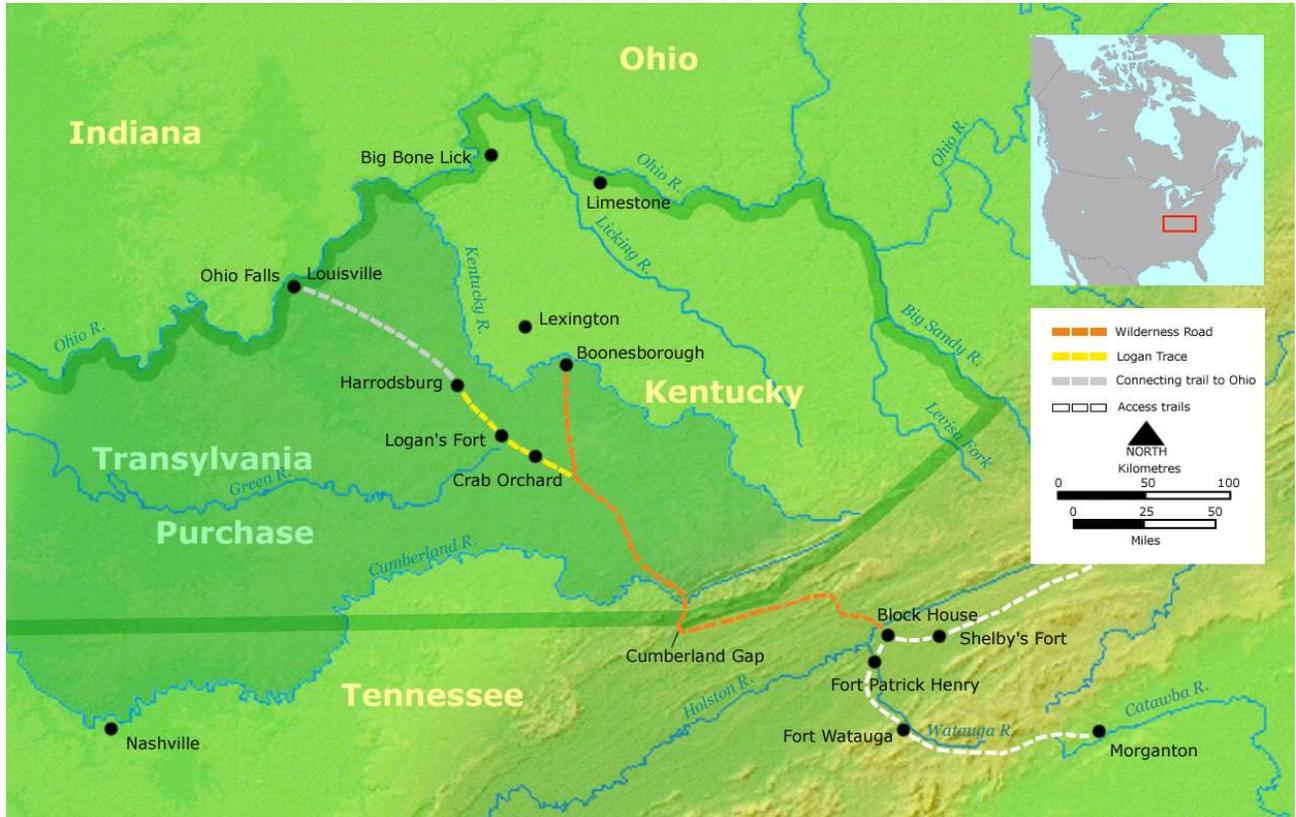
Orange, Virginia, where Levi Burks was born, is located northeast of Charlottesville, Virginia. Harrodsburg, Kentucky, is located 400 miles straight west of Orange Virginia. One can imagine that in the late 1790's, the only way west from Virginia to Kentucky was through the Cumberland Gap on the Wilderness Road.¹ Here is a painting depicting Daniel Boone leading a group of settlers west through the Cumberland Gap:



“Gateway to the West” – Daniel Boone Leading the Settlers through the Cumberland Gap, 1775 by H. David Wright, c. 2000.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilderness_Road

Daniel Boone led a team of men with axes who built the Wilderness Road in the years after 1775. I was surprised to learn that Logan Trace,² which was an extension of the Wilderness Road, went directly to Harrodsburg, Kentucky, as shown by the dashed-yellow line in the following map:



It seems like the route west from Virginia consisting of the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap, followed by Logan Trace, would provide a good explanation of how Levi Burks got to Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

Levi’s father William Burks died in Kentucky, so it is certainly possible that William brought his entire family west to Harrodsburg when Levi was a young man. This could have been in the 1790’s, when Kentucky was still the western frontier.

Levi first married Sarah “Sally” Pigg (1785-1830). Sally was born in Pittsylvania, Virginia. They were married on 29 Jun 1802, in Lincoln, Kentucky (south of Salvisa). Sally was only 17 years old at the time. A copy of their marriage bond is in the Appendix of this chapter.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logan_Trace

Levi and Sally had eleven children between 1803 and 1826 – a span of 23 years. Sally died in 1830 at the age of 45. As far as I can tell, all eleven children of their lived to adulthood (which to me is pretty amazing).

After Sally's death in 1830, Levi didn't waste any time – he married Amy Griffey (1784-1854) on 1 July 1830. She was a widow, having been married to a Mr. White. So in various family trees, she is listed as Amy Griffey White, or Amy (White) Griffey, or other variations.³ Levi and Amy had three children together from 1831 to 1835. My great-grandfather, James Alfred Burks, was their first child, born in 1831. And James Alfred Burks was the only child of that marriage to marry and have children of his own. I documented my DNA matches with the descendants of James Alfred Burks in Chapter 38.

Many of the eleven children of Levi's first marriage to Sarah "Sally" Pigg married and had large families. One of these eleven was Ewing Washington Burks (1808-1887), who had five children with his first wife from 1833 to 1840; she died in 1840. He then had ten children with his second wife from 1843 until her death in 1864. He then had four children with his third wife, Mary Ann Fletcher, between the years 1873 and 1878. Mary Ann was a widow and already had four children with her first husband (a Mr. Jackson). Ewing Washington Burks was 27 years older than Mary Fletcher – in fact, Mary was two years younger than Ewing's oldest child from his first marriage. Ewing Washington Burks' 19th child was born when he was 70 years old. But I digress....

The important take-away message from this rambling is that Levi had a number of children in his first marriage, and they in turn had lots of offspring, which opens up the possibility that there are living descendants of Levi Burks with whom I should have DNA matches.

With this as background, let's move on to the Levi Burks DNA Circle

Levi Burks DNA Circle

When I login to the Ancestry.com DNA homepage, I not only see my DNA matches, but I also see my DNA Circles (I am in four of them):

³ I also have seen her name listed as Anny – when written in cursive, Amy and Anny appear very similar. Most people agree on Amy.

DNA Matches ?



- ✔ 313 Shared Ancestor Hints
- ★ 655 Starred matches
- 👤 1000+ 4th cousins or closer

[View All DNA Matches](#)

DNA Circles 4 ?



Confidence: Emerging

🔗 **Levi Burks DNA Circle**

2nd Great-Grandfather

6 MEMBERS

[View All DNA Circles](#)

There are just six members of the Levi Burks DNA Circle. When I looked at the details of this DNA circle, I learned why the software on the Ancestry.com website put me into this DNA circle:

Levi Burks DNA Circle BETA

6 members • 4 matches



DNA evidence shows you're likely a descendant of **Levi Burks** because you are part of his DNA Circle, which includes 6 of his probable descendants.

Who is in a DNA Circle?

- ✔ Circle members share DNA with other members of the circle.
- ✔ Circle members all have family tree evidence that they are direct descendants of Levi Burks.
- ✔ Your DNA matches some or all members of this DNA Circle.

[Learn more about DNA Circles](#)

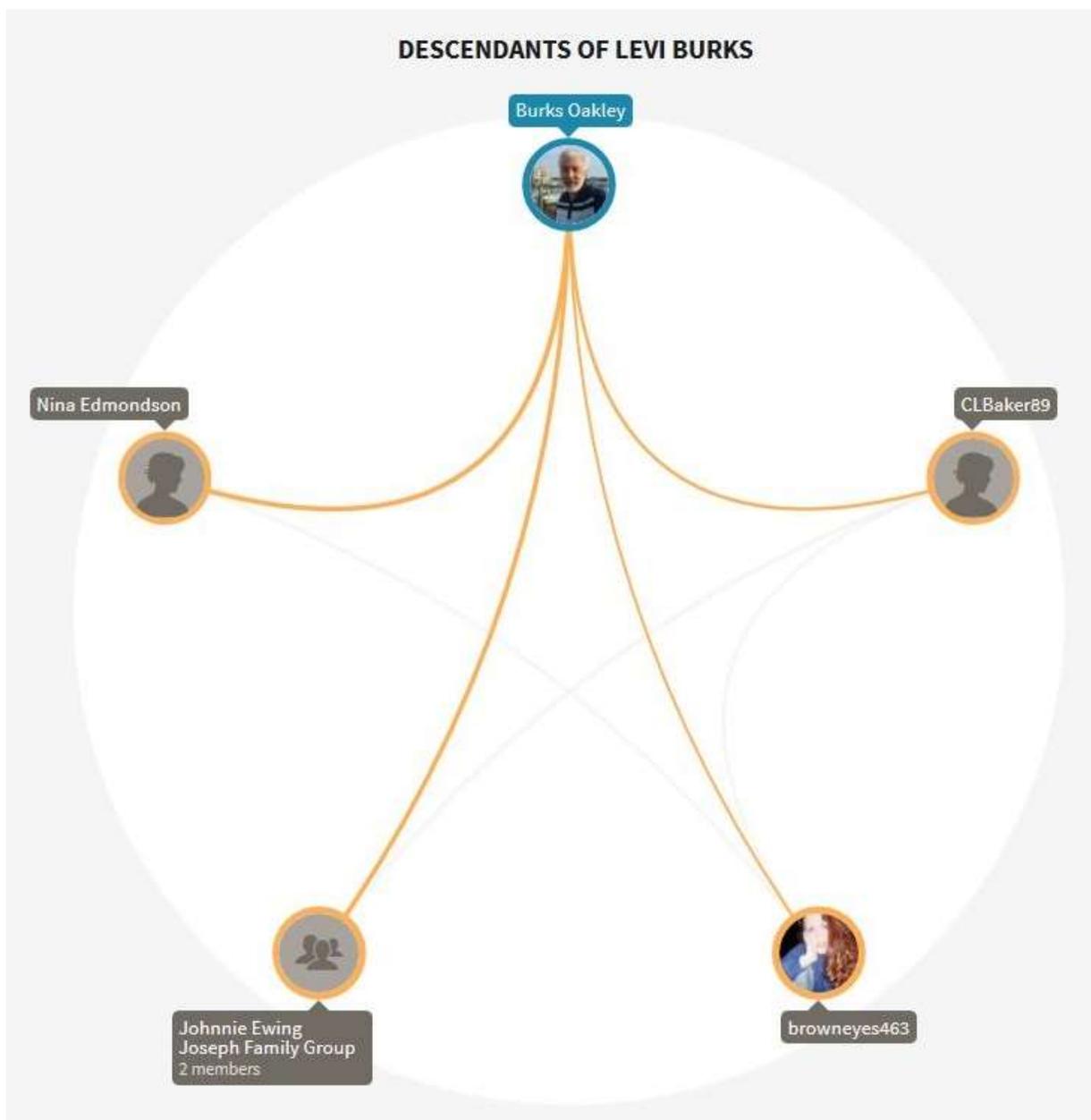
I am in this DNA Circle because I have DNA matches with the others in this group and we all have family trees that go back to Levi Burks.

Here are the members of this DNA Circle:

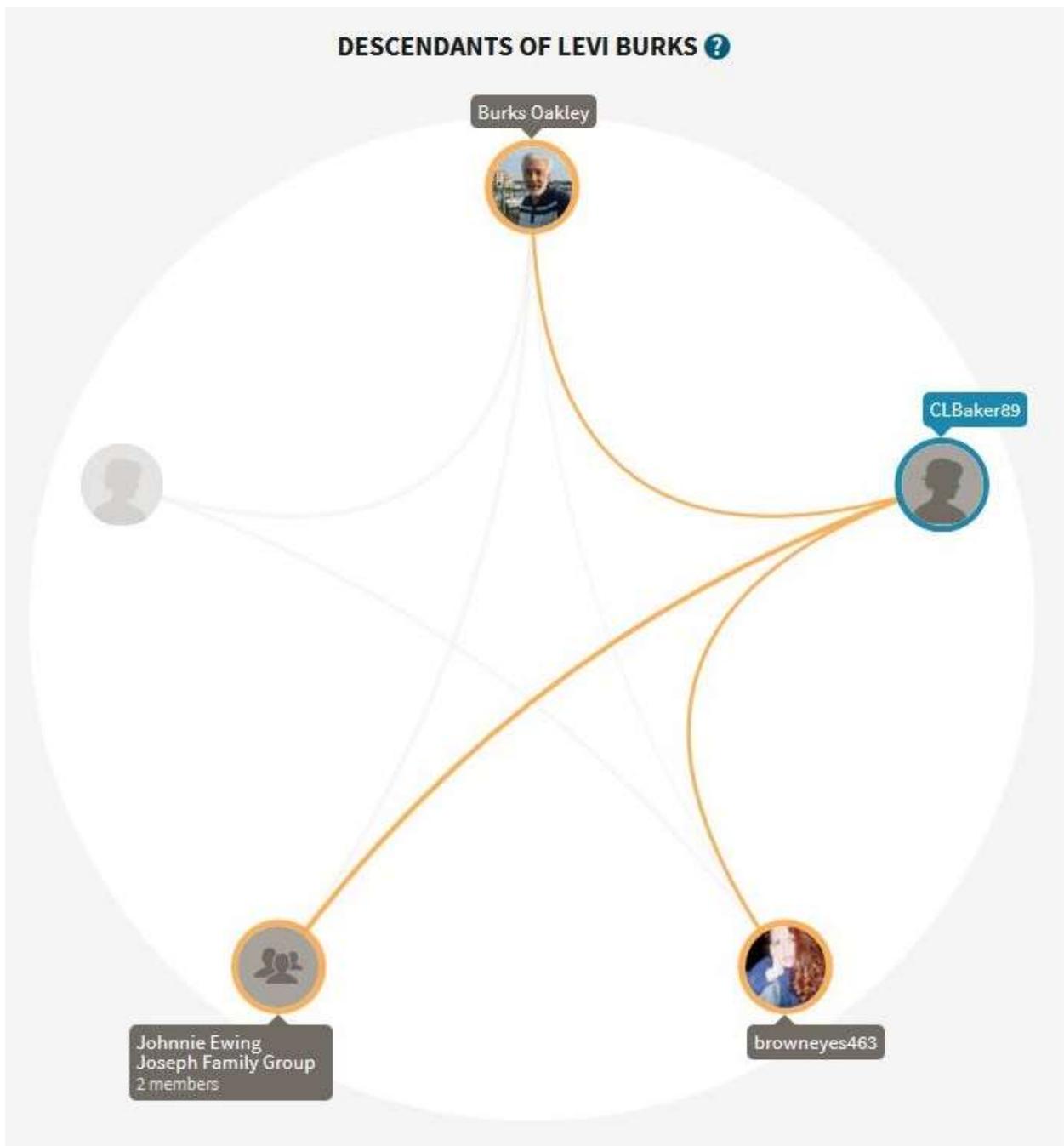
DESCENDANTS OF LEVI BURKS ?		
6 DESCENDANTS	RELATIONSHIP TO BURKS OAKLEY	RELATIONSHIP TO LEVI BURKS
 Burks Oakley		
 CLBaker89	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship
 N.C. (managed by wheremypeepsat) Johnnie Ewing Joseph Family Group	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship
 Melissa Thompson Johnnie Ewing Joseph Family Group	 DNA MATCH TO CIRCLE ▾	 View Relationship
 Nina Edmondson	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship
 browneyes463	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship

It appears that I have DNA matches with four individuals who are in this circle: **CLBaker89**, **N.C.**, **Nina Edmondson**, and **browneyes463**. Note that some of my close relatives who are also descendants of Levi Burks, such as Hal Oakley and Mark Eidem, aren't in this DNA Circle, since they don't have family trees on Ancestry.com that include Levi Burks (more about this later).

Ancestry.com also provides a graphic showing my DNA matches with four other people in the Levi Burks DNA Circle.



According to Ancestry.com, an individual can be put into a DNA circle without having DNA matches with ALL of the other members the group. For example, **CLBaker89** only has DNA matches with three others in this circle:

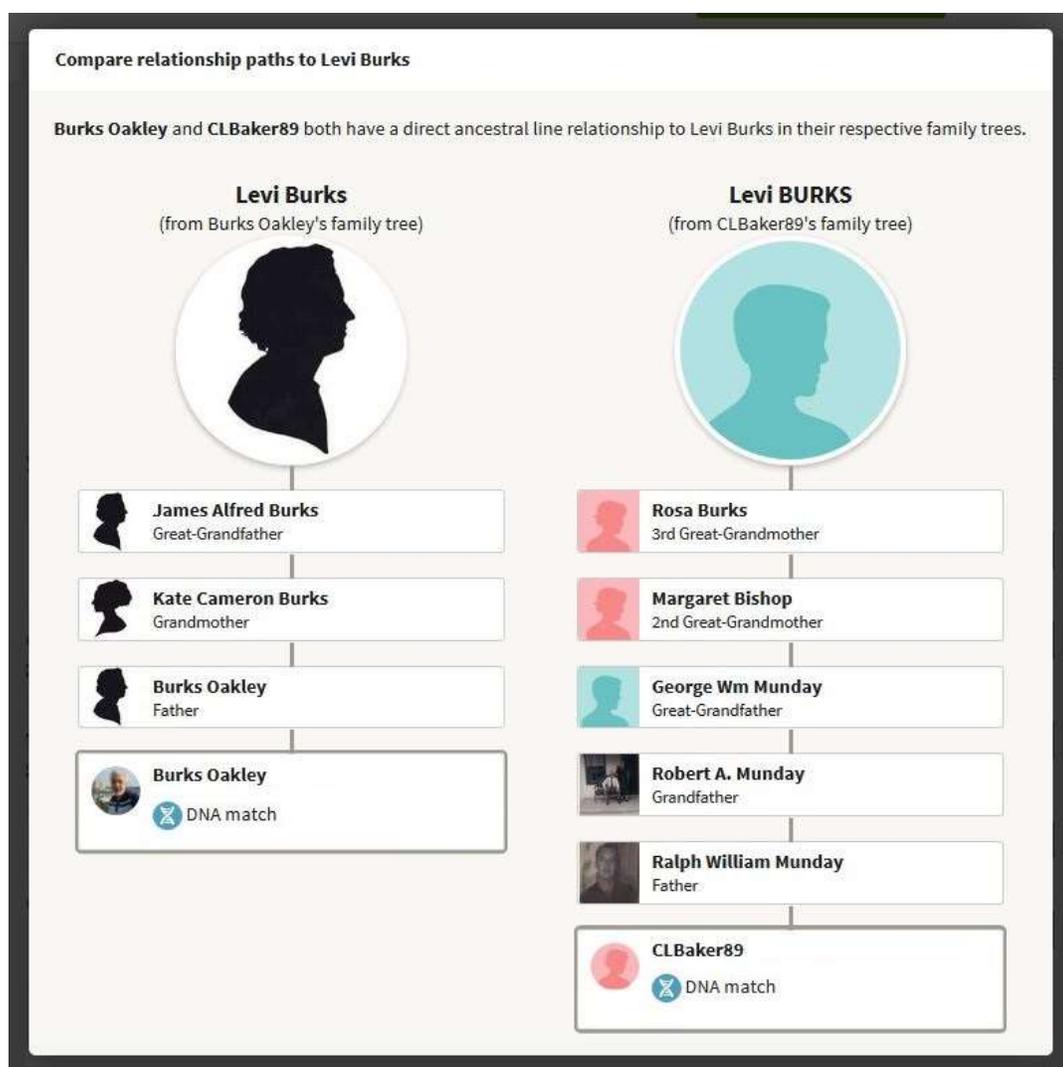


CLBaker89 doesn't have a DNA match with **Nina Edmondson**. Remember that the people in this DNA circle are distant cousins – it turns out that they are my third-cousins (3C) or even third-cousins once-removed (3C1R). And the 2016 Bettinger study found that people known to be 3C or 3C1R can have ZERO shared DNA.

I went back to the list of the six people in the Levi Burks DNA Circle:

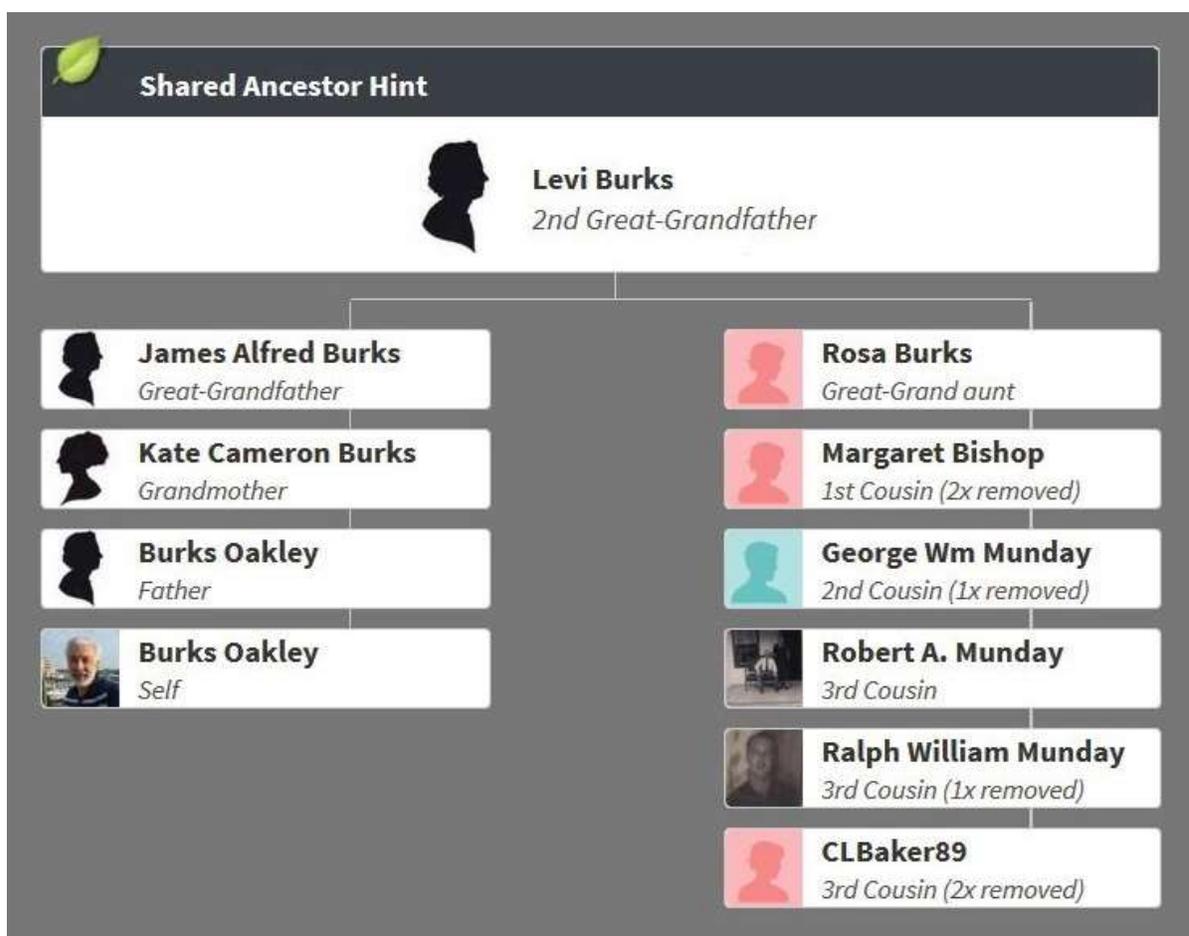
DESCENDANTS OF LEVI BURKS ?		
6 DESCENDANTS	RELATIONSHIP TO BURKS OAKLEY	RELATIONSHIP TO LEVI BURKS
 Burks Oakley		
 CLBaker89	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship
 N.C. (managed by wheremypeepsat) Johnnie Ewing Joseph Family Group	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship
 Melissa Thompson Johnnie Ewing Joseph Family Group	 DNA MATCH TO CIRCLE ▾	 View Relationship
 Nina Edmondson	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship
 browneyes463	 DNA MATCH ▾	 View Relationship

I clicked on the links labelled “View Relationship” to see how I am related to these people. Here is a graphic showing my relationship with **CLBaker89**:

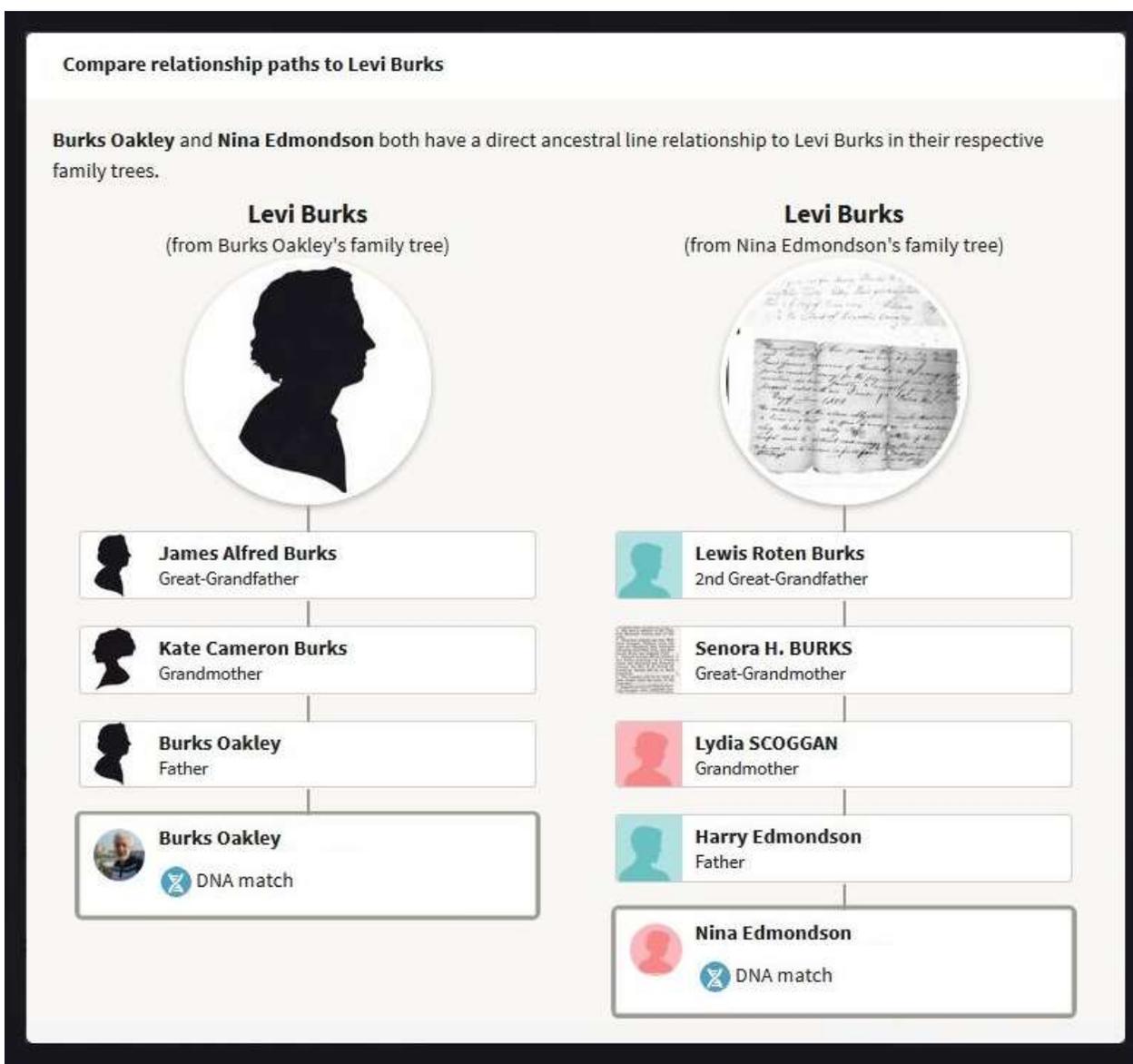


CLBaker89 is descended from Levi's daughter, Rosa Burks (1807-1880), while I am descended from Levi's son James Alfred Burks (1831-1900). Note that Rosa was a daughter from Levi's first marriage, while James Alfred was a son from Levi's second marriage.

I'm not sure if this actually provides much new information, since I knew previously that **CLBaker89** and I are both descended from Levi Burks. When I looked at my DNA match with her several years ago, I viewed a Shared Ancestor Hint on the Ancestry.com website, which shows that we both go back to Levi Burks:



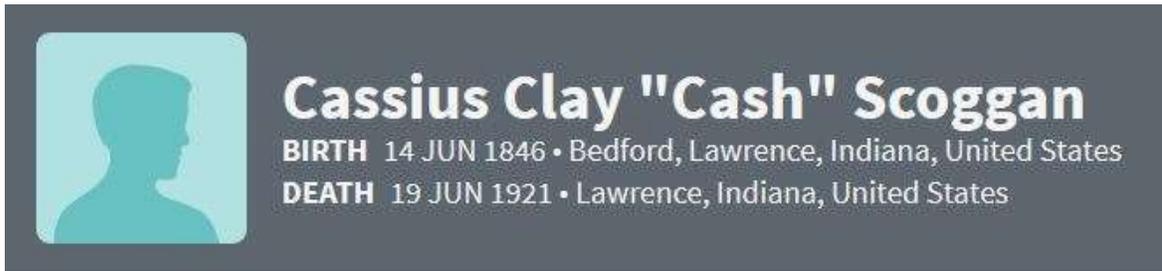
Another member of the Levi Burks DNA Circle is **Nina Edmondson**. The following graphic shows how we both are descended from Levi Burks:



Nina is descended from Levi Burks through his son Lewis Roten Burks (1823-1865). Let me go off on another tangent here, since I think this is pretty interesting. Lewis Roten Burks' daughter was Senora H. Burks (1856-1940). She was married to Cassius Clay Scoggan (1846-1921). Yes, his given name was Cassius Clay. Presumably he was named after Cassius Marcellus Clay (1810-1903), who was a Kentucky planter, politician, and emancipationist who worked for the abolition of slavery.⁴ The great boxer Muhammad Ali (1942-2016) was born in Kentucky as Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr.; his father, Cassius Marcellus Clay Sr. (1912-1990), was in fact named after the 19th-century Republican politician and staunch abolitionist from Kentucky, Cassius Marcellus Clay.

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassius_Marcellus_Clay_\(politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassius_Marcellus_Clay_(politician)), <http://time.com/4363225/original-cassius-clay-muhammad-ali/>

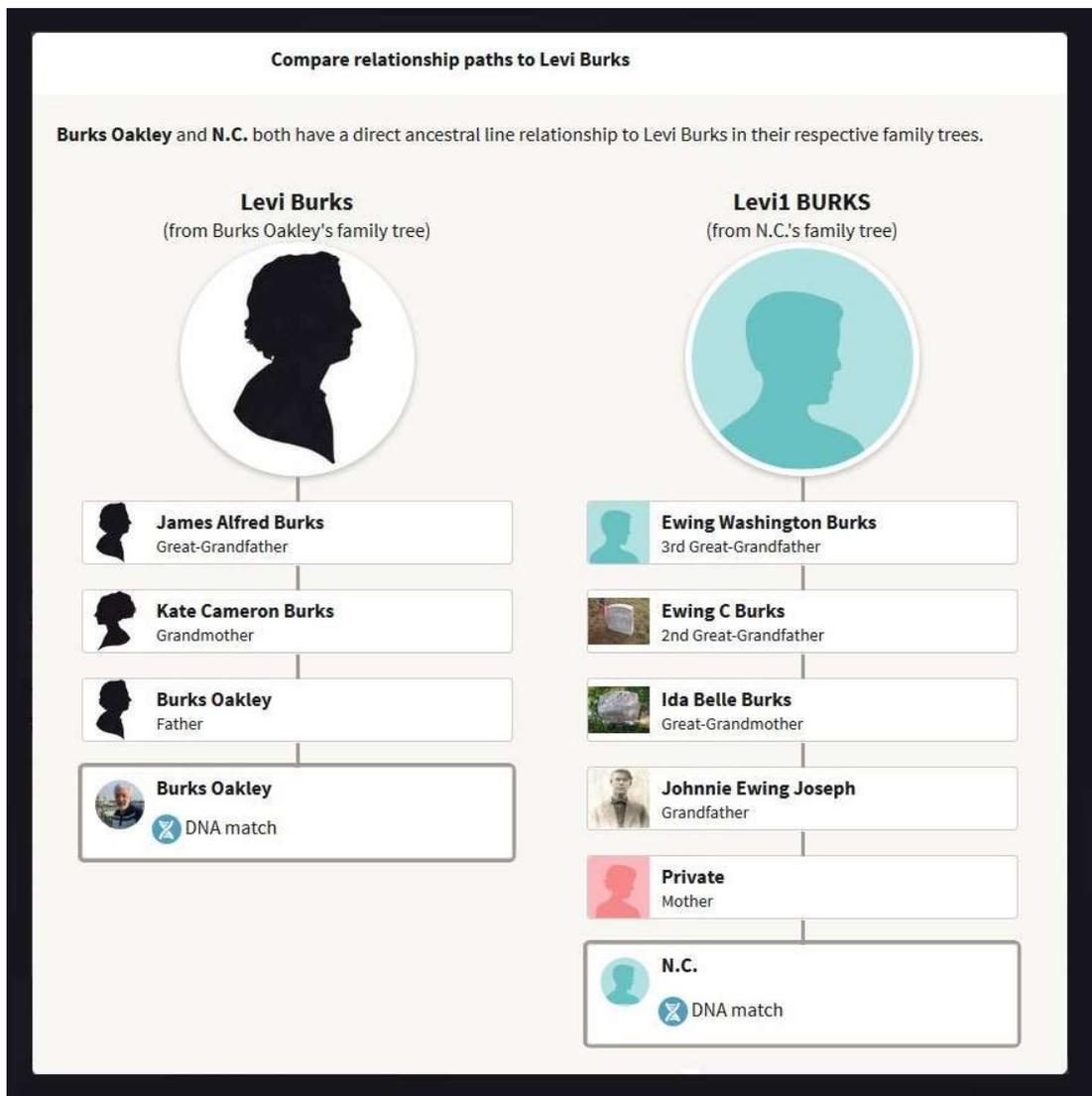
And to make this come full circle, the Kentucky politician Cassius Marcellus Clay used the nickname Cash, as did Cassius Clay Scoggan:



Cassius Clay "Cash" Scoggan
BIRTH 14 JUN 1846 • Bedford, Lawrence, Indiana, United States
DEATH 19 JUN 1921 • Lawrence, Indiana, United States

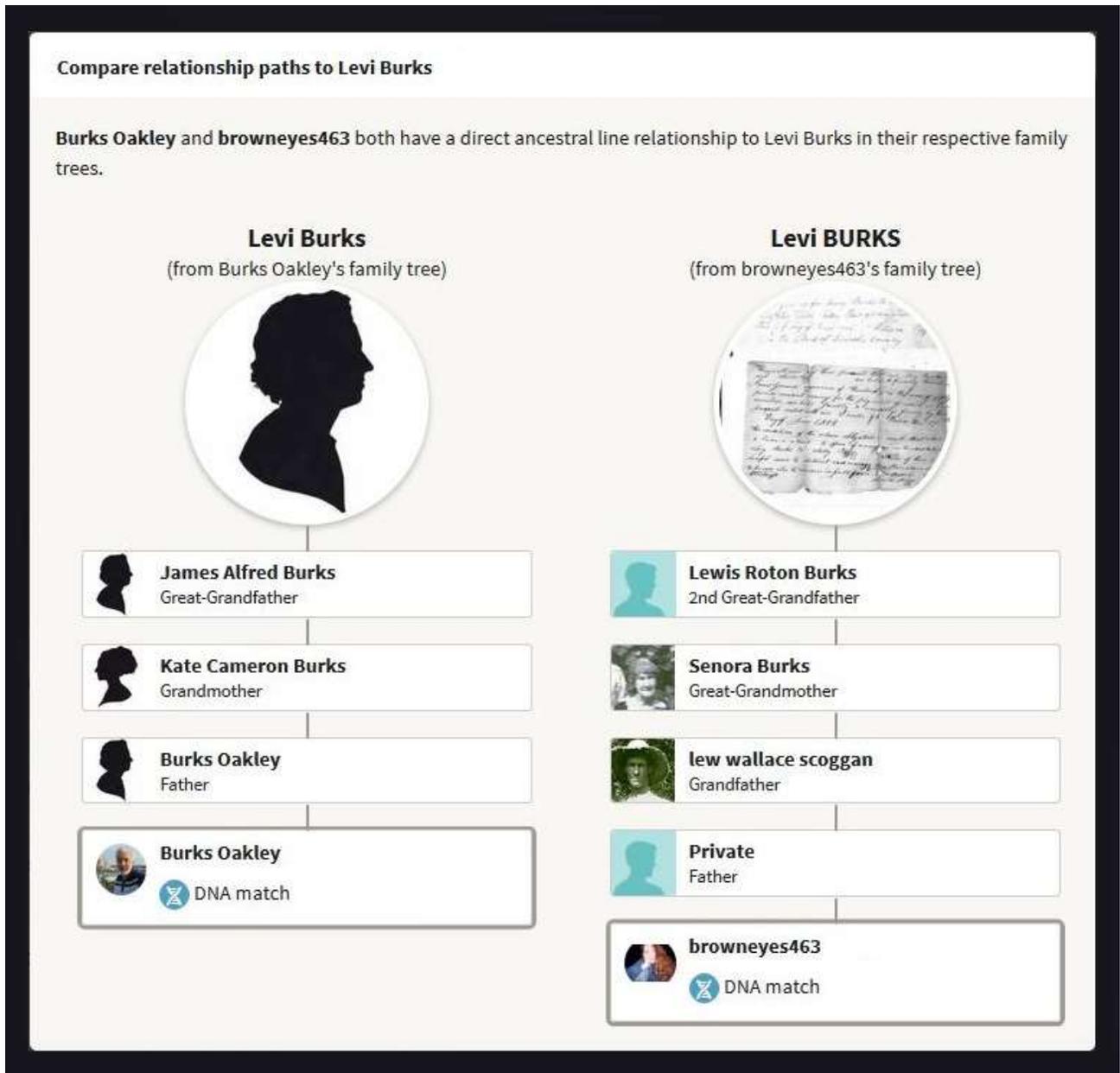
But I digress ...

The next member of the Levi Burks DNA Circle is *N.C.*, who I corresponded with several years ago. His name is Neil Chase.



Neil Chase is descended from Levi Burks through his prolific son, Ewing Washington Burks (1808-1887). Recall that Ewing Washington Burks was the man with three wives and 19 children.

The last person in the Levi Burks DNA Circle is a woman having the username of ***browneyes463***. She also is descended from Levi Burks through his son Lewis Roton/Roten Burks and his daughter Senora Burks:



It is clear from ***browneyes463***'s tree that her father's last name was Scoggan, so that must be her last name as well. I sent her a message via the Ancestry.com

message system, and I learned that her father is Jerry Scoggan and her name is Ada Scoggan (now Ada Scoggan Verkamp).

I looked up Jerry Scoggan on Ancestry.com, and I learned that I have a DNA match with him – 45 centimorgans shared across 3 DNA segments. Jerry and I have Shared DNA Matches with a number of Burks family members, including **Nina Edmondson** and **CLBaker89**. Note that Jerry Scoggan is a grandson of Cassius Clay Scoggan.

The fifth person in the Levi Burks DNA Circle is a woman named Melissa Thompson. She is descended from Levi Burks through his son Ewing Washington Burks. But I don't have a DNA match with her, so I'm not going to deal with her any more in this chapter.

Limitations of these DNA Circles

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Ancestry.com website notes that:

A DNA Circle will form around an ancestor in your family tree if your tree is public and linked to your DNA test, and if two or more of your DNA matches...

- are DNA matches to you and to each other at a 2nd cousin level or further out
- have public family trees attached to their DNA tests; and
- share a common ancestor (according to their trees).

So right away, we see that one of the limitations of this approach is that an individual with a DNA match connecting to other descendants of Levi Burks has to have a public family tree that goes back to Levi Burks in order to be placed in the DNA Circle. If the tree stops with a child of Levi Burks, then the person isn't in the DNA Circle, even if they have DNA matches with most of the people in the circle. While I can do some research and find an individual's line back to Levi Burks, the software on the Ancestry.com website can't do this.

I know that my "Quincy Oakley" cousins Hal Oakley, Mark Eidem, and Jake Oakley are all descended from Levi Burks. **CLBaker89** and I have Shared DNA Matches

with all three of them. But Hal doesn't have a tree on Ancestry, Jake's family tree isn't linked to his DNA profile, and Mark's family tree is for his research into his father's (Eidem) side of the family – it only has his mother on the Oakley side of his tree. So they aren't in the Levi Burks DNA Circle.

Jerry Scoggan is Ada Scoggan's father, but he doesn't have a family tree on the Ancestry.com website. But he has DNA matches with me and Nina Edmondson. Yet he isn't in this circle.

Nevertheless, it still is nice to have much of this automated by the software on the Ancestry.com website.

DNA Matches with Other Descendants of Levi Burks

The manual approach that I have taken in the past was to search through my DNA matches for individuals having Burks ancestors in their family trees. Or even more specifically, Burks ancestors born in Kentucky (or Virginia). Here is a screenshot showing just a few of the results of this search using Kentucky:

AncestryDNA Results for Burks Oakley

Filters Search Matches
Burks Kentucky, USA Search

4TH COUSIN

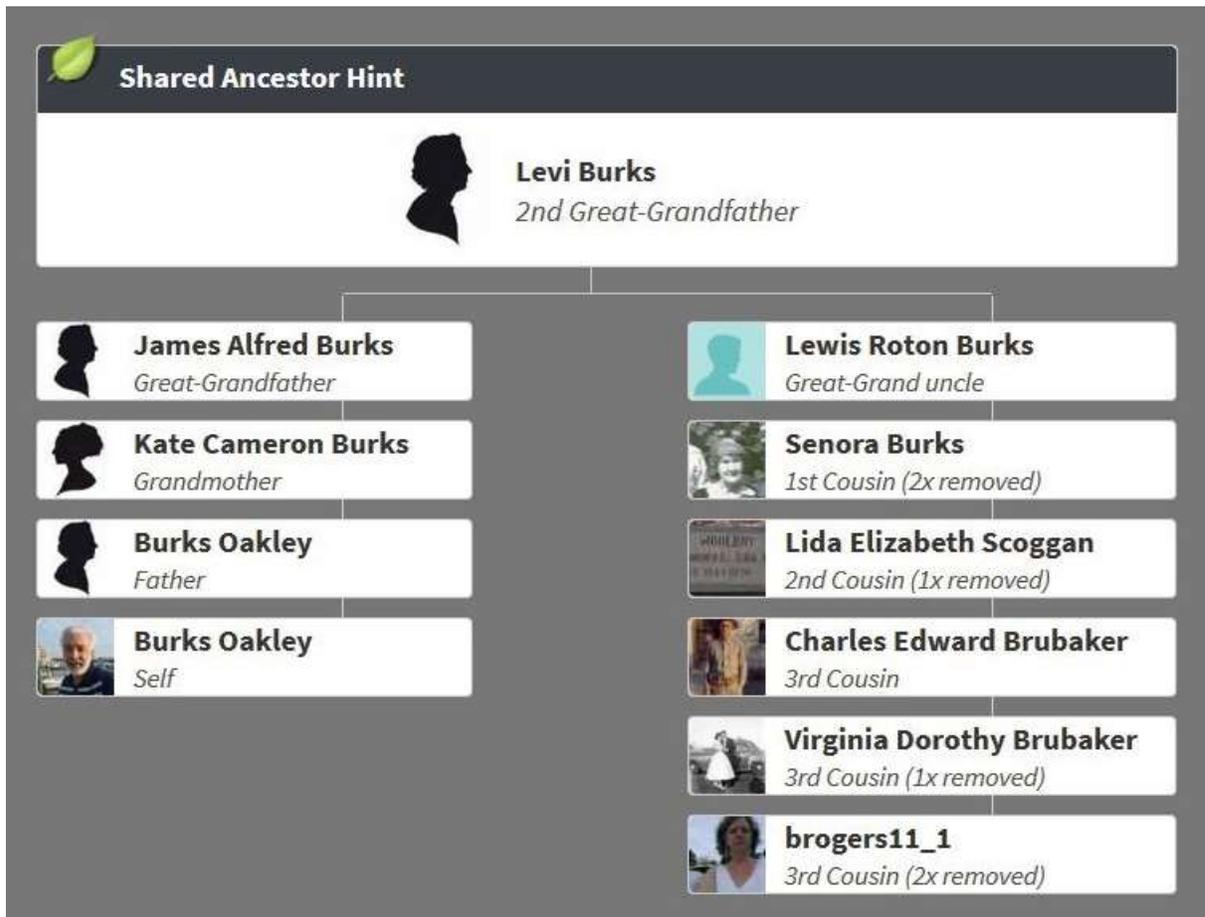
- Deborah Dixon** 748 people View Match
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins
Confidence: High
- PeggyPoteet** 1,189 people View Match
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins
Confidence: High
- MissRobby29** 3,082 people View Match
Possible range: 4th - 6th cousins
Confidence: High

I earlier knew about **Peggy Poteet** and **MissRobby29**. Peggy is descended from George Burks (1768-1851), who was a brother of Levi Burks. **MissRobby29** goes back even further – she is descended from Levi’s great-grandfather Samuel King Burks (1680-1756).

But my DNA match with **Deborah Dixon** was new to me. Her family tree on Ancestry.com shows that she is descended from Rosa Burks (1807-1880), who was one of Levi’s daughters from his first marriage. But since her family tree ends with Rosa Burks, she isn’t a member of the Levi Burks DNA Circle. Her tree also shows that her maiden name was Shoemaker. So clearly Deborah Shoemaker is another descendant of Levi Burks with whom I have a DNA match.

As an aside, this search also turned up two members of the Levi Burks DNA Circle – **N.C.** and **CLBaker89**.

This search also turned up a woman having the username of **brogers11_1**. Gosh, I knew about her in 2016, when I found a Shared Ancestor Hint on Ancestry.com

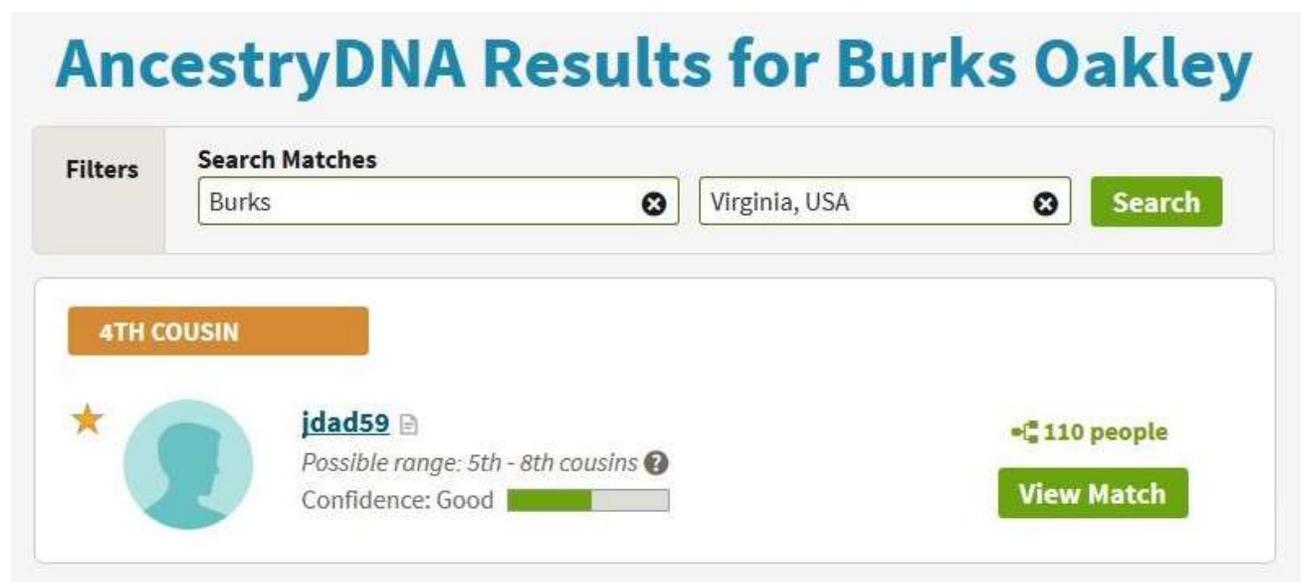


brogers11_1 is descended from Levi Burks through his son Lewis Roton/Roten Burks (1823-1865), and then Senora Burks and her daughter Lida Elizabeth Scoggan. I should note that **Nina Edmondson** is descended from Lida's twin sister Lydia.

Subsequently, **brogers11_1** put her DNA on GEDmatch.com, and I found that **Nina Edmondson, brogers11_1**, and I all share a DNA match on Chromosome 17.

So this one is a puzzle to me. **brogers11_1** and I have a DNA match. We also match Nina Edmondson. **brogers11_1** has a family tree going back to Levi Burks. Why isn't she a member of the Levi Burks DNA Circle? No clue...

The search for DNA matches having Burks ancestors born in Virginia turned up yet another descendant of Levi Burks:



The screenshot shows the AncestryDNA search interface. At the top, the title "AncestryDNA Results for Burks Oakley" is displayed in blue. Below the title is a search filter section with a "Filters" tab and a "Search Matches" section. The search criteria are "Burks" and "Virginia, USA", with a green "Search" button. Below the search section, a match is shown for "4TH COUSIN" with a star icon. The match is for a user named "jdad59" with a profile picture icon. The match details include "Possible range: 5th - 8th cousins" and "Confidence: Good" with a green progress bar. A green "View Match" button is visible next to the match details. To the right of the match details, it says "110 people".

This search turned up a man with the username of **jdad59**. His tree shows that he is descended from Sarah Ann Burks, and according to the family tree owned by **TwoOldSisters**, Sarah Ann was a daughter of Levi Burks and his first wife. So **jdad59** is also a descendant of Levi Burks with whom I have a DNA match. But since his family tree ends with Sarah Ann Burks, he isn't a member of the Levi Burks DNA Circle.

Finally, a generic search for my DNA matches having a Burks ancestor (not specifying a state) turned up another descendant of Levi Burks with whom I share a DNA match:

The screenshot shows the AncestryDNA search results for 'Burks Oakley'. At the top, there is a search bar with 'Burks' entered and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there is a section for 'DISTANT COUSIN' with a star icon. The match is for 'Nancy Thompson', with a possible range of '5th - 8th cousins' and a 'Confidence: Good' indicator. A 'View Match' button is visible next to the match information.

One of the results of this search was **Nancy Thompson**, and her family tree indicates that she is descended from Belle Burks (1878-1959). Her family tree only has 28 people in it, so it doesn't go back very far into the past.

But some research on the Ancestry.com website found that Belle Burks was a daughter of the prolific Ewing Washington Burks, and thus a granddaughter of Levi Burks. In fact, Belle Burks was the 19th child fathered by Ewing Washington Burks. His first child was born in 1833 and Belle was born in 1878 – 45 years later!!! I learned that Nancy Thompson's maiden name is Jones.

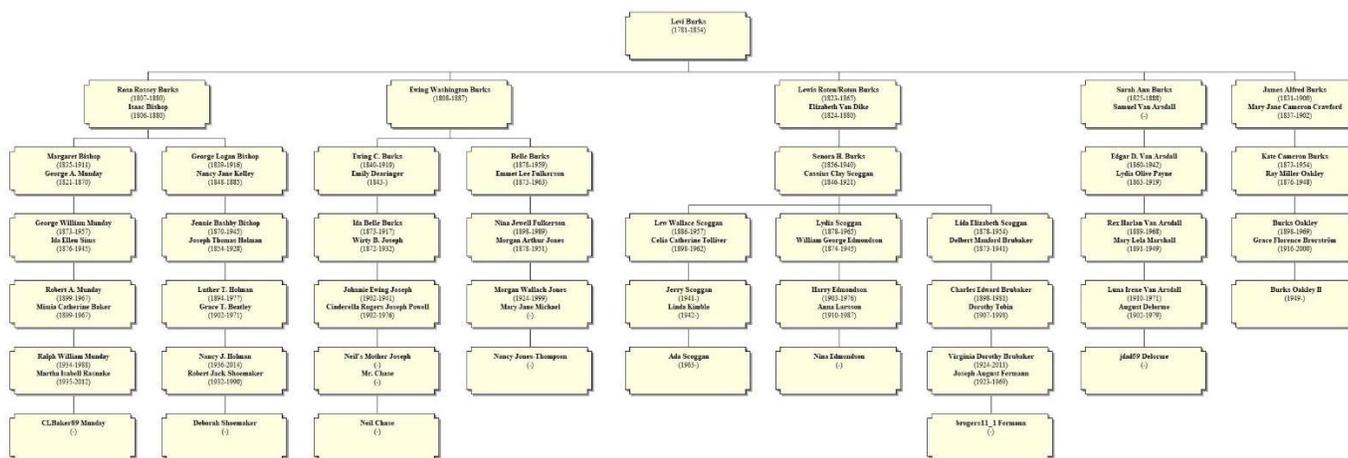
In addition to the six members of the Levi Burks DNA Circle, I now have identified five other individuals who are my DNA matches and are descended from Levi Burks:

- Jerry Scoggan
- Deborah Shoemaker Dixon
- **brogers11_1**
- **jdad59**
- Nancy Jones Thompson

I should add that I also have DNA matches with the Quincy Oakleys who are descendants of Levi Burks – Hal Oakley, Mark Eidem, and Jake Oakley.

Putting all the Family Trees Together

I put all nine descendants of Levi Burks with whom I have DNA matches into a single chart:



A larger version of this chart is available at:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/LeviBurksDescendantsOverall.pdf>

It is quite amazing to see how the generations line up (or don't line up) in this chart. My generation includes the 2nd-great grandchildren of Levi Burks – going from left to right in the chart, these people were born in 1899, 1894, 1902, 1924, 1941, 1903, 1898, 1910, and 1949. I'm the one born in 1949 – I sure am an outlier in this group!

I find it amazing that Ancestry.com was able to determine that I have DNA matches with the last person in each of these family lines (the last two people in Ada Scoggan's line).

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed at great length the Levi Burks DNA Circle. I showed how I am related to the other members of this DNA Circle. Just as importantly, I found others who should be in this DNA Circle, but aren't, due to the limited information in their family trees.

My DNA matches who are descended from Levi Burks are my third-cousins (1), third-cousins once-removed (4), and third-cousins twice-removed (4). Since these people are such distant relatives, our DNA matches are small (but significant).

Perhaps the best part of this chapter is that it takes our family back to 1800, the Cumberland Gap, Daniel Boone, and pioneers settling on the western frontier. Priceless!



Daniel Boone escorting settlers through the Cumberland Gap
Oil on canvas
Painted by George Caleb Bingham (1811–1879) between 1851 and 1852

Appendix A

Of possible interest are these scans of the wedding bonds related to Levi's two marriages. The first is from his marriage to Sarah "Sally" Pigg on 29 June 1802:



Sir I give up for Levy Burks to marry my
Daughter Sally this given under my hand
this 29 day of June 1802 William Pigg
To the Clerk of Lincoln County

Know all men by these presents that we Levy Burks
and Lewis Pigg are held & firmly bound in
James Garrard Governor of Kentucky in the sum of fifty
pounds current money for the payment of which we bind
ourselves our heirs jointly & severally firmly by these
presents sealed with our seals / Dated this 29th
Day of June 1802

The condition of the above obligation is such that where as
a line is about to issue of a marriage intended between
Levy Burks & Sally Pigg Now if there is no
lawful cause to obstruct said marriage then then above obligation
to be void else to remain in full force & virtue
Witness
Levy Burks (seal)
Lewis Pigg (seal)

The second is from his marriage to Amy Griffey White on 1 July 1830:

Kentucky, County Marriage Records, 1783-1965 for Amy White

Mercer > 1827-1833

We know all men by these presents, that me Levi Banks
and Isaac Bishop are held firmly
bound unto the Commonwealth of Kentucky in the penal
sum of fifty pounds current money to the payment of
which with duty to be made we bind ourselves
herein jointly & severally firmly by these presents sealed
with our seals & dated this 1st day of July

1830 The condition of the above obligation is such
that whereas there is a license about to issue for a
marriage intended to be solemnized between the above
bound Levi and Amy White
that if there be no lawful cause to obstruct
said marriage then the above obligation to be void else
to remain in full force & virtue.

by
Levi Banks
Isaac Bishop

Levi Banks
Isaac Bishop

Appendix B

I thought it would be interesting to present details of my DNA matches with these individuals.

Name	Size of DNA Match with Burks
<i>CLBaker89</i>	12.0 cM
<i>N.C.</i> (Neil Chase)	20.4 cM
<i>Nina Edmondson</i>	23.0 cM
<i>browneyes463</i> (Ada Scoggan)	6.1 cM
Jerry Scoggan	45.0 cM
Deborah Shoemaker Dixon	33.0 cM
<i>brogers11_1</i>	8.1 cM
<i>jdad59</i>	16.6 cM
Nancy Jones Thompson	17.7 cM

My largest DNA match is with Jerry Scoggan, and he is the only one of these people who is my third-cousin; all the others are third-cousins once-removed or twice-removed.

The sizes of these DNA matches are consistent with our known genealogical relationships.