

Chapter 8

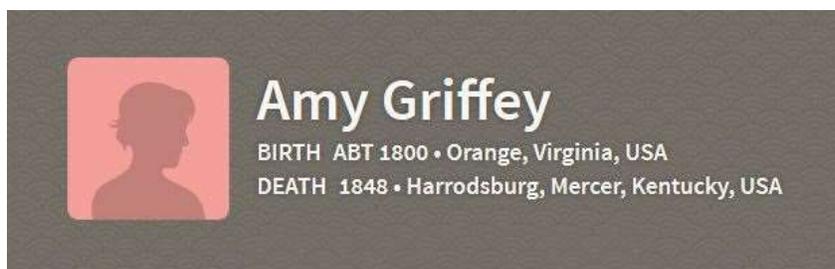
Our Griffey Family History

Introduction

Levi Burks (1781-1854) was my 2nd-great grandfather. In 1802, he married Sarah “Sally” Pigg (1785-1830). They had ten children, and then Sarah Pigg Burks died in 1830. Levi remarried the widow Amy Griffey White (her maiden name was **Griffey**) that same year.¹ Levi and Amy had four children, including my great-grandfather James Alfred Burks (1831-1900).

I have been working to construct a pedigree² for each of my 2nd-great grandparents on my father’s side of the family. I’m especially interested in my **Burks** family ancestors, since I have the **Burks** surname as my given name. However, Levi Burks’ second wife (and my 2nd-great grandmother) Amy Griffey is one of my “brick walls” – she appears in only a few family trees and genealogical databases on the web, and none of them have anything about her parents.

My family tree (based on what Hal Oakley gave me from his family genealogy) showed that Amy Griffey was born in 1784 in Orange County, Virginia. But her son James Alfred Burks was born in 1831, so she would have been 47 years old at that time if she was born in 1784. My guess is that she was probably born around 1795 or 1800. Consistent with this is the record for Amy Griffey in the Ripperden-Nelson family tree³ on the Ancestry.com website, which lists her birth year as “About 1800”.



The Cook and Burks Genealogy tree on the Ancestry.com site also has her birth year as 1800.⁴

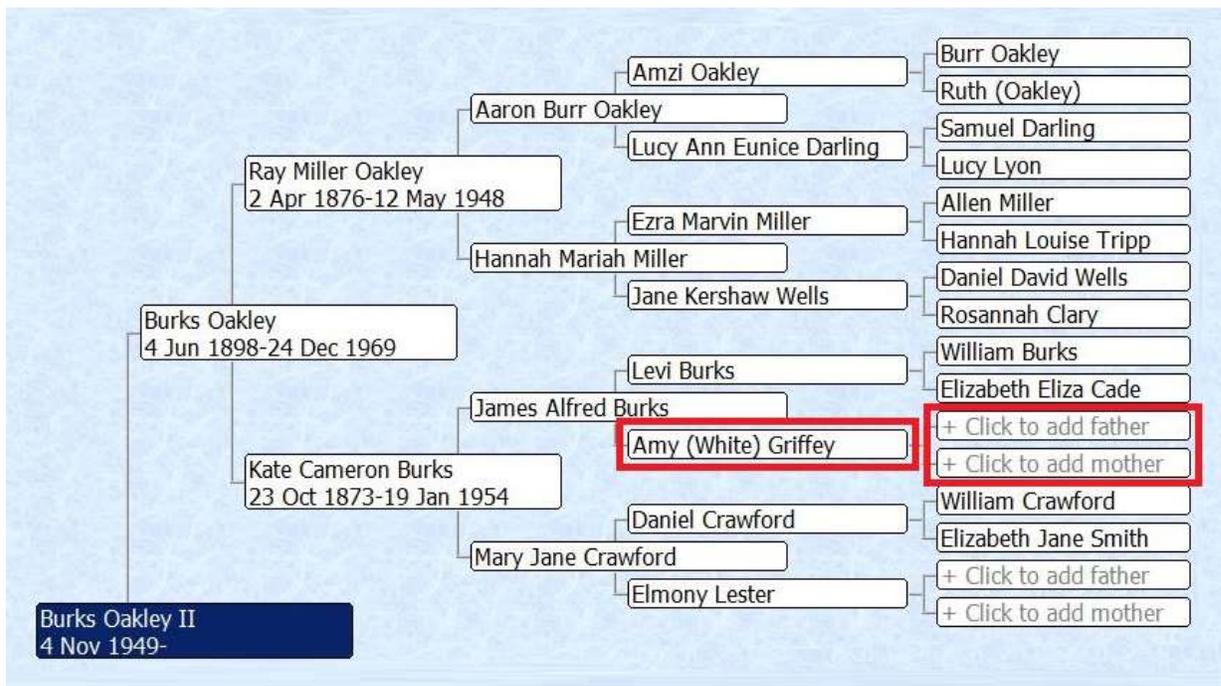
¹ The marriage took place on 1 July 1830 in Mercer County, Kentucky.

² A pedigree is an ancestral line; a line of descent; a lineage; an ancestry.

³ <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/17246543>

⁴ <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/35084212/family?fpid=18744890394>

The lack of information about Amy Griffey’s ancestors is a glaring hole in my family tree. Here is a chart showing my pedigree on my father’s side of the family:



Note that Amy Griffey’s parents were unknown at the time that this chart was created. So while I can track many branches of the “Quincy Oakley” family tree in America back to the mid-1600’s, it has been frustrating to me that Amy Griffey’s pedigree is blank.

I have re-visited my search for Amy Griffey’s ancestors at least once each week for many, many months, and I always have come up empty. Finally, one of my DNA matches on the Ancestry.com website provided a clue, and that led to another clue, and Well, the remainder of this narrative will focus on how I was able to construct a (hypothetical) pedigree for her and support this pedigree through numerous DNA matches.

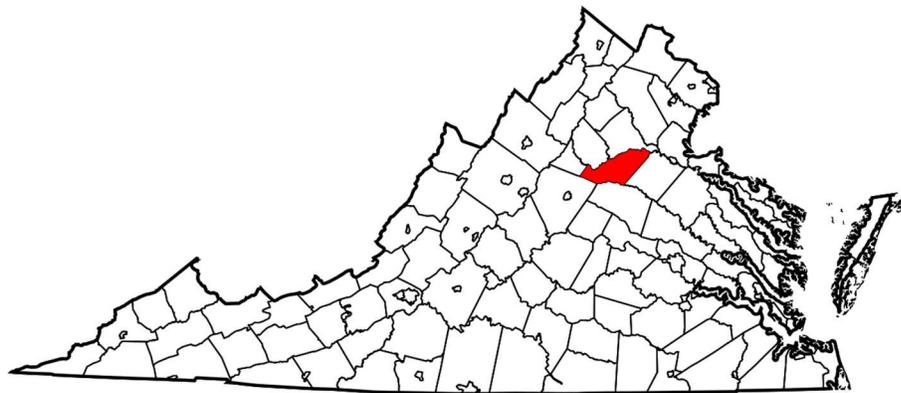
Orange County, Virginia

Since Amy Griffey was born in Orange County, Virginia, in the late 1700’s, I thought that it would be useful to provide some background about this location. Orange County is a rural county located in the central piedmont region of the Commonwealth of Virginia. As of the 2010 census, the population was just over 33,000 people. Its county seat is the town of Orange (population 4,700). Orange County is home to Montpelier, the 2,700 acre estate of James Madison, the fourth President of the United States and oft-hailed “Father of the Constitution.”

Orange County was created in August 1734 when the Virginia House of Burgesses adopted “An Act for Dividing Spotsylvania County.” Unlike other counties whose boundaries had ended at the Blue Ridge Mountains, Orange was bounded on the west “by the utmost limits of Virginia”, which at that time stretched to the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. For this reason, some contend that Orange County was at one time the largest county that ever existed in America. This situation lasted only four years; in 1738, most of the western tract was split off into Augusta County.

The early US Census records for Orange County (1790, 1800, 1810) were lost. In August 1814, British troops occupied Washington, DC, and public buildings were put to the torch. In the destruction that followed, numerous early records of the government were lost, including all of Virginia’s 1790 and 1800 census reports, as well as eighteen county lists (including Orange) for the state’s 1810 federal census. Nevertheless, the 1810 substitute census list for Orange County contained 1,097 households, 1,253 adult males (both white and free black), 3,171 slaves over the age of twelve, and 3,238 horses.

Here is a map of Virginia, highlighting the present-day Orange County:



Griffey Family in Orange County

Instead of searching directly for Amy Griffey, I decided to broaden my criteria and search family trees on the Ancestry.com website for a **Griffey** born in Orange County, Virginia, in the late 1700’s. I reasoned that I might be able to find one of Amy Griffey’s cousins, or even a sibling, and that might provide some clues as to who her ancestors were. Through this process, I turned up Edmund Burrus Griffey (1796-1856):

Results 1–20 of 60

Member Tree

Name

Parents

[BUFFIN FAMILY Tree_AutoBackup](#)

Public Member Tree
1 source

Edmund Burrus Griffey

Birth: 1796 - Orange County (Orange), USA
Death: 05 Dec 1856 (5 Dec 1856) - Columbia, Boone, Missouri, USA

F: Joseph William Griffey
M: Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burrus



 **Edmund Burrus Griffey**
BIRTH 1796 • Orange County, Virginia, USA
DEATH 20 APR 1858 • Columbia, Boone, Missouri, USA
LIFESTORY **FACTS** GALLERY

Edmund Burrus Griffey was born in 1796 in Orange County, Virginia. His father was Joseph William Griffey (1765-1842) and his mother was Francis Wisdom Burrus (1773-1835) – her middle name comes from the fact that her mother’s maiden name was **Wisdom**. Both Joseph William Griffey and Francis Wisdom Burrus were born in Orange County, Virginia. At last, a line of the **Griffey** family in Orange County, Virginia, in the late 1700’s!!

My First DNA Hint

I searched my DNA matches on the AncestryDNA website for individuals having the surname of **Griffey** in their pedigrees. This turned up several matches, including one with a woman having the username of **C.C.** (administered by Mslew22):



[C.C.](#) (administered by Mslew22)

Possible range: 5th - 8th cousins

Confidence: Good

Last logged in Nov 10, 2015

37831 people

[VIEW MATCH](#)

Her **Griffey** pedigree included Joseph William Griffey and his wife Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris:

Joseph William Griffey

Vital Events (3 of 4 timeline events)

Birth	1765 Orange Co., VA
Marriage	15 Oct 1789 to Fanny Wisdom Burris Orange Co., VA
Death	20 Jul 1842 Lawrenceburg - Anderson, KY

Spouse and Children

- Fanny Wisdom Burris**
1773 - 11 Feb 1835
- David D Griffey**
1791 - 1848
- Mary Polly Griffey**
07 Jul 1792 - 12 Jul 1858
- Edmond Burrus Griffey**
1796 - 05 Dec 1856
- Nancy Griffey**
1799 - Bef. 1899
- Matilda Griffey**
1802 - Bef. 1900
- Frances W Griffey**
11 Aug 1803 - 21 Jan 1876
- Benjamin Griffey**
1806 - 21 Jul 1876
- Joseph William Griffey**
1808 - 1892
- William Burrus Griffey**
1812 - Aft. 1890
- Ann Griffey**
1814 - 13 Oct 1875

[Note that in this family tree, Francis Wisdom Burrus appeared as Fanny Wisdom Burris.]

This was encouraging! I have a DNA match with **C.C.**, who is a direct descendant of a **Griffey** couple that was having children in Orange County, Virginia, around the time when Amy Griffey was born. And they had lots of children, with some gaps in between several births when they could have had another daughter born around 1800.

A Hypothetical Family Tree for Amy Griffey

As I did previously with another branch of the “Quincy Oakley” family, I hypothesized that Joseph William Griffey (1765-1842) and Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris/Burrus (1773-1835) were Amy Griffey’s parents. This couple was having children in Orange County, Virginia, around the time of Amy Griffey’s birth; I can’t imagine that there were too many **Griffeys** living in very rural Orange County, Virginia, in the late 1700’s.

I looked further into my hypothesized family tree for Amy Griffey. I searched a number of family trees on the Ancestry.com website, and I was able to find a number of family lines going back from Joseph William Griffey and Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris/Burrus.

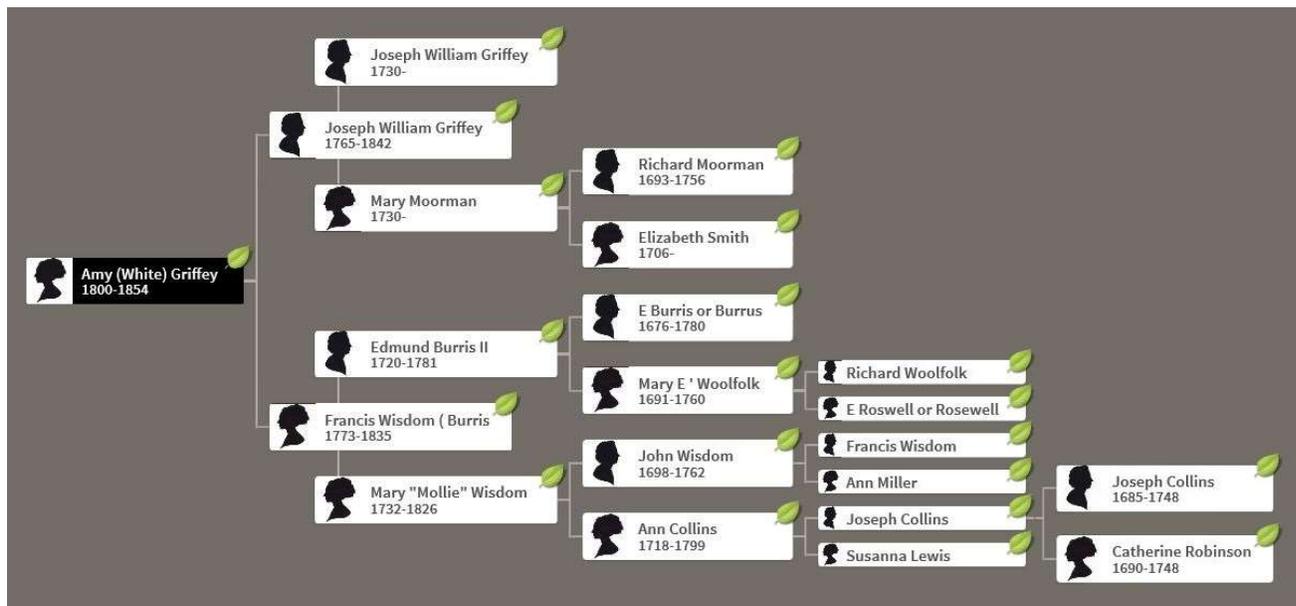
Amy’s proposed mother, Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris, was the daughter of Edmund Burris II (1720-1781) and Mary Wisdom (1732-1826). Edmund II and Mary both died in Orange County, Virginia.

Mary Wisdom’s parents were John Wisdom (1698-1762) and Ann Collins (1718-1799). John Wisdom’s parents were Francis Wisdom (1676-1750) and Ann Miller (1680-1728). Ann Collins’ parents were Joseph Collins (1685-1748) and Susanna Lewis (1692-1768). And Joseph Collins’ parents were Joseph Collins (1685-1748) and Catherine Robinson (1690-1748).

Edmund Burris II’s parents were Edmund Burris/Burrus (1676-1780) and Mary Woolfolk (1691-1760). [Interestingly, Edmund Burris II and his wife Mary Wisdom had a son Edmund Burris III, who died in Mercer County, Kentucky – and Mercer County, Kentucky, was where both Levi Burks and Amy Griffey Burks lived most or all of their married life.]

Amy’s proposed father was Joseph William Griffey, and his parents were Joseph William Griffey (1730-?) and Mary Moorman (1730-?). They both were born in England and immigrated to America.

On the following page is a chart showing my hypothetical pedigree for Amy Griffey:



I searched my DNA matches on the Ancestry.com website for individuals who are descended from people appearing in my hypothesized family tree for Amy Griffey. I searched for all of the new surnames and limited these searches to people born in Virginia. I found that I have a large number of DNA matches with living descendants of these people.

I was encouraged by the fact that I had DNA matches that were consistent with the hypothetical family tree for Amy Griffey. I went ahead and added all of the people in her pedigree to my family tree on the Ancestry.com website. Software on the AncestryDNA website regularly scans MY family tree on the Ancestry.com website for any of MY direct ancestors who also appear in the family trees of my DNA matches. If I have an ancestor in common with one of my DNA matches, the site calls it a “Shared Ancestor Hint”, meaning that we both are descended from this same person (or couple). When one goes to the DNA section of the website, it shows a graphic summarizing the number of these “Shared Ancestor Hints”:

DNA MATCHES

27 Shared ancestor hints

Starred matches

204 4th cousins or closer

[VIEW ALL DNA MATCHES](#)

Right before I added the people from Amy Griffey’s hypothesized pedigree, I had 55 “Shared Ancestor Hints”. Imagine my surprise shortly after adding the people

from Amy's pedigree to my tree – because suddenly I had 71 “Shared Ancestor Hints”!

DNA MATCHES

 71 Shared Ancestor Hints

 Starred matches

 225 4th cousins or closer

[VIEW ALL DNA MATCHES](#)

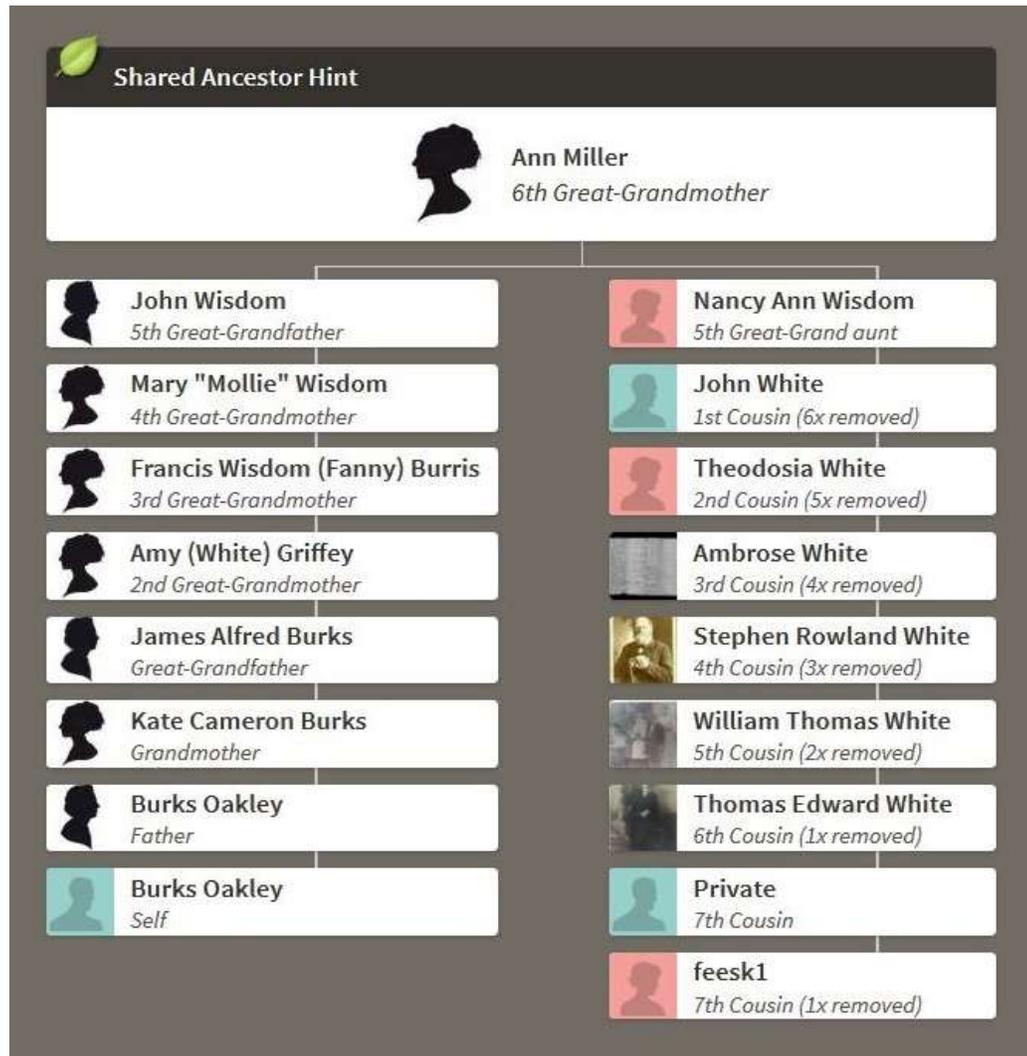
Adding Amy Griffey's hypothesized family tree added **SIXTEEN** new shared ancestor hints, and I only had 55 previously. This means that more than 25% of my current “Shared Ancestor Hints” come from my hypothesized ancestral line for Amy Griffey.

Here are selected examples of the sixteen “Shared Ancestor Hints”. The first is with **C.C.** (administered by Mslew22):



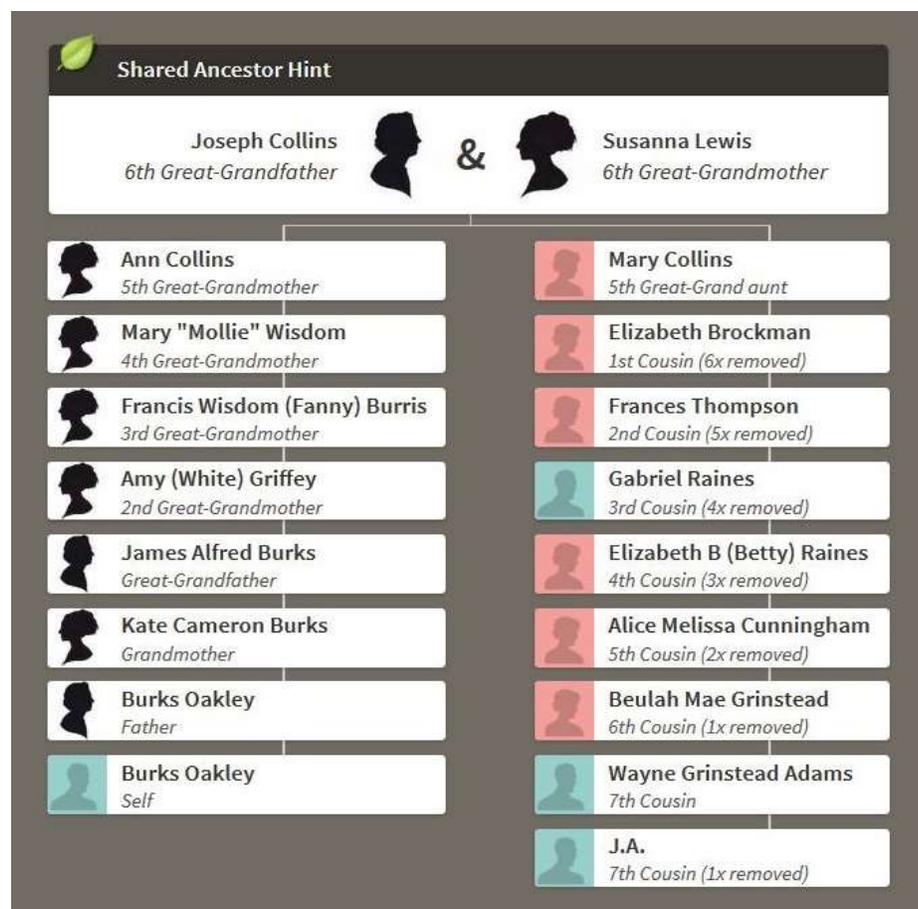
I also have another “Shared Ancestor Hint” involving this couple; it is with a woman having the username of **GiddyUp32**, whose real name is Cindy Wellman.

The next “Shared Ancestor Hint” is with a woman having the username of *feesk1*:



This match goes all the way back to Ann Miller, who was the great-grandmother of Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris. Ann Miller was married to Francis Wisdom – and the algorithms that calculate the “Shared Ancestor Hints” didn’t include Ann’s husband Francis in this hint, since *feesk1* has a different date for Francis Wisdom’s death than I do (she has 1728 and I have 1750).

The next DNA match is with a man having the username of **J.A.** (administered by debadams4870). This match goes back to Joseph Collins (1687-1757) and Susanna Lewis (1692-1768), who were Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris’ great-grandparents:



In addition to **J.A.** (administered by debadams4870), I have seven other “Shared Ancestor Hints” going back to Joseph Collins and Susanna Lewis:

- K.R.** (administered by meowjmr)
- D.V.** (administered by vinescustom)
- K.R.** (administered by meowjmr)
- G.G.** (administered by gailgodley_1)
- jbennettjones**
- jerrine21**
- mgubeno**

My next DNA match is with a woman having the username of **karma1950**; this match goes back to Edmund Burris I (1676-1780) and his wife Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Woolfolk (1691-1760):



One additional DNA match is with a man having the username of ***burtontr81***. This match goes back to John Wisdom and Ann Collins, who were Amy Griffey's great-grandparents. ***burtontr81*** is descended from their daughter Rachel Wisdom, while the "Quincy Oakleys" are descended from their daughter Mary "Mollie" Wisdom:



I also have three other DNA matches going back to John Wisdom and Ann Collins, The first is with a man having the username of **doswho**. Like **burtontr81**, he is descended from their daughter, Rachel Wisdom. The second and third matches are with women having the usernames of **rebelpearlt11** and **jodyblower76**, and they both are descended from John and Ann's daughter Elizabeth.

I'll just cover one last DNA match, and that is with a man having the username of **chefthome**. This match goes all the way back to Joseph Collins (1685-1748) and Catherine Robinson (1690-1748):



I find it interesting that this couple are Amy Griffey's third-great grandparents (according to my hypothetical pedigree), and that is going back more generations than I ever could have expected.

Many More DNA Matches

I actually have many more DNA matches with living descendants of my hypothesized ancestors of Amy Griffey. I found these people while searching on the names I have mentioned above – **Wisdom, Burris/Burrus, Collins, Miller**, etc. While these surnames appear in the family trees of my DNA matches, their family trees don't go back far enough to reach the people in Amy Griffey's hypothetical

tree – I had to search other family trees to see the connection back to Amy’s (hypothetical) ancestors.

On the Ancestry.com website, I have seventeen matches with individuals who have the surname **Wisdom** in their pedigrees, but only six of them lead to “Shared Ancestor Hints”. One of these matches is with a man having the username of **Imccourry**. His **Wisdom** line only goes back to Rachel Wisdom, who was born in 1745 in Orange County, Virginia. Recall that Rachel appears in **burtontr81**’s family tree that I included above. Her parents were John Wisdom and Ann Collins. Rachel was the sister of our Mary “Mollie” Wisdom. But since **Imccourry**’s family tree doesn’t go back far enough, the Ancestry.com software can’t show this as a “Shared Ancestor Hint”.

I have twenty matches with individuals who have the surname **Burris** in their pedigrees, but only three lead to “Shared Ancestor Hints”. One of these matches is with a woman having the username of **mabarker11**. Her **Burris** line goes back only as far as Thomas Burris (1722-1789), who died in St. Thomas Parish, Orange County, Virginia. Various family trees on the Ancestry.com website^{5 6} show that he was a son of Edmund Burris I and his wife Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Woolfolk. This means that he was a brother of our Edmund Burris II (1720-1781).

The bottom line is that I have a plethora of DNA matches with living descendants of the people in Amy Griffey’s hypothetical family tree. [Don’t you just love that word – plethora!]

Concluding Remarks

It is very tempting to conclude that the hypothesized family tree for Amy Griffey is correct, and that I have broken through the “brick wall” for Amy Griffey. It is difficult to come up with an alternative hypothesis that would explain the fact that more than 25% of my “Shared Ancestor Hints” come from Amy’s hypothesized ancestors.

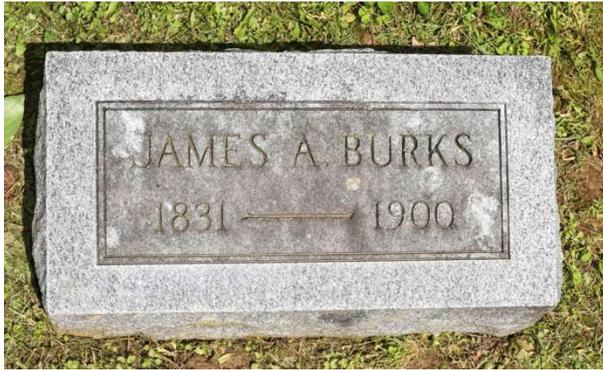
I now plan to contact all of the individuals in this narrative with whom I have DNA matches, and ask them to upload their DNA profiles to the GEDmatch.com website, so that we can compare our DNA matches at the chromosome level. If we can triangulate on a couple of common ancestors, then I will know that this hypothesized tree is correct.

⁵ <http://person.ancestry.com/tree/74043602/person/34286760718/facts>

⁶ <http://person.ancestry.com/tree/80137226/person/42424800995/facts>

Afterward

Levi Burks and Amy Griffey Burks were my 2nd-great grandparents. Their son James Alfred Burks was my great-grandfather. Recall that James Alfred Burks and his wife Mary Jane Crawford Burks are buried in Greenmount Cemetery in Quincy, Illinois. Here are photographs of their gravestones:



The first generations of the “Quincy Oakley” family to actually live in Quincy, Illinois, were my four great-grandparents: Aaron Burr Oakley and his wife Hannah Mariah Miller Oakley on one side of the family, and James Alfred Burks and his wife Mary Jane Crawford Burks on the other side of the family. And while both of my great-grandparents on the **Burks** side of the family are buried in Quincy, both of my great-grandparents on the **Oakley** side of the family are buried in Rockford, Illinois.