

Revisiting Amy Griffey's Lineage

By Burks Oakley II
26 August 2025

I am interested in genetic genealogy – that is, the use of DNA to confirm and to extend my family tree. I make extensive use of the Ancestry.com website in this hobby/pastime/obsession.

One of my most successful applications of DNA to genealogy was finding the parents of Amy Griffey (1800-1854). This woman was my second-great grandmother, and she was the second wife of Levi Burks (1781-1854). I have been unable to find any records online that show who her parents were.

When I first became interested in genetic genealogy, Amy Griffey was a proverbial “brick wall”. I asked Google AI what a brick wall was in genealogy. The response was:

In genealogy, a “brick wall” is a research dead end, a point where you can no longer find information about a particular ancestor. After many hours of searching, the paper trail seems to vanish, leaving a gap in your family tree.

By using DNA matches, I believe that I was able to identify her parents, thus breaking through the brick wall:



AI-generated photo of breaking through a brick wall.

I wrote about the entire process of finding Amy Griffey's ancestors in several narratives in 2017 and 2019 – see:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/8A-GriffeyGenealogy.pdf>

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/8B-AmyWhiteGriffey-revisited.pdf>

Basically, I knew that Amy Griffey was born in Orange County, Virginia, around 1800. And that is all that I knew. So I searched for a **Griffey** male who was living in Orange County, Virginia, and who was married with children born around

1800. That search eventually led me to Joseph William Griffey (1765-1842) and his wife Francis “Fanny” Wisdom Burris (1773-1835). Even though there was no direct evidence that Amy Griffey was a daughter of the *Griffey-Burris* couple, I went ahead with the hypothesis that she was indeed their daughter.

I added Joseph William Griffey and Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris and several generations of their direct ancestors to my family tree on Ancestry.com, and I was pleasantly surprised to see that several days later, I had a large number of new “Shared Ancestor Hints” (as they were called back then). These “Shared Ancestor Hints” showed that I had a large number of DNA matches with descendants of Amy Griffey’s proposed ancestors. I took all of these DNA matches as strong support of my hypothesis.

I haven’t found anything since then that doesn’t support this hypothesis. [How’s that for a double negative?] But I have to admit that I’m always looking for more information in support of the hypothesis (and dreading finding anything that refutes my hypothesis). And that is what this narrative is about.

I recently found that I have a new DNA match on Ancestry.com with Gregg Goodpaster¹:

Distant Family



Gregg Goodpaster

4th cousin or half 3rd cousin 1x removed

Paternal side

10 cM | < 1% shared DNA

 Public linked tree

 11 people

 Common ancestor

We both are descended from Joseph William Griffey (1765-1842) and his wife Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris (1773-1835):

How are you and Gregg Goodpaster related?

Common Ancestors

According to Ancestry member trees, these are the common ancestors that connect you and Gregg Goodpaster. View a common ancestor to see the relationship path that connects you.

Gregg Goodpaster could be your 4th cousin 1x removed through:



Joseph William Griffey

3rd great-grandfather

1765-1842

View Relationship



Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris

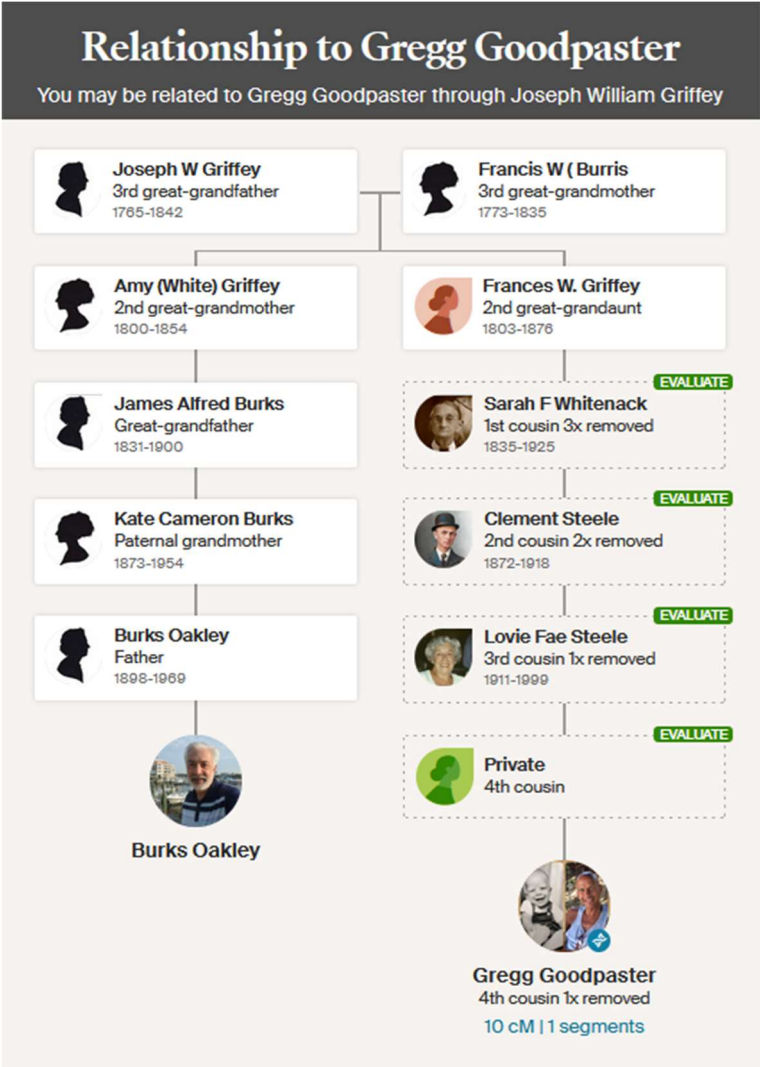
3rd great-grandmother

1773-1835

View Relationship

¹ Based on my online searches, Gregg Goodpaster appears to be a retired pilot from American Airlines, who flew the B737 and B787. See: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/gregg-goodpaster-44485054/>

Here is a chart showing how Gregg and I are most likely related:

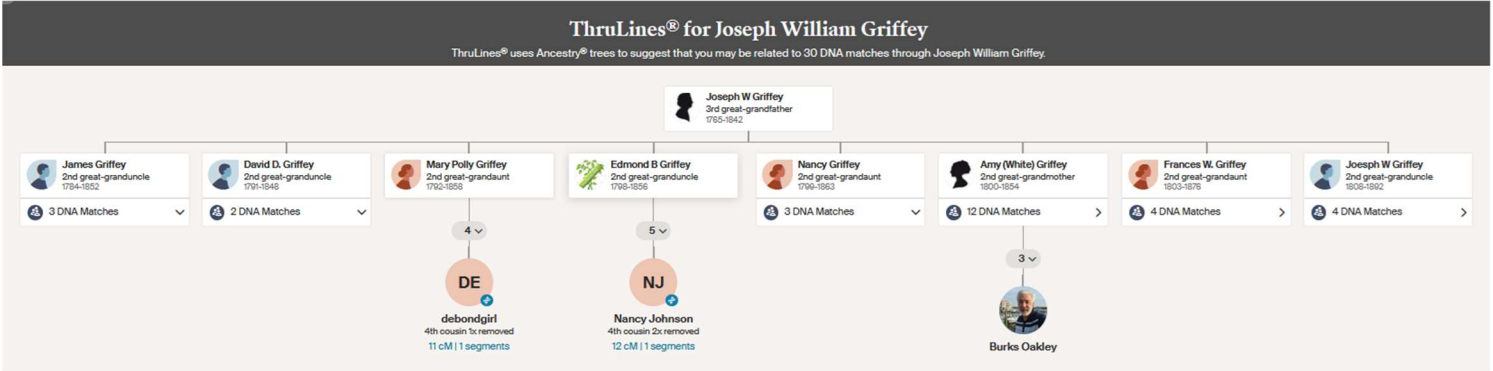


I am descended from the **Griffey-Burris** couple through their daughter Amy Griffey, while Gregg is descended from this couple through their daughter Frances W. Griffey (1803-1876).

Again, I don't have any records or documents that actually show that the **Griffey-Burris** couple were the parents of Amy Griffey. This hypothesis is based on a large amount of DNA evidence, combined with family trees on Ancestry.com.

In an attempt to see if anything had changed since I last looked at Amy Griffey's lineage in 2019, I thought that I should go back and systematically review my ThruLines® charts for Amy Griffey's ancestors, just to see if everything still supported my hypothesis.

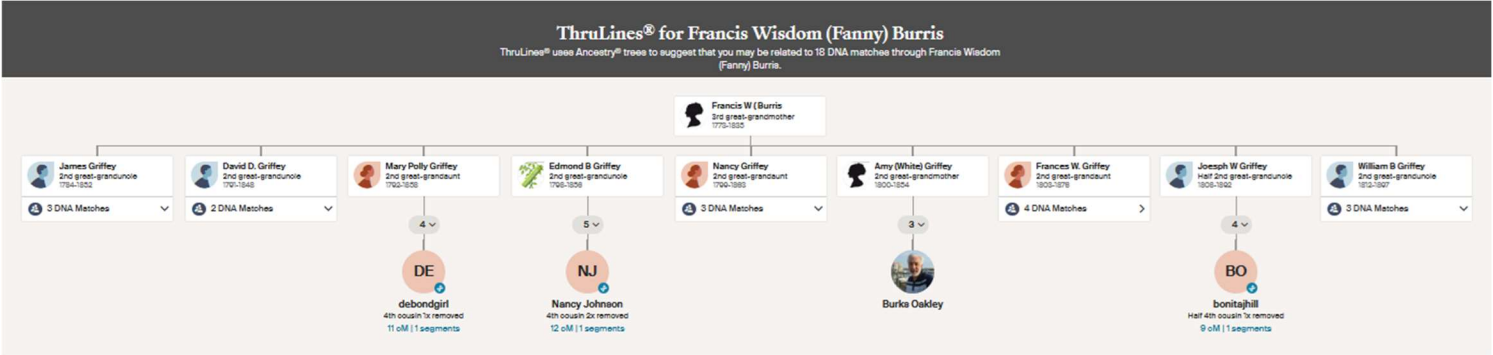
I'll start with my ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey:



Since ThruLines® charts are so difficult to read at this magnification, I'll show all of them in landscape view in an appendix. But the important thing to see here is that I have DNA matches with 30 individuals who are descended from Joseph

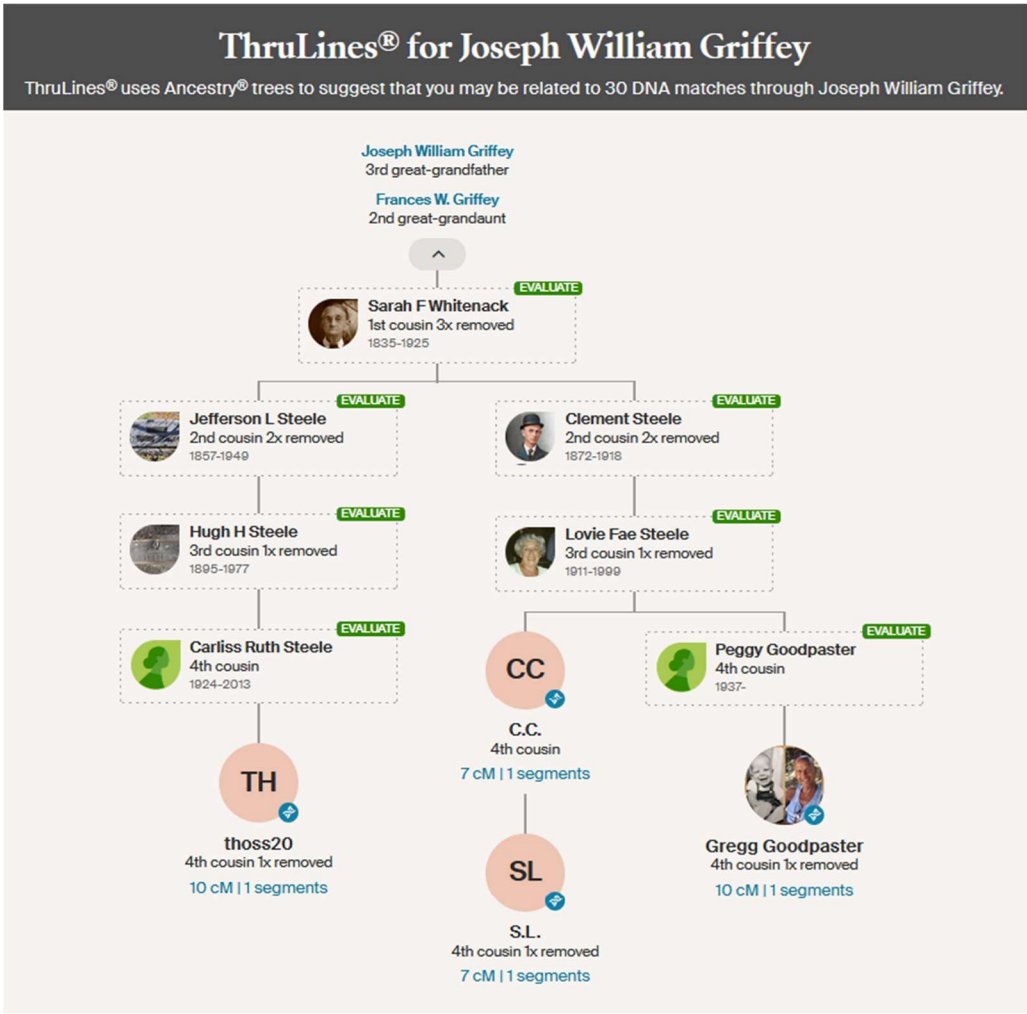
William Griffey. And these 30 DNA matches connect back to Joseph William Griffey through eight of his children. This finding, in and of itself, is pretty strong support for the hypothesis that Joseph William Griffey (or a close relative, such as a brother) was the father of Amy Griffey.

Next is Joseph William Griffey’s wife, Fanny Burris:



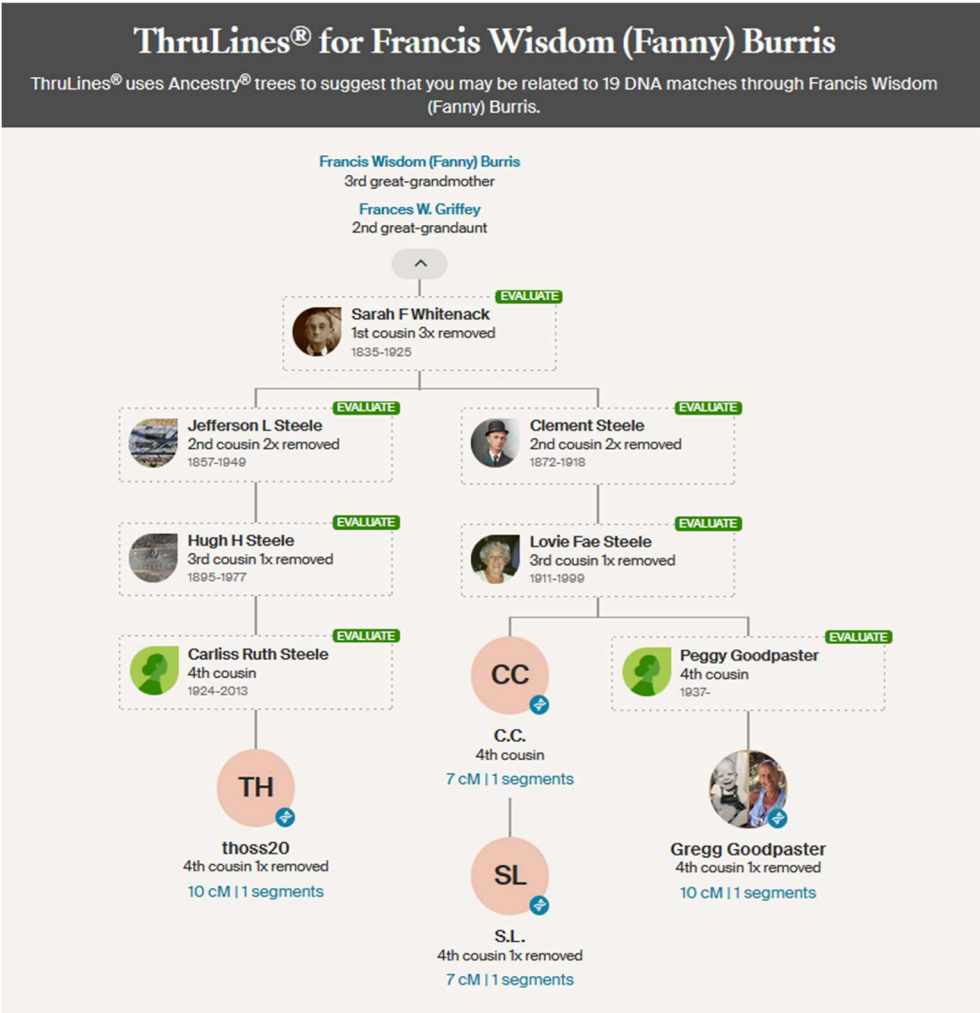
Wow, I only have 18 DNA matches with her descendants, but through nine different children. Having thought about this discrepancy (18 vs. 30 DNA matches) for a while, my guess is that she is listed with many different names in family trees on Ancestry.com - Burrus, Burris, Burrows, Burras, Burruss, Frances, Francis, Fanny, etc., and since the ThruLines® charts are based on family trees on Ancestry.com, one or more family trees must be preventing the software on this site from making connections to Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris in my tree.

Recall that it was my new DNA match with Gregg Goodpaster that prompted me to revisit Amy Griffey’s lineage. Here is the branch of my ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey that includes Gregg:



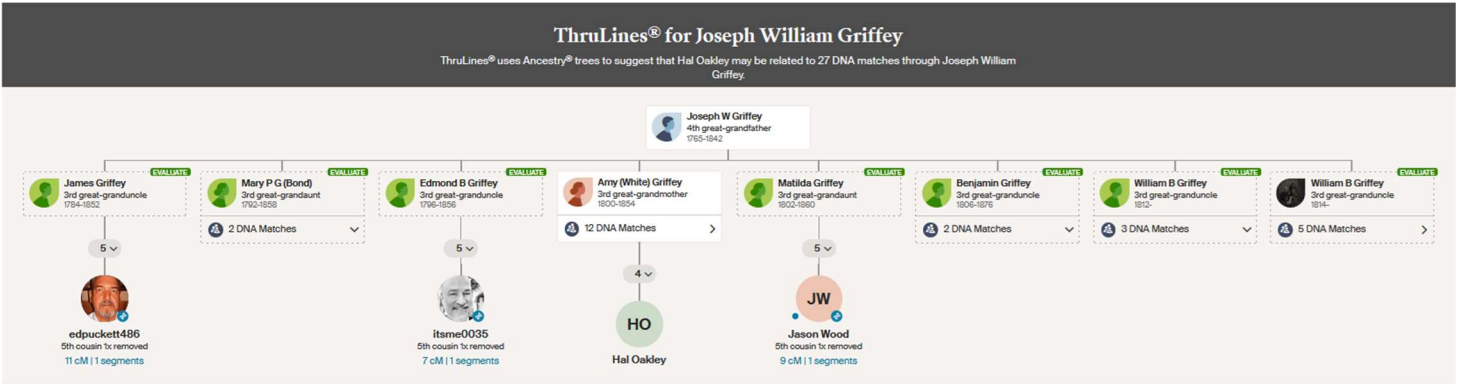
This branch of the chart shows that I also have DNA matches with Gregg’s aunt *C.C.*, as well as *C.C.*’s son *S.L.*

For completeness, here is same branch of my ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey’s wife Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris:



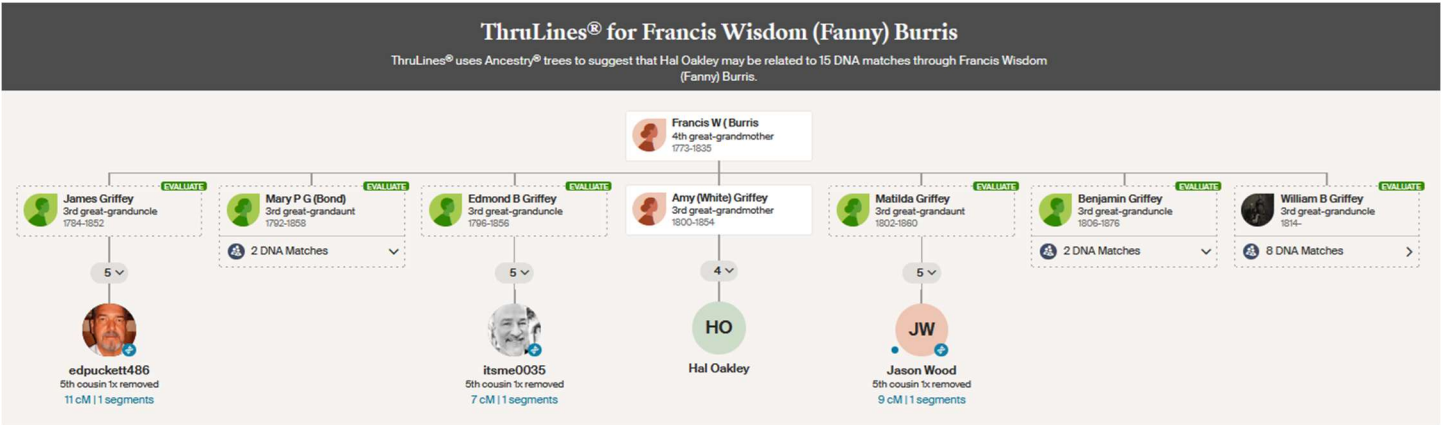
As expected, this branch of my ThruLines® chart for Fanny looks identical to the same branch in my ThruLines® chart for her husband Joseph.

I have access to Hal Oakley’s DNA on Ancestry.com. Hal is my first-cousin once-removed. This means that Joseph William Griffey is one more generation back in the past for Hal than for me. Here is Hal’s ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey:



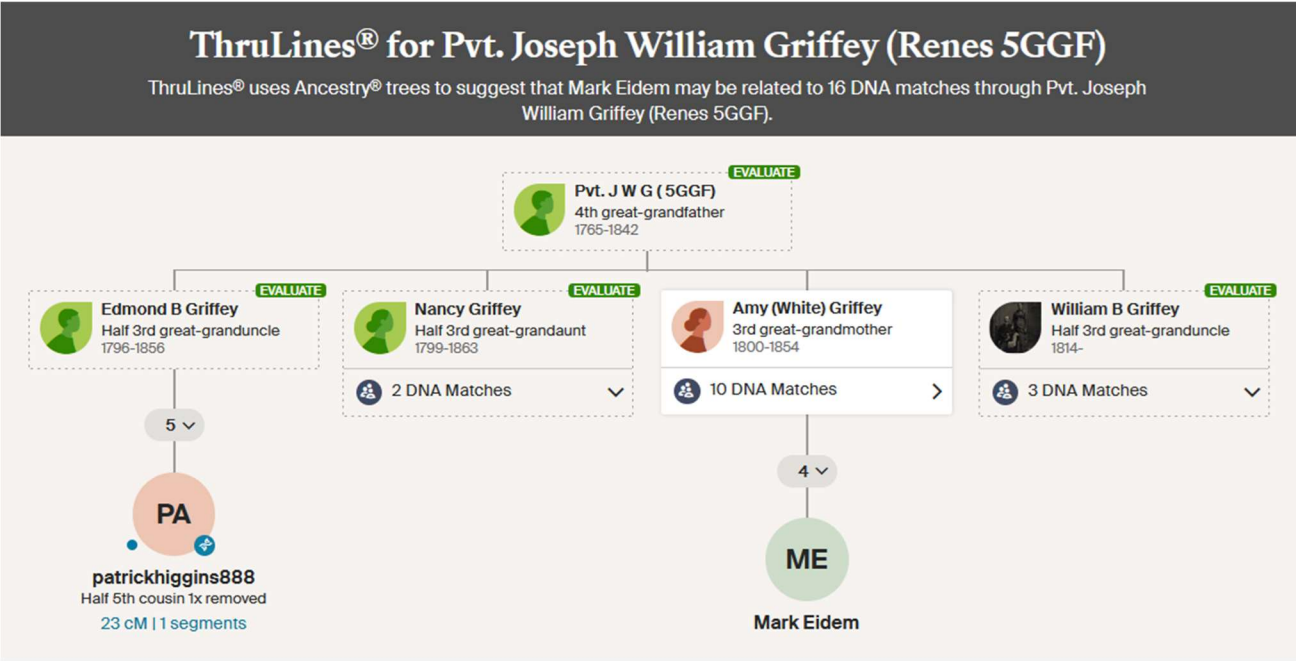
According to this ThruLines® chart, Hal has DNA matches with 27 descendants of Joseph William Griffey, and these matches go back to Joseph William Griffey through eight of his children.

Here is Hal’s ThruLines® chart for Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris:



Hal has DNA matches with 15 descendants of Fanny Burris, connecting back through seven of her children. As with my ThruLines® charts for this couple, Hal has fewer DNA matches with descendants of Fanny than with descendants of her husband Joseph.

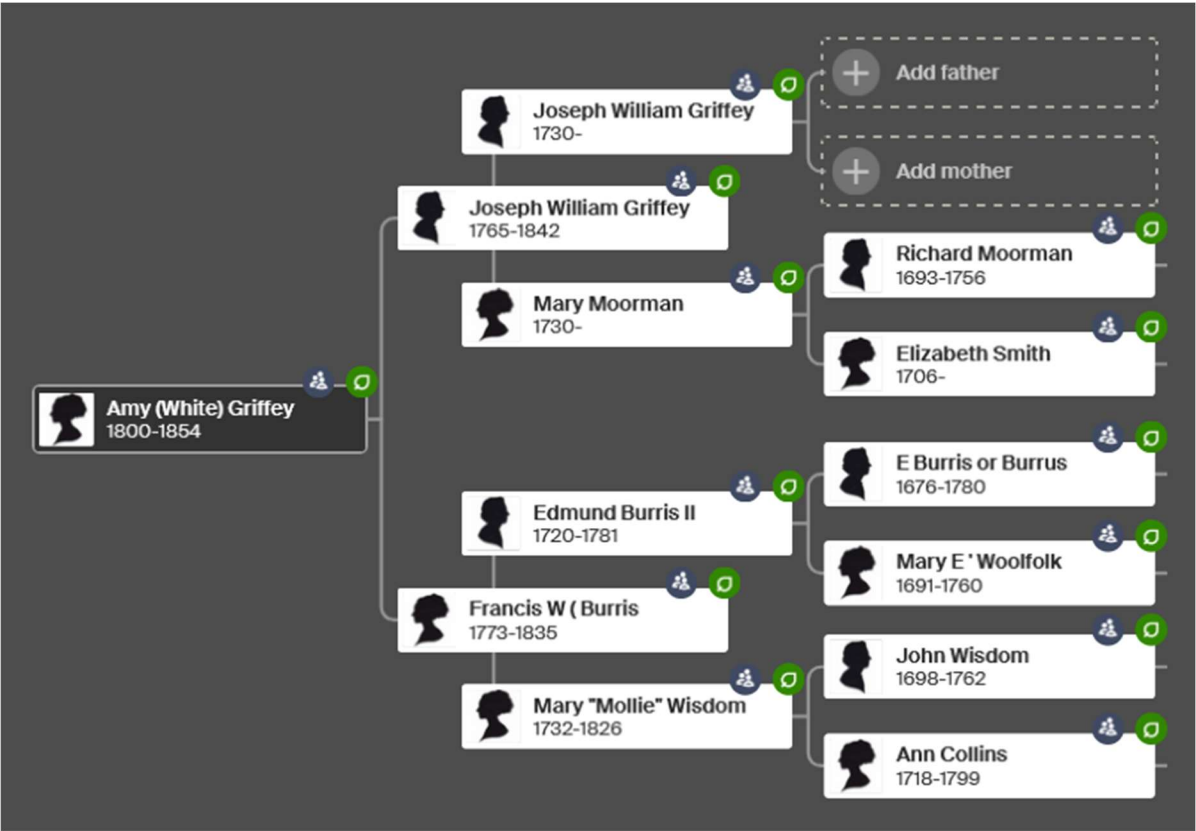
I also have access to Mark Eidem’s DNA on Ancestry.com. Like Hal, Mark is my first-cousin once-removed. Here is his ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey:



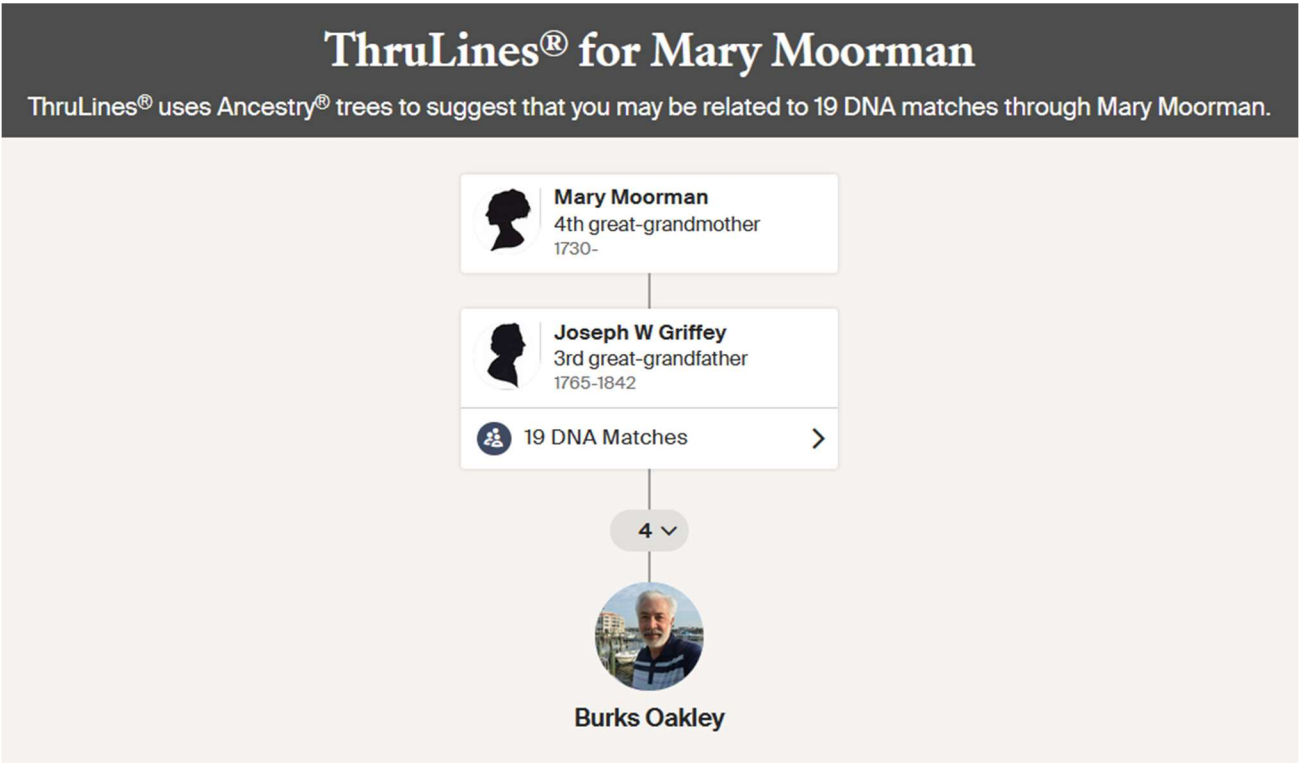
Unfortunately, Mark doesn’t have Amy Griffey’s parents in his family tree on Ancestry.com. So based on several family trees on this site (including Hal’s and mine), software added “Pvt. Joseph William Griffey (Renes 5GGF)” as Amy’s father. And this led to a ThruLines® chart showing that Mark has DNA matches with 16 descendants of this man. And for whatever reason, software on Ancestry.com did not create a ThruLines® chart for Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris.

The three ThruLines® charts for Joseph William Griffey (Hal’s, Mark’s, mine) certainly support the hypothesis that this man was Amy Griffey’s father. And the two ThruLines® charts for Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris support the hypothesis that this woman was Amy Griffey’s mother.

But I still need to go back and look at a few more generations of Amy Griffey’s ancestors. Here is the overall pedigree for Amy Griffey:



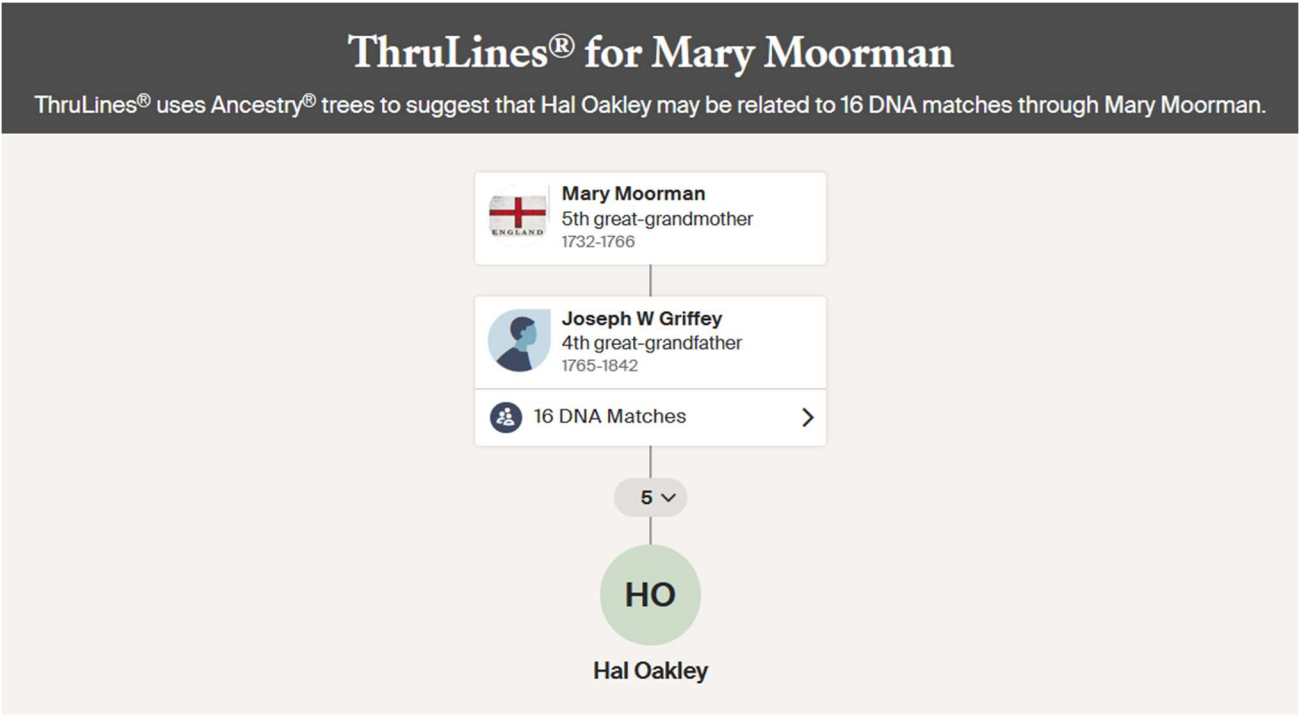
I started with Joseph William Griffey Sr. and his wife Mary Moorman. Here is my ThruLines® chart for Mary Moorman:



I was surprised to find that I didn't have any new DNA matches going back to Mary Moorman through any of her other children. And my ThruLines® chart for Mary's husband, Joseph William Griffey Sr., looks similar to hers.

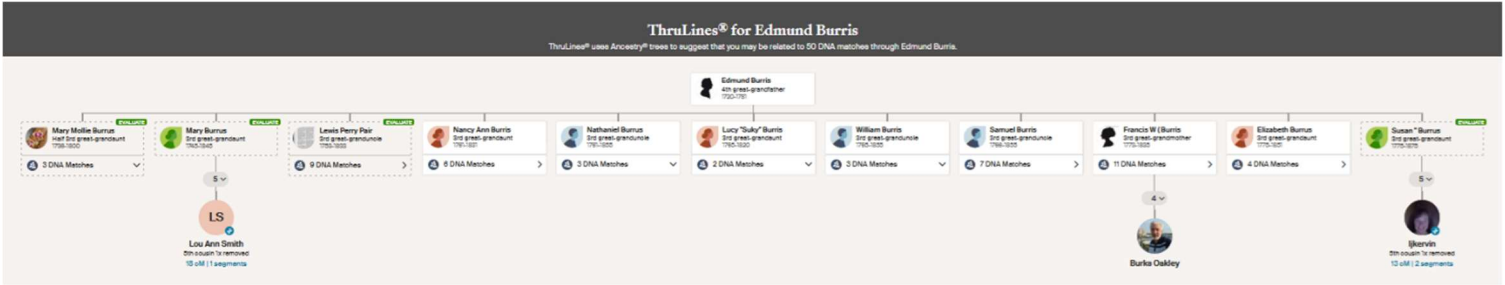
When I looked at the *Griffey-Moorman* couple on Ancestry.com, none of their profiles showed that they had children other than Joseph William Griffey (Jr.). If they didn't have other children, there would not be any new ancestral lines in their ThruLines® charts.

Here is Hal Oakley's ThruLines® chart for Mary Moorman:



I also looked at my ThruLines® charts for Mary Moorman’s parents, but once again, there were no new ancestral lines at this level. But I did find numerous profiles for Mary Moorman’s parents, showing that they had lots of children. So it is bothersome that I don’t have DNA matches with any of descendants of Mary Moorman’s siblings.

Next are the parents of Fanny Burris, Edmund Burris II and Mary “Mollie” Wisdom. Here is my ThruLines® chart for Edmund Burris II:



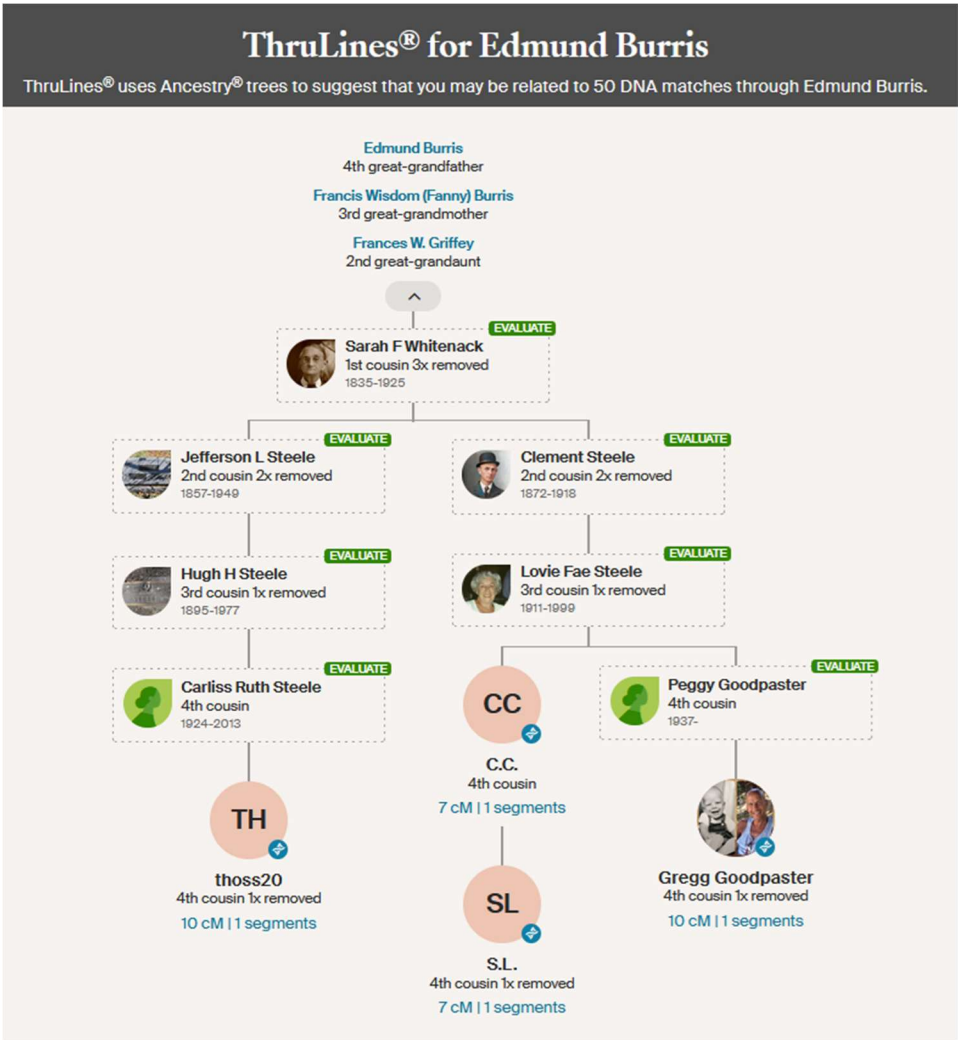
OMG! I have 50 DNA matches with descendants of Edmund Burris II. These matches go back to this man through eleven of his children.

Next comes Mary “Mollie” Wisdom, who was the wife of Edmund Burris II. Here is my ThruLines® chart for Mary “Mollie” Wisdom:



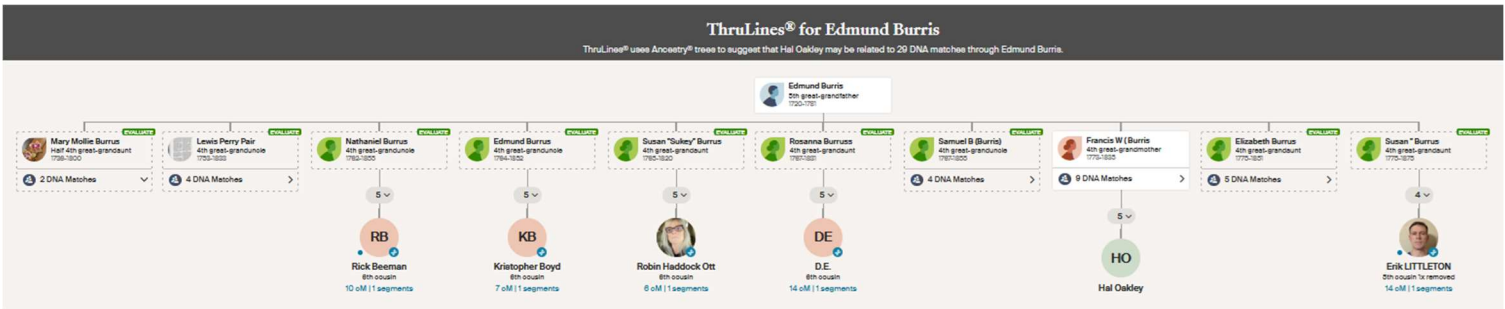
Wow! I have DNA matches with 47 descendants of this woman, connecting back through ten of her children. I’m not going to take the time to figure out why the two charts are slightly different (50 vs. 47 DNA matches) – but obviously one child is missing from my ThruLines® chart for Mollie Wisdom.

Again, all of this review started with my DNA match with Gregg Goodpaster – and here is the branch of my ThruLines® chart for Edmund Burris II that includes Gregg:



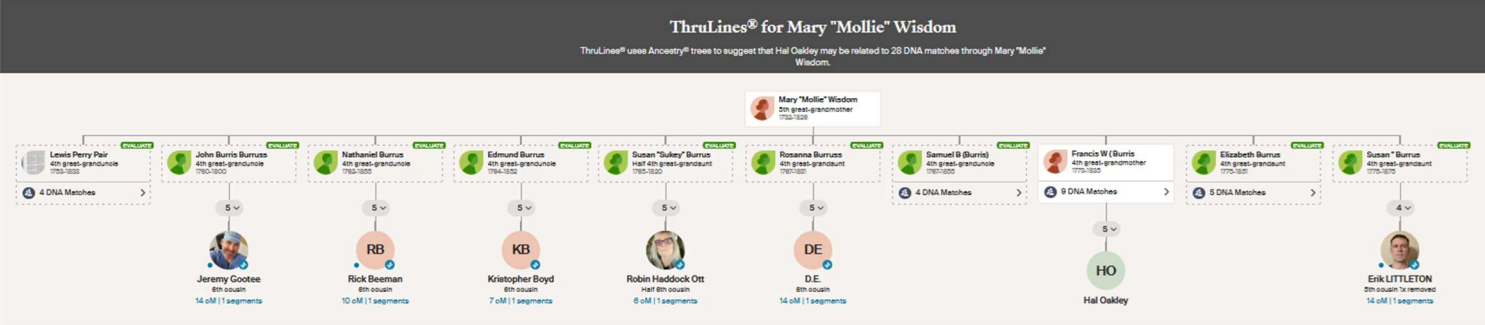
This really is just the same as it was in the ThruLines® charts for Joseph William Griffey and Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris.

For completeness, here is Hal’s ThruLines® chart for Edmund Burris II, who was Hal’s fifth-great grandfather:



Wow! Hal has DNA matches with 29 descendants of Edmund Burris II. These matches connect back to this man through ten of his children.

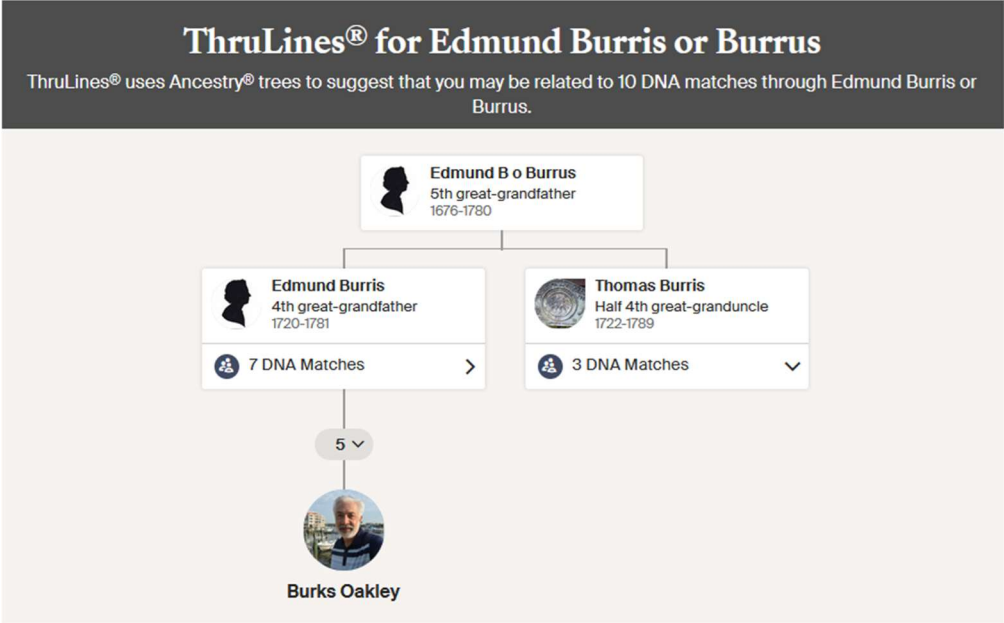
And here is Hal’s ThruLines® chart for Mary “Mollie” Wisdom:



Hal has DNA matches with 28 descendants of Mary “Mollie” Wisdom, going back through ten of her children.

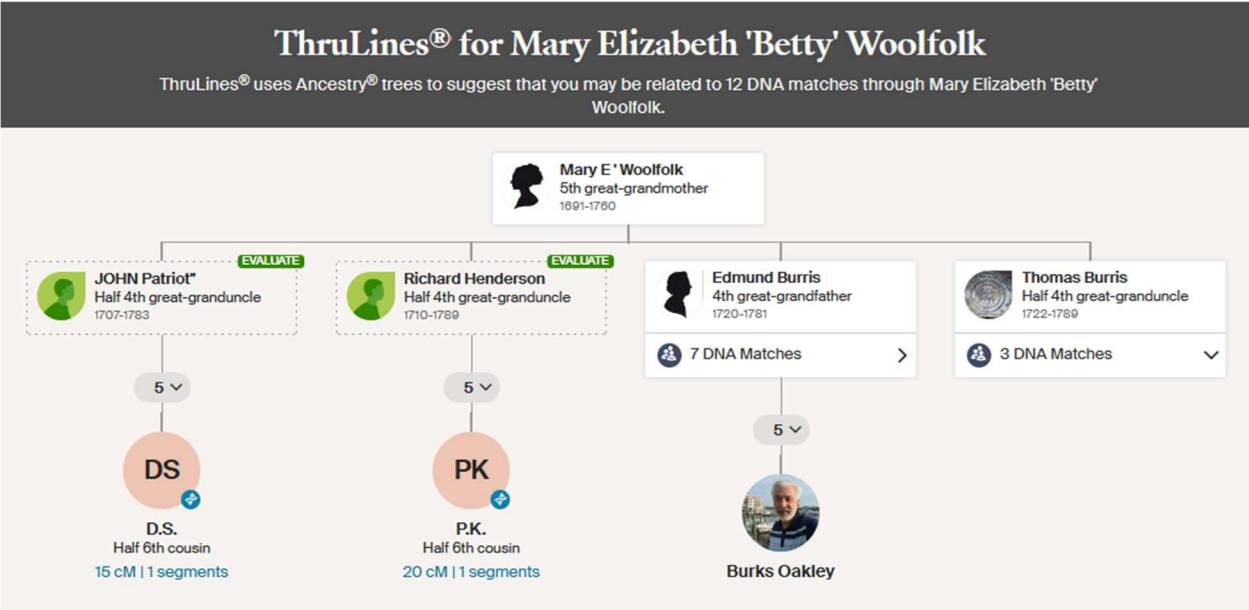
Mark doesn’t have a *Burris* or a *Wisdom* in any of his ThruLines® charts.

The last ThruLines® charts for involve my fifth-great grandparents. I’ll begin with Edmund Burris (Sr.) and his wife Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Woolfolk. Here is my ThruLines® chart for Edmund Burris (Sr.):



This chart shows that I have DNA matches with 10 descendants of Edmund Burris (Sr.). Three of these matches go back through his son Thomas Burris. For some unknown reason, Thomas is listed as a “half” relationship, even though he had the same mother as Edmund Burris (Sr.).

Here is my ThruLines® chart for Edmund’s wife Mary Elizabeth “Betty” Woolfolk:



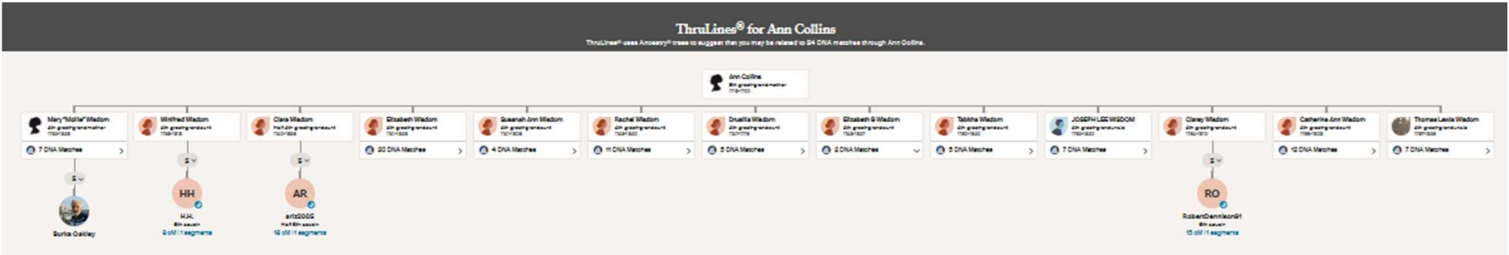
This chart shows DNA matches going back through her sons John Henderson and Richard Henderson, but these are in error. One or more people have family trees that show these Henderson males as being sons of a Mary Woolfolk, but this person was a different Mary Woolfolk than my ancestor.

The last of my fifth-great grandparents are John Wisdom and his wife, Ann Collins. Here is my ThruLines® chart for John Wisdom:



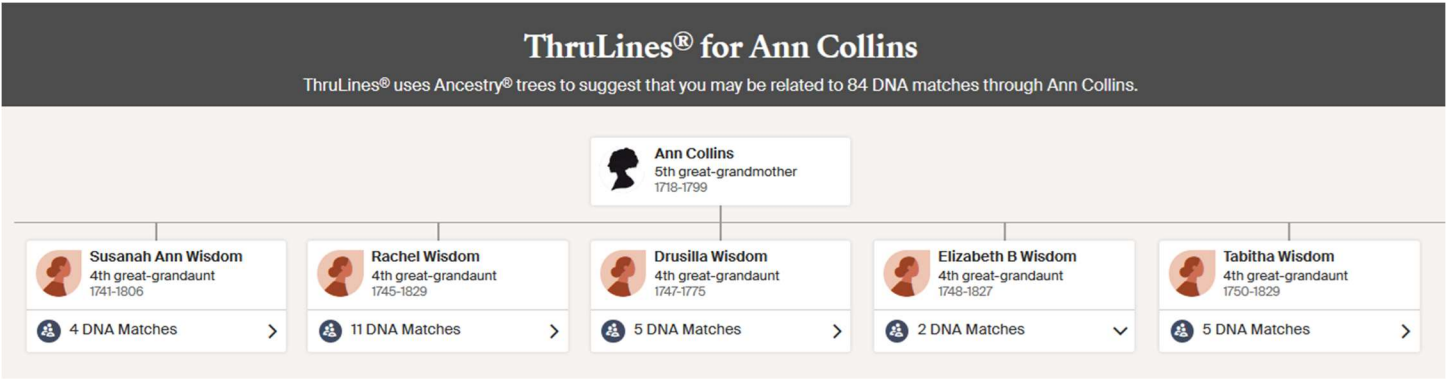
Oh my! This chart shows that I have DNA matches with 85 descendants of John Wisdom, going back through fifteen different children.

Here is my ThruLines® chart for John Wisdom’s wife, Ann Collins:



I have 84 DNA matches with descendants of Ann Collins, going back through thirteen of her children.

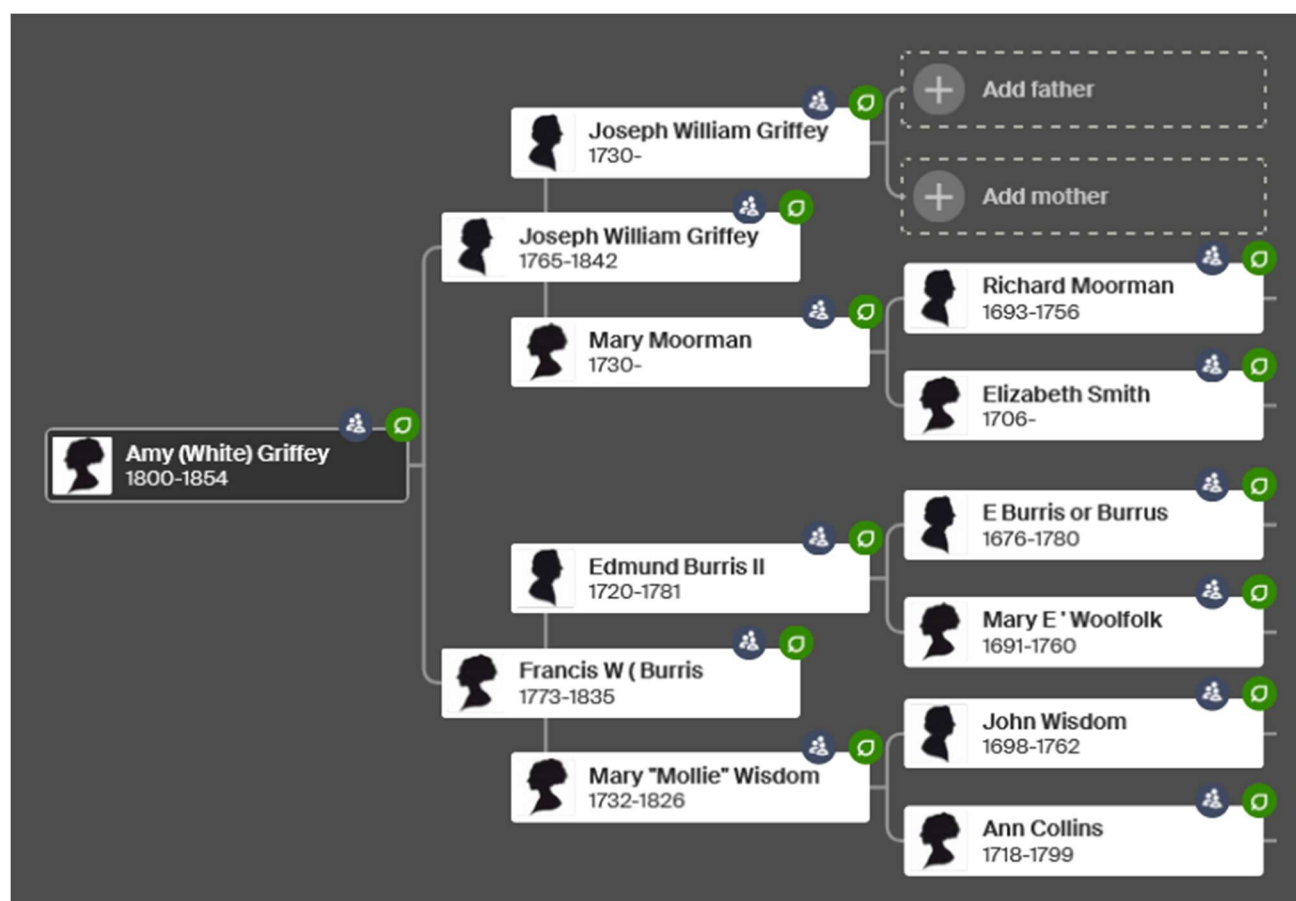
Here is an excerpt of this chart at increased magnification, so that the “84 DNA Matches” is legible:



Wow! This is really quite amazing – that I have 85 DNA matches with descendants of John Wisdom and 84 DNA matches with descendants of John’s wife, Ann Collins.

Of course, Hal and Mark do not have ThruLines® charts for any of MY fifth-great grandparents, since my fifth- are their sixth-, and ThruLines® charts only go through fifth-great grandparents.

At this point, let me revisit Amy Griffey’s hypothetical pedigree chart:



I feel really confident about Amy Griffey's maternal ancestors. The huge number of DNA matches with descendants of these ancestors provide solid support for this branch of the family tree.

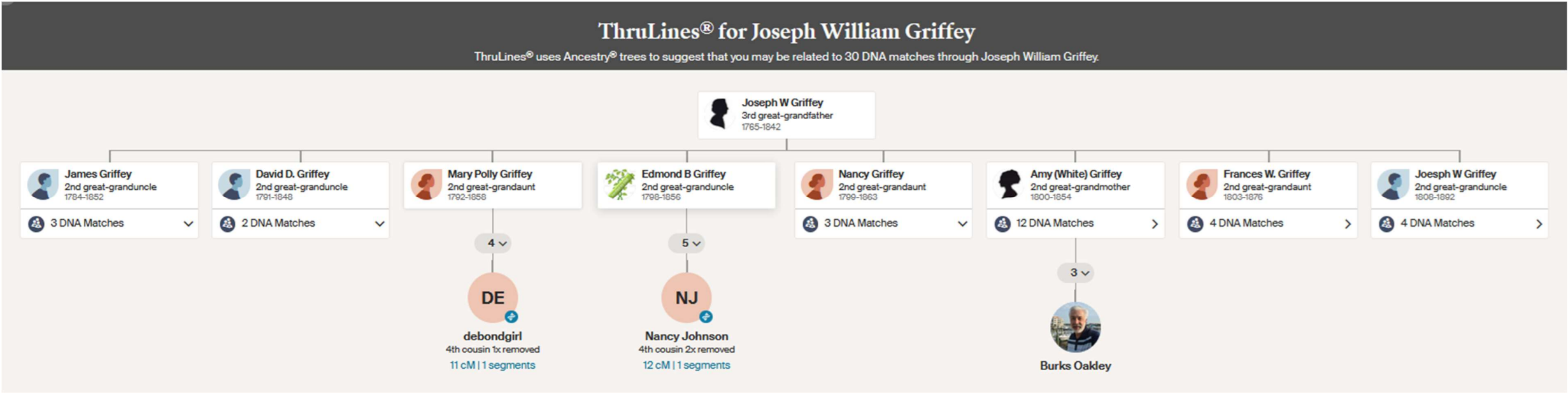
Hal, Mark, and I all have a number of DNA matches with descendants of Joseph William Griffey (Jr.). And all the profiles for Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris on Ancestry.com show that Joseph William Griffey (Jr.) was her husband.

All these ThruLines® charts certainly support the hypothesis about Amy Griffey's lineage. I just wish I had more DNA evidence going back on the **Griffey-Moorman** line.

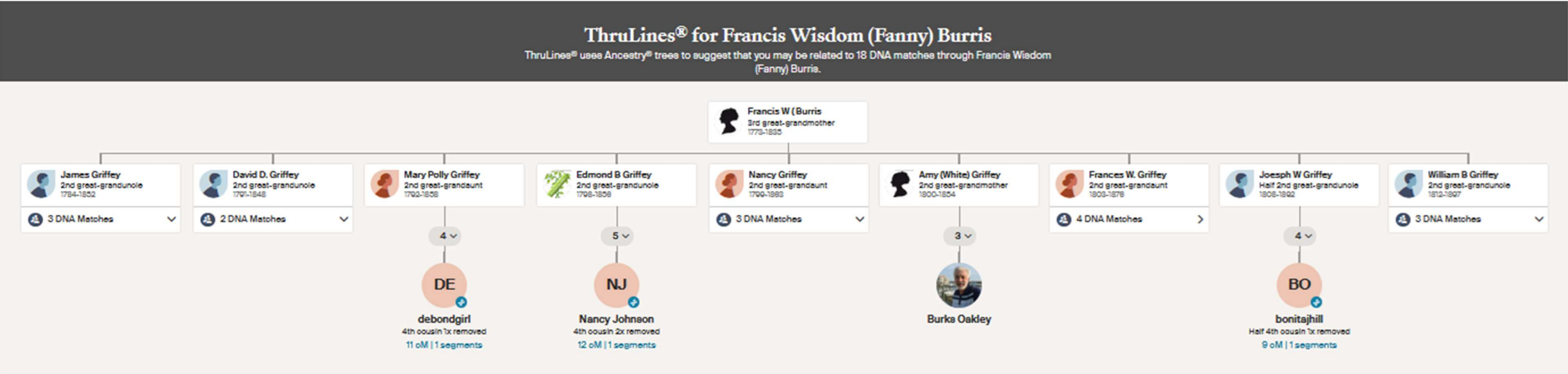
Taken all together, the DNA evidence connecting us to this branch of our family tree gives me confidence that I really did find the parents of Amy Griffey back in 2017 and 2019.

Appendix: ThruLines® charts shown in landscape view

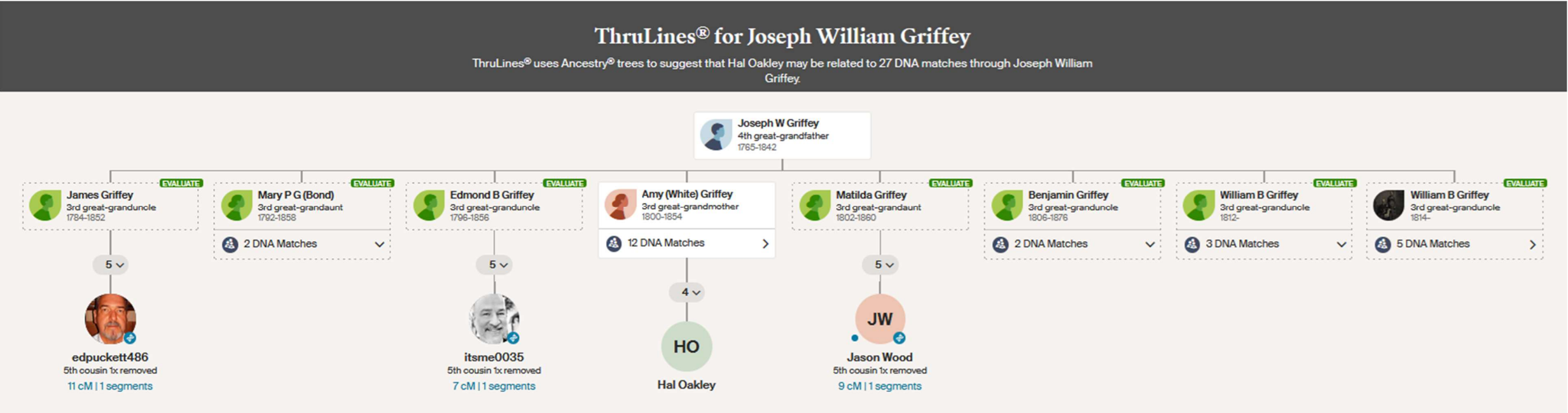
My ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey:



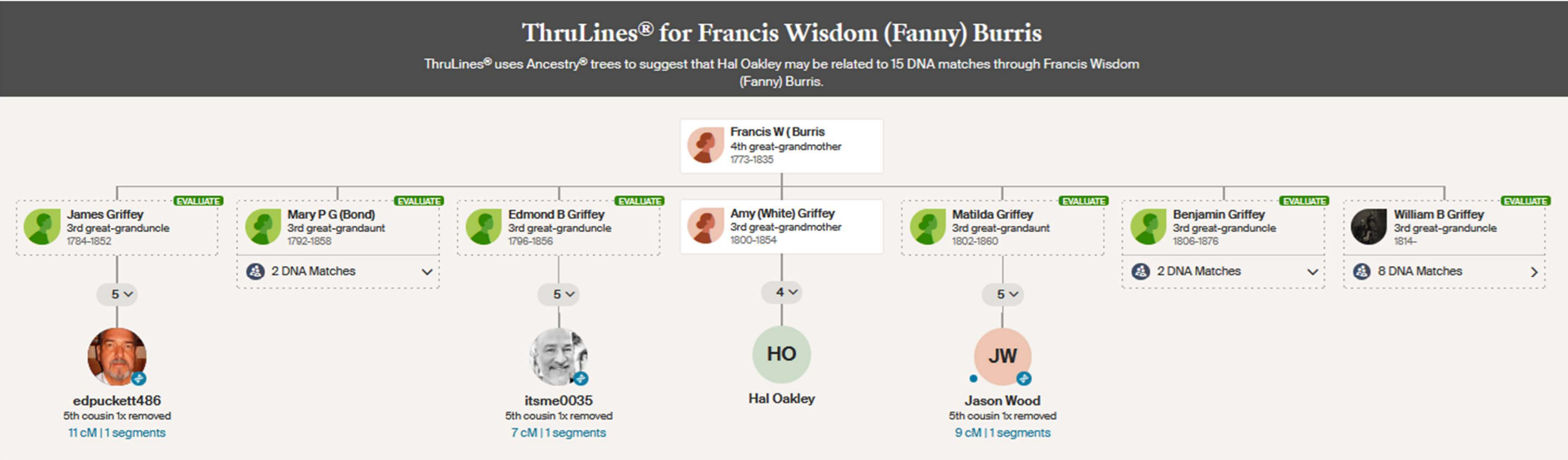
My ThruLines® chart for Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris:



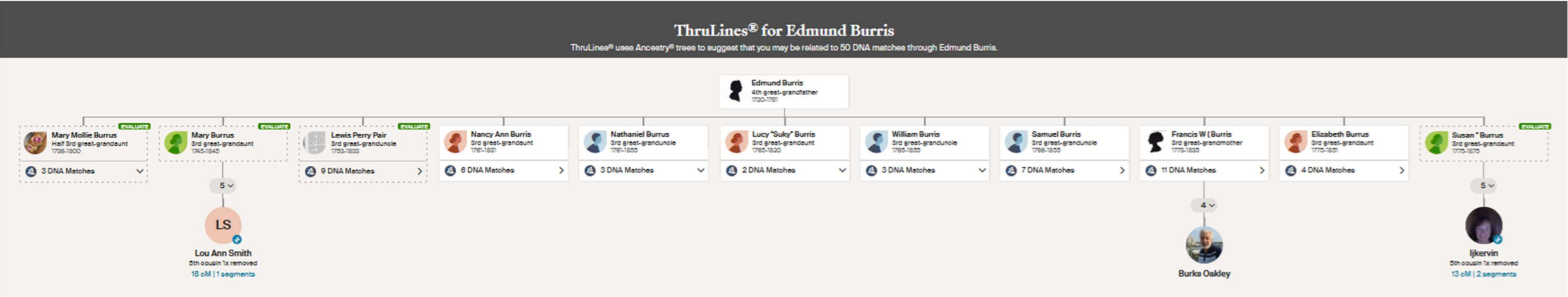
Hal Oakley's ThruLines® chart for Joseph William Griffey:



Hal Oakley's ThruLines® chart for Francis Wisdom (Fanny) Burris:



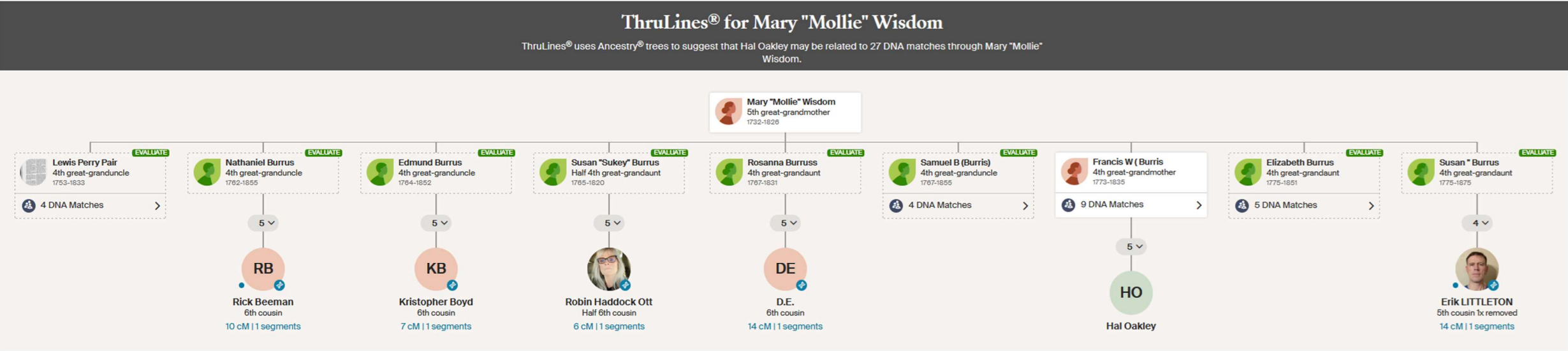
My ThruLines® chart for Edmund Burris II:



My ThruLines® chart for Mary “Mollie” Wisdom:



Hal Oakley’s ThruLines® chart for Mary “Mollie” Wisdom:



My ThruLines® chart for John Wisdom:



My ThruLines® chart for Ann Collins:

