

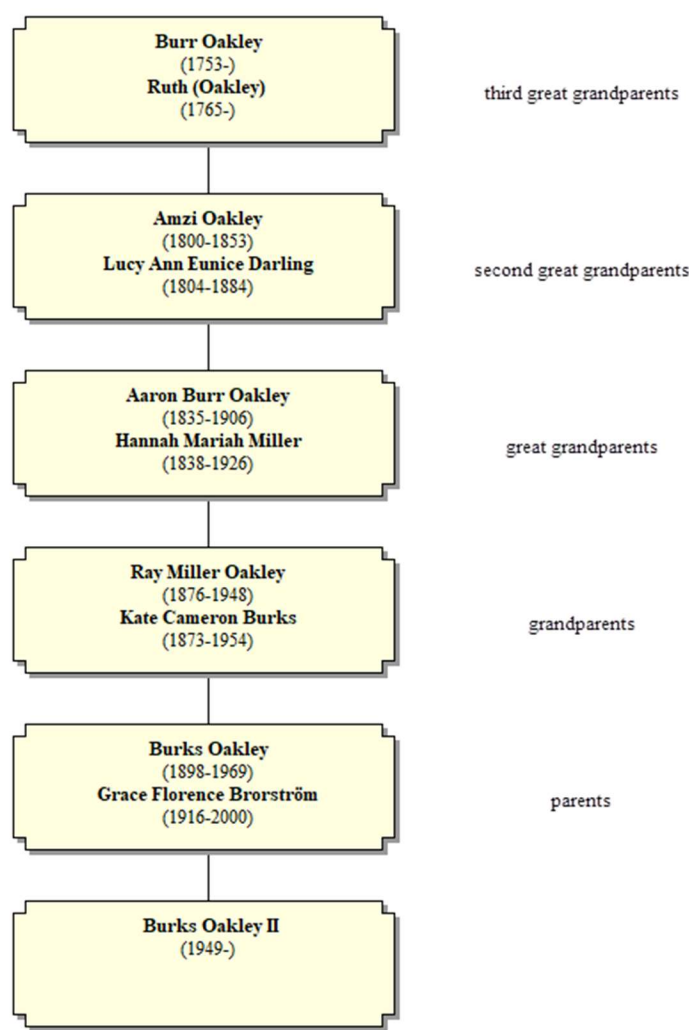
One More Piece of DNA Evidence that Mary Jane Higgins was the Wife of Burr Oakley

By Burks Oakley II
4 November 2025

I am interested in genetic genealogy – that is, the use of DNA to confirm and to extend my family tree. To that end, I make extensive use of the Ancestry.com website.

When I first became interested in genetic genealogy, I started with the family tree that my father had compiled – and this tree had been augmented by my cousin Hal Oakley’s research. Although my family tree is remarkably complete, one glaring absence has been knowledge of one of my third-great grandmothers on my father’s side of the family. This woman was Burr Oakley’s wife, but the meager information that I had only listed his wife as Ruth (last name unknown).

Here is a chart showing my ancestral line back to Burr Oakley and his wife Ruth, as it was in my father’s family tree:



Over time, I came to have doubts that Burr Oakley’s wife was really named Ruth. Going back as far as 2015, I had found a number of family trees on the Ancestry.com website that listed Burr’s wife as Mary Higgins. Here is a screenshot from 10 October 2015 that I had saved on my computer:

Results 1–10 of 363,150		
Member Tree	Name	Parents
STARR Family of Royal Oak MI	Burr Oakley	F: Jeremiah Oakley M: Sarah Burr
Public Member Tree 1 source	Spouse: Mary Higgins	
Bennett Family Tree	Burr Oakley	F: Jeremiah Oakley M: Sarah Burr
Public Member Tree 2 attached records, 3 sources	Birth: 1775 - Fairfield, USA Spouse: Mary Higgins	
Udell Family Tree	Burr Oakley	F: Jeremiah Oakley M: Sarah Burr
Public Member Tree 2 attached records, 4 sources	Birth: 1775 - Fairfield, USA Spouse: Mary Higgins	
Russo Family Tree	Burr Oakley	F: Jeremiah Oakley M: Sarah Burr
Public Member Tree 1 source	Birth: 1775 - Fairfield, USA Death: 1820 Spouse: Mary Higgins	
debbs Family Tree	Burr Oakley	F: Jeremiah Oakley M: Sarah Sherwood Burr
Public Member Tree 2 attached records, 3 sources	Birth: 1775 - Fairfield, USA Spouse: Mary Higgins	
Stocker	Burr Oakley	F: Jeremiah Oakley M: Sarah Burr
Public Member Tree 2 attached records, 4 sources	Birth: 1775 - Fairfield, USA Spouse: Mary Higgins	

More recently, I saw that the entry for Burr Oakley on the FamilySearch.org website listed his wife as Mary Jane Higgins:





Burr Oakley
20 June 1770–after 1820

Brief Life History of Burr

When Burr Oakley was born on 20 June 1770, in Easton, Fairfield, Connecticut, United States, his father, Jeremiah Oakley, was 40 and his mother, Sarah Burr, was 35. He married Mary Jane Higgins in 1791, in Westchester, New York, United States. They were the parents of at least 2 sons and 2 daughters. He lived in Weston, Fairfield, Connecticut, United States in 1800. He died after 1820, in Fairfield, Fairfield, Connecticut, United States.

Earlier this year, I found several DNA matches on Ancestry.com that supported the idea that Mary Jane Higgins was indeed Burr’s wife. I wrote several narratives about this at the time:

http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/BurrOakleyFamily_23Jan25.pdf

http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/BridgetBoss_7Mar25.pdf

Although I was pretty convinced by the DNA matches I had found, I was sure that if I only looked deeper into this, I could (would?) find more supporting evidence. How’s that for conviction!

Several weeks ago, I started looking on the Ancestry.com website for more information about Burr Oakley. I found his profile on the “Woodcox” family tree, which is owned by Clinton Woodcox:

Woodcox ▾Find in tree

Clinton Woodcox

***Burr Oakley**

BIRTH 20 JUN 1770 • Easton, Fairfield, Connecticut, British Colonial America

DEATH Fairfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut, United States of America

Relationships

Spouse and children

Parents

***Jeremiah Oakley**
1730–1820

***Sarah (Burr) OAKLEY**
1732–1807

***Mary Jane (Higgins) MANLEY OAKLEY**
1770–1807

Amzi Oakley
1799–1853

***Mary (Oakley) GAGE**
1801–1862

Thomas Higgins Oakley
1806–1870

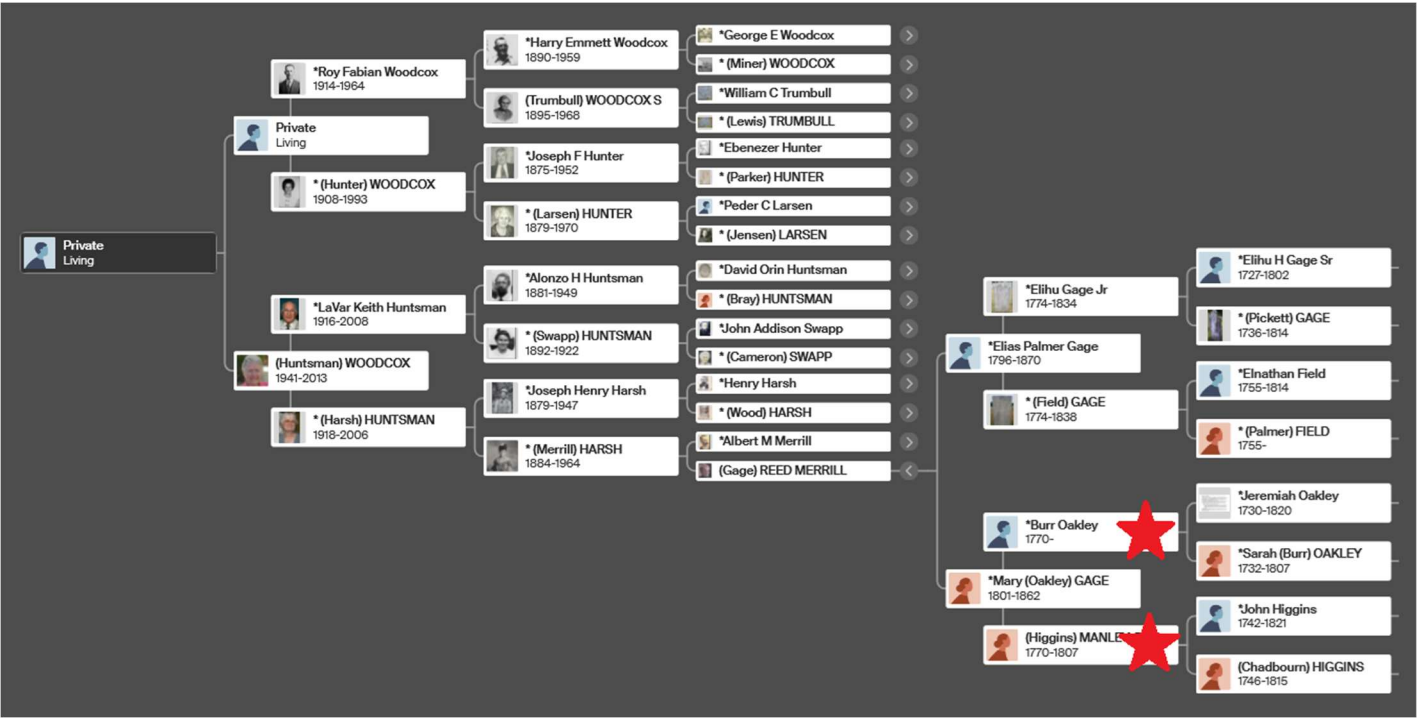
This profile had Burr’s wife as Mary Jane Higgins (1770-1807), and it showed that this couple had three children:

- Amzi Oakley (1799-1853) – my ancestor
- Mary Oakley (1801-1862)
- Thomas Higgins Oakley (1806-1870)

This profile also had Burr Oakley’s date of birth as 20 June 1770, whereas my father’s family tree had his date of birth as 1753.

I noticed that a number of people listed in this profile had an asterisk (*) before their first names. And after a little more digging through the “Woodcox” family tree, I figured out that the leading asterisk meant that this person was one of Clinton Woodcox’s direct ancestors. In this case, the asterisk next to Mary Oakley (married name Gage) indicates that this woman was Clinton’s direct ancestor.

Here is the relative part of Clinton’s pedigree chart:



This pedigree chart shows that Clinton is descended from Burr Oakley and his wife Mary Jane Higgins through their daughter Mary Oakley (1801-1862). Note also that Clinton’s lists all the women in his tree with both their maiden names and their married names.

Based on this profile, Burr Oakley was Clinton’s fourth-great grandfather. Since Burr Oakley was my third-great grandfather, Clinton and I are fourth-cousins once-removed. This certainly is a nice finding. Unfortunately, he and I don’t have a DNA match on Ancestry.com.

I just mentioned that Clinton’s direct ancestor Mary Oakley (married name Gage). Here is her profile from Clinton’s tree:

WoodcoxFind in treeClinton Woodcox

***Mary (Oakley) GAGE**

BIRTH 12 DEC 1801 • Norwalk, Fairfield, Connecticut, USA

DEATH 8 JAN 1862 • Connecticut, USA

Direct Ancestor

Relationships

Parents

***Burr Oakley**

1770–

***Mary Jane (Higgins) MANLEY OAKLEY**

1770–1807

Spouse and children

***Elias Palmer Gage**

1796–1870

William Gage

1820–1859

David Gage

1822–1835

Hepzibah (Gage) STOCKER

1824–1870

Anna Delight (Gage) WOOD MAYHEW

1826–1909

Edwin Burr Gage (Co.A, 11 Reg. Ct. Vol, Civil War)

1828–1902

Romanso Gage

1830–1882

Joshua Gage

1832–1863

Elias Oakley Gage

1835–1863

Adelea Gage

1837–

Lydia Jane Gage

1837–1885

Thomas Oakley Gage

1840–1841

***Ann Augusta (Gage) REED MERRILL**

1842–1922

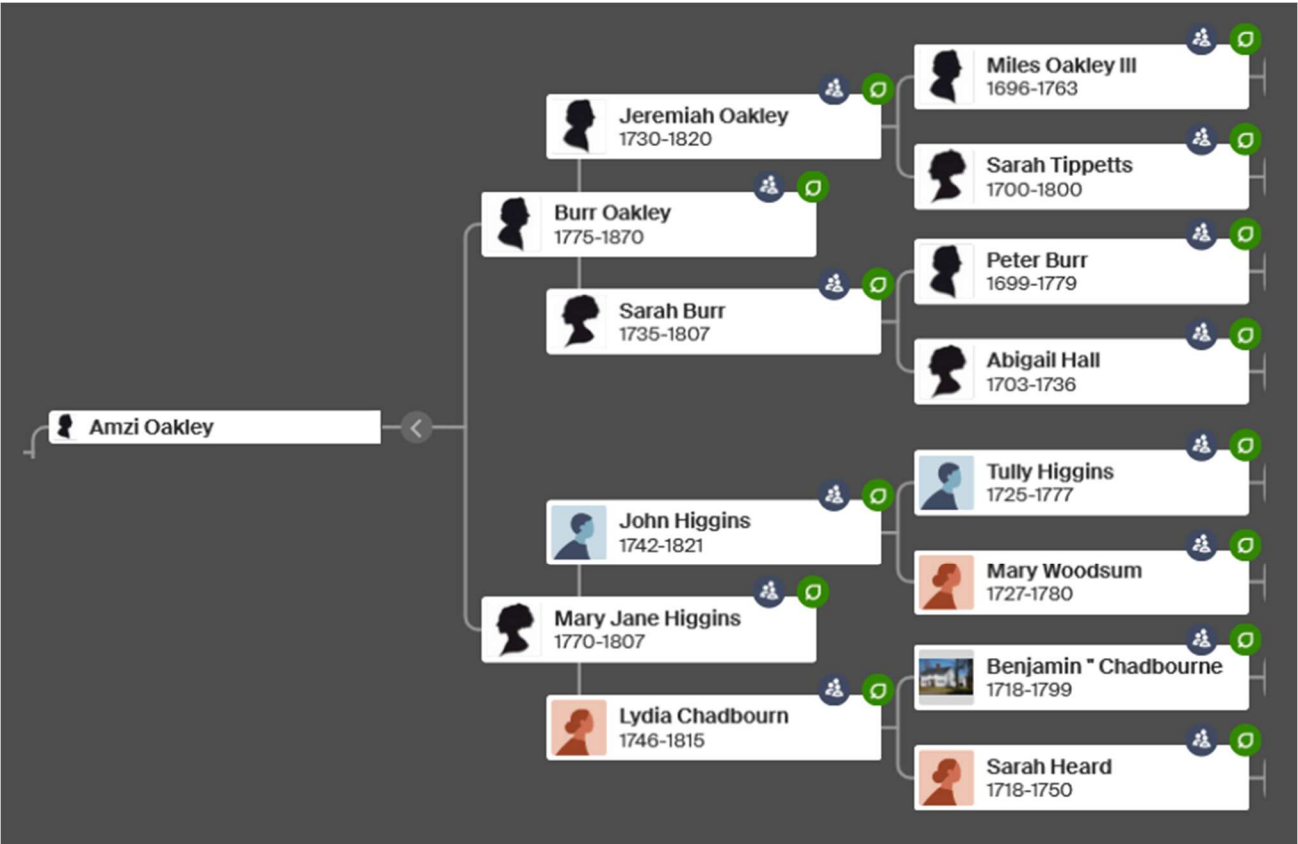
Charles Oscar Gage

1846–1864

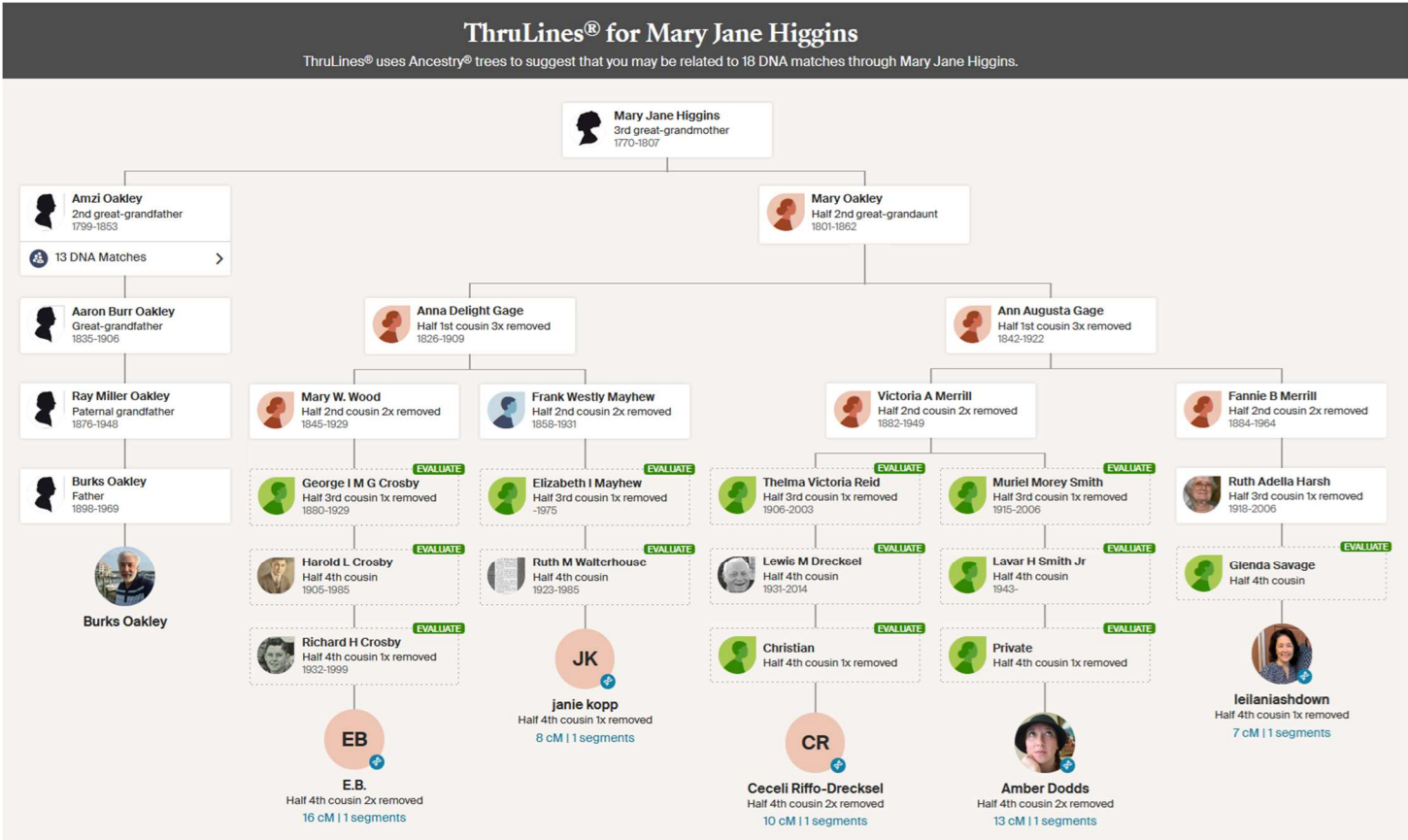
I'll come back to Mary Oakley (married name Gage) and several of her children shortly.

But I digress....

When I was looking into Burr Oakley's wife earlier this year, I edited my family tree on Ancestry.com to include Mary Jane Higgins as his wife, and then I added several generations of Mary Jane's ancestors:



As I wrote earlier, after adding Mary Jane Higgins to my family tree, I then looked at her ThruLines® chart:



It turned out that I had five DNA matches with descendants of Mary Jane Higgins’ daughter Mary Oakley (married name Gage). Two of these matches were through Mary Oakley’s daughter Anna Delight Gage (1826-1909):

- *E.B.*
- janie kopp

Three of these matches were through Mary Oakley’s daughter Ann Augusta Gage (1842-1922):

- Ceceli Rizzo-Drecksell
- Amber Dodds
- leilaniashdown

This was the first DNA evidence I had that was consistent with Mary Jane Higgins being the wife of Burr Oakley.

I also added Mary Jane Higgins and her parents to my cousin Hal Oakley’s tree. Here is his ThruLines® chart for Mary Jane Higgins:



This chart shows that Hal has DNA matches with three descendants of Mary Jane Higgins’ daughter Mary Oakley (married name Gage). One of these matches was through Mary Oakley’s oldest son William Gage (1820-1859):

- Amy Daday

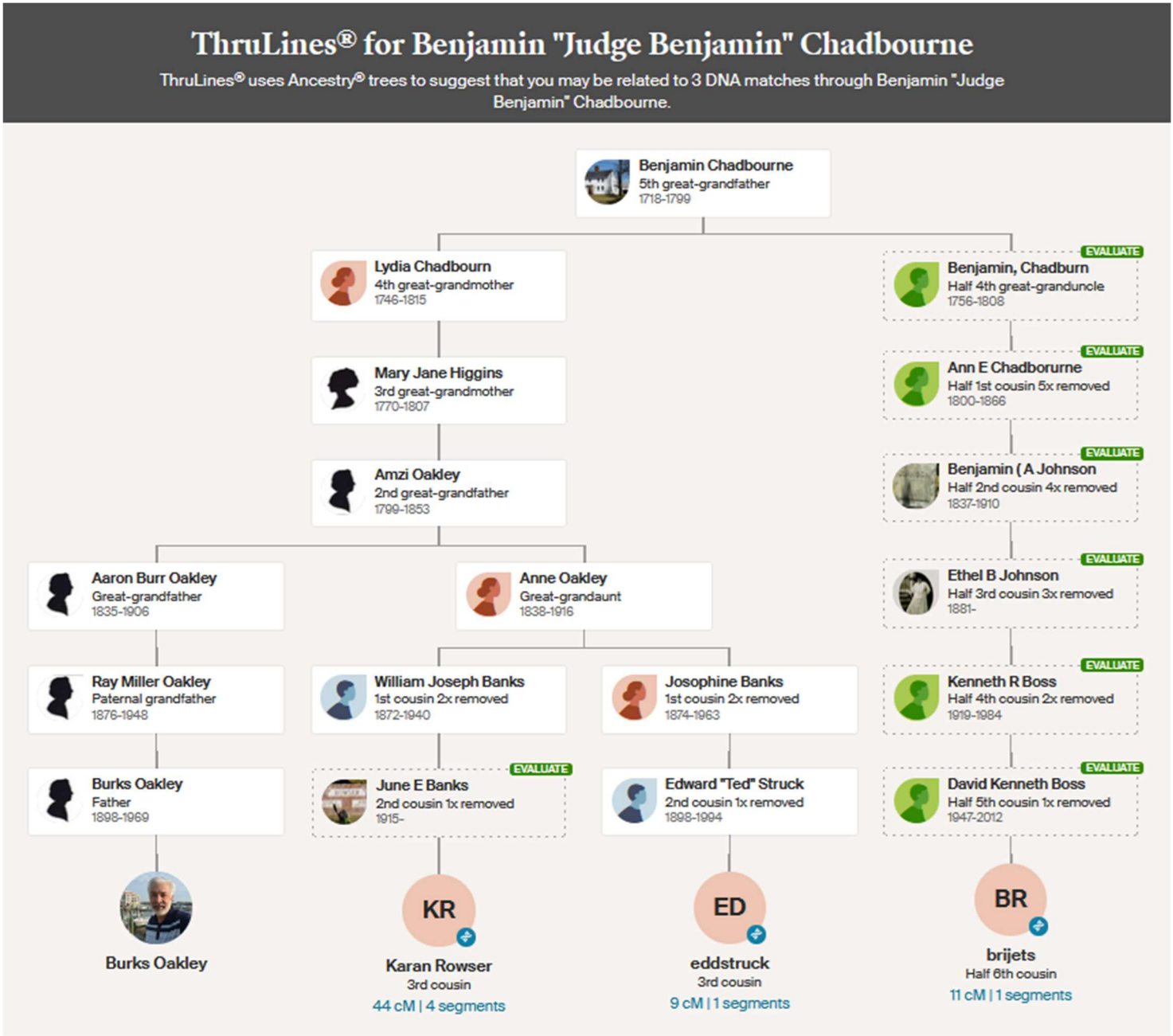
And two of these matches were through Mary Oakley's daughter Ann Augusta Gage (1842-1922):

- Shanna Hitz
- Clifford Lum

Again, I wrote about all these matches earlier:

http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/BurrOakleyFamily_23Jan25.pdf

When I added Mary Jane Higgins to my family tree, I also had added her parents and grandparents. Her maternal grandfather was Benjamin Chadbourne (1718-1799), and when I looked at my ThruLines® chart for this man, who was my fifth-great grandfather, I was amazed to see that I had a DNA match with a woman having the username of *brijets*. She is descended from Benjamin Chadbourne through his son Benjamin Chadbourn (1756-1808).



I wrote about this DNA match previously:

http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/BridgetBoss_7Mar25.pdf

I'm always amazed by these autosomal DNA matches that go back to someone born more than 300 years ago!

OK, I knew all of these ThruLines® connections previously. So the engaged reader might be asking, “Where is the new finding, Burks?”

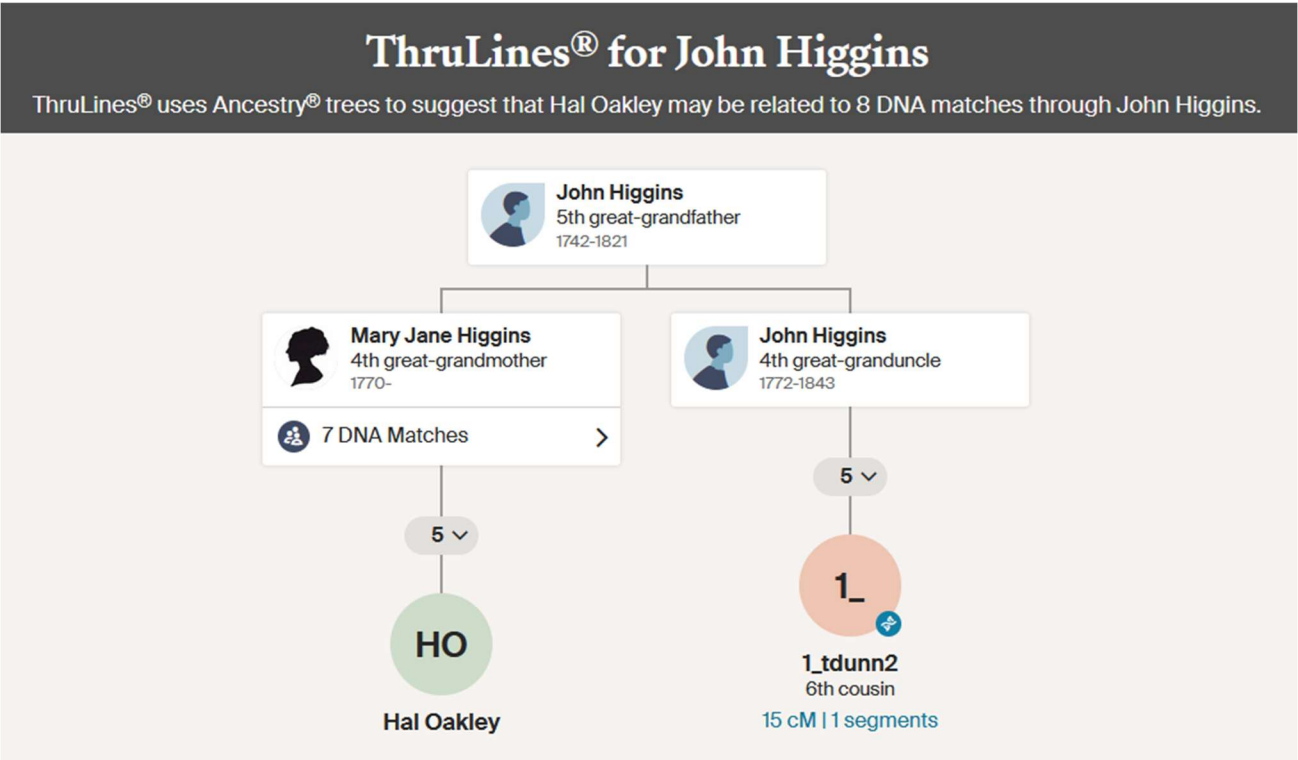
I recently looked at my cousin Hal Oakley’s DNA matches. I looked at his ThruLines® charts for the parents of Mary Jane Higgins – John Higgins (1742-1821) and Lydia Chadbourn (1746-1815). And what do you suppose I found?

Scroll down....

Keep scrolling....

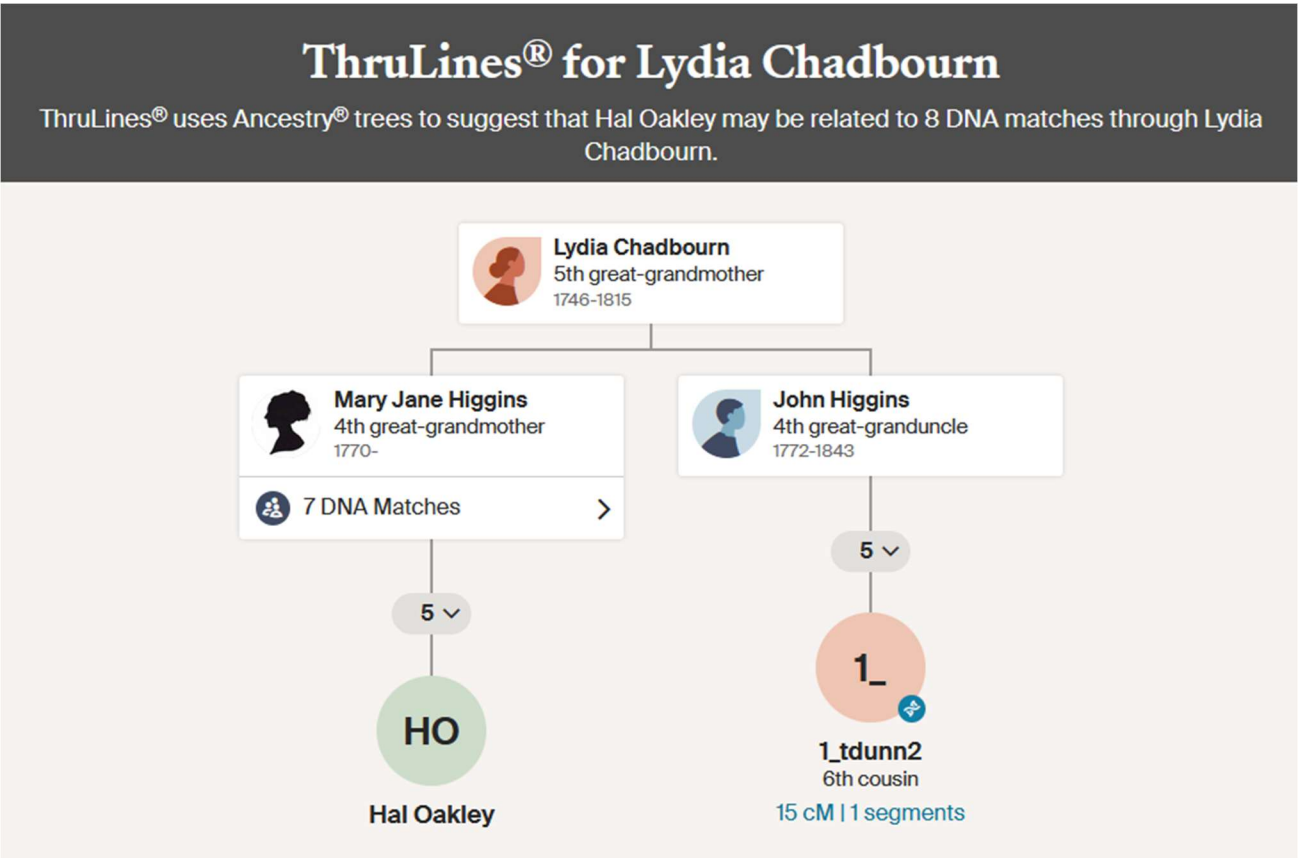
Go on to the next page....

Hal’s ThruLines® for John Higgins shows that he has a DNA match with a man having the username of **1_tdunn2**:



This man connects back to John Higgins Sr. through his son John Higgins Jr. (1772-1843).

Here is Hal’s ThruLines® chart for Mary Jane Higgins’ mother, Lydia Chadbourn:



This chart shows the same DNA match with **1_tdunn2**.

I next viewed Hal’s DNA match with **1_tdunn2**. Here is a panel showing their common ancestors:

How are Hal Oakley and 1_tdunn2 related?

Common Ancestors 👤

According to Ancestry member trees, these are the common ancestors that connect Hal Oakley and 1_tdunn2. View a common ancestor to see the relationship path that connects them.

Hal Oakley and 1_tdunn2 could be 6th cousin through:

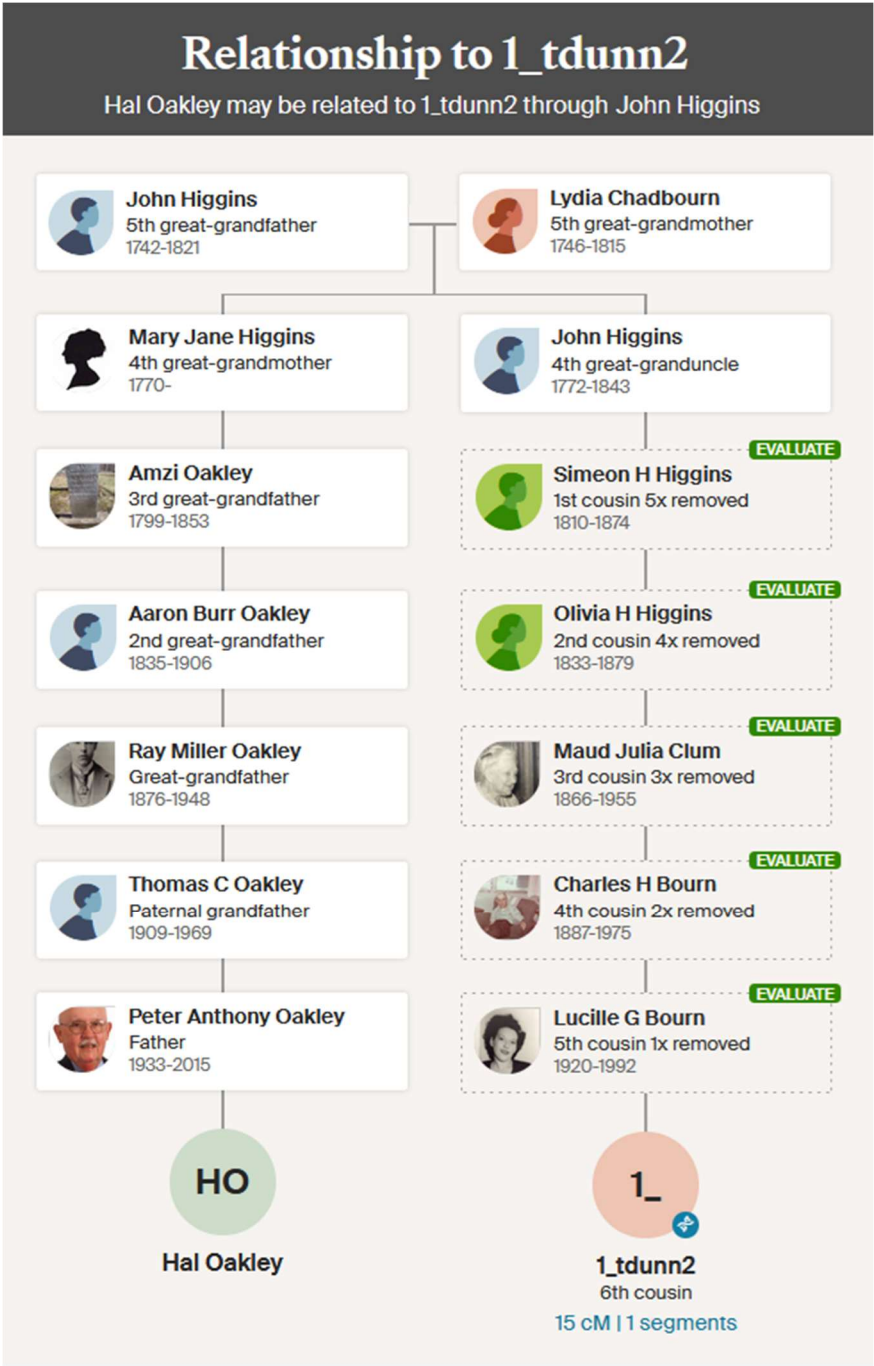


John Higgins
5th great-grandfather
1742-1821
[View Relationship](#)



Lydia Chadbourn
5th great-grandmother
1746-1815
[View Relationship](#)

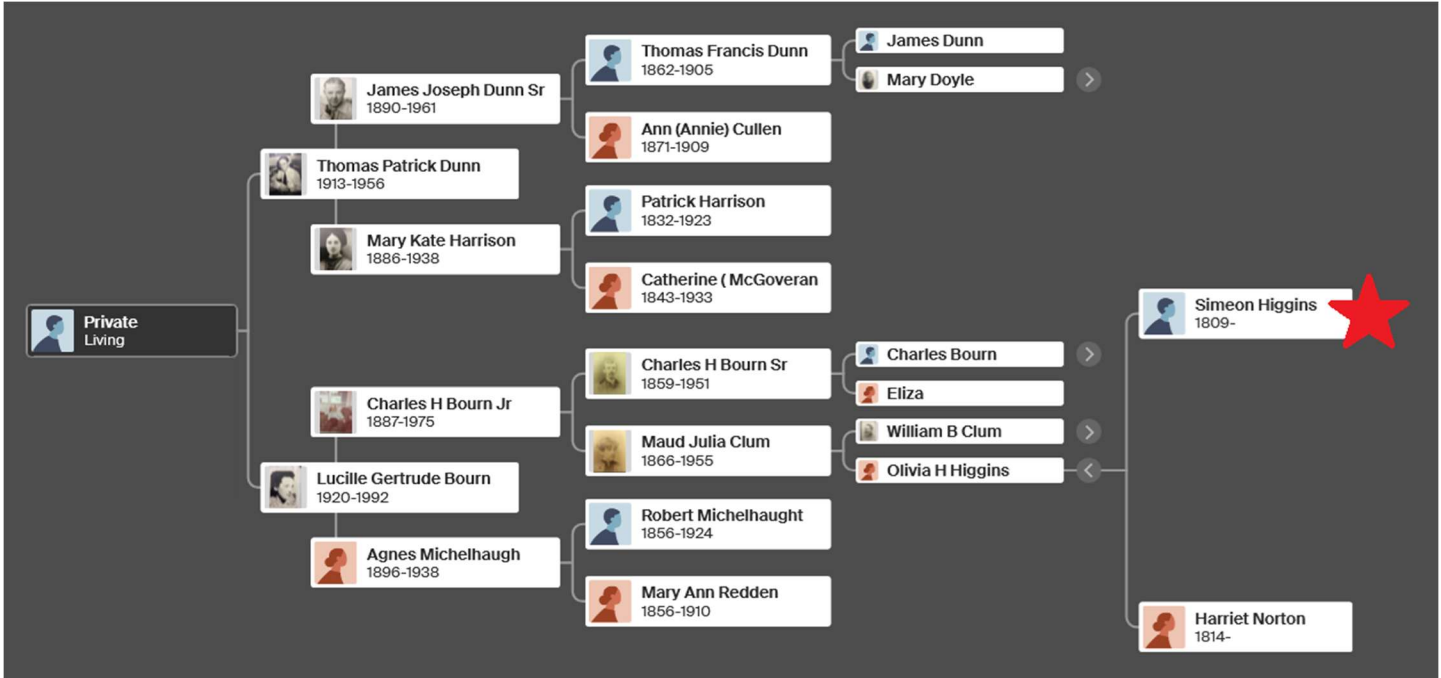
And here is a chart showing how Hal and **1_tdunn2** are likely related:



According to this chart, Hal and **1_tdunn2** are sixth-cousins, and they share 15 cM of DNA.

Is the ancestral line for **1_tdunn2** in this chart correct?

I next looked at the pedigree chart for **1_tdunn2**:



This chart shows that **1_tdunn2**'s third-great grandfather was Simeon Higgins (1809-1874). Simeon Higgins appears in the chart (on the previous page) showing how Hal and **1_tdunn2** are related – Simeon was the son of John Higgins Jr.

I did a search for Simeon Higgins on the Ancestry.com website. He appears in 25 family trees:

All Public Member Trees results for simeon higgins

Simeon H Higgins found in 25 trees

View all

Simeon H Higgins from tree

family history

Birth

11 Nov 1810 Maine, USA

Marriage

16 Jun 1831 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA

Residence

1870 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA

Death

17 Nov 1874 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA

Father

john Higgins (1772-1843)

Mother

Clarissa Ilsley (1768-1861)

Spouse

Harriet Norton (1816-1874)

3745 People

13 Records

13 Sources

Here are the first two trees:

Simeon H Higgins found in 25 public trees

Simeon H Higgins from tree family history

Birth	11 Nov 1810 Maine, USA	Father	john Higgins (1772-1843)
Marriage	16 Jun 1831 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA	Mother	Clarissa Ilsley (1768-1861)
Residence	1870 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA	Spouse	Harriet Norton (1816-1874)
Death	17 Nov 1874 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA		

3745 People 13 Records 13 Sources

Simeon H Higgins from tree Kirkpatrick Family Tree

Birth	11 Nov 1810 Maine, USA	Father	John Higgins (1772-1843)
Marriage	16 Jun 1831 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA	Mother	Clarissa Ilsley (1768-1861)
Residence	1860 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA	Spouse	Harriet Norton (1816-1874)
Death	17 Nov 1874 Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA		

297920 People 3 Records 4 Sources

Essentially all the others have this same information about Simeon Higgins. Here is the profile for Simeon Higgins from Ashleigh Watson’s family tree:

family history Find in tree Ashleigh Watson

Simeon H Higgins

BIRTH 11 NOV 1810 • Maine, USA

DEATH 17 NOV 1874 • Portland, Cumberland, Maine, USA

Relationships

Parents

john Higgins

1772-1843

Clarissa Ilsley

1768-1861

Spouse and children

Harriet Norton

1816-1874

Olivia Higgins

1833-1879

Harriet Davis Higgins

1840-1913

pathania Higgins

1835-1911

Frances Ellen Higgins

1843-1876

melvin W Higgins

1839-1886

Simeon’s father was John Higgins (1772-1843) and Simeon’s oldest child was Olivia Higgins (1833-1879). Based on **1_tdunn2**’s pedigree chart, Oliva was his second-great grandmother.

So it certainly appears that the ancestral line from **1_tdunn2** back to John Higgins and his wife Lydia Chadbourn is correct.

To me, Hal’s new DNA match with **1_tdunn2** and the associated family trees provide additional support of the idea that Burr Oakley’s wife really was Mary Jane Higgins. The chart showing how Hal and **1_tdunn2** are related doesn’t include Burr Oakley at all – it just goes back to the parents of Burr’s wife, Mary Jane Higgins.

I should add that Hal also has a DNA match with **M.D.**, who is the daughter of **1_tdunn2**!!

Hal Oakley

Summary

Origins

Matches

Traits

Distant Family

1_tdunn2

Half 3rd cousin 1x removed or 3rd cousin
2x removed
Unassigned
15 cM | < 1% shared DNA

Public linked tree
503 people

Common ancestor

M.D.
Managed by 1_tdunn2

4th cousin or half 3rd cousin 1x removed
Unassigned
14 cM | < 1% shared DNA

Public linked tree
503 people

Since Hal and **1_tdunn2** are sixth-cousins, Hal and **M.D.** are sixth-cousins once-removed. Software on Ancestry.com doesn’t compute common ancestors for relationships that are more distant than sixth-cousins.

Summary

In this rambling narrative, I reviewed the DNA matches that I had found previously that supported the idea that Mary Jane Higgins (1770-1807) was the wife of my third-great grandfather, Burr Oakley (1770-after 1820).

The supporting evidence includes the five DNA matches that I have, and the three DNA matches that my cousin Hal Oakley has, with descendants of Mary Jane Higgins through her daughter Mary Oakley (married name Gage).

This also includes my DNA match with **brijets**, who is descended from Mary Jane Higgins' maternal grandfather Benjamin Chadbourne (1718-1799) through his son Benjamin Chadbourn (1756-1808).

The new DNA match that provides additional support is Hal Oakley’s DNA match with **1_tdunn2**. They both are descended from Mary Jane Higgins’ father, John Higgins (1742-1821). Hal, of course, is descended from John Higgins through his daughter Mary Jane Higgins, while **1_tdunn2** is descended from John Higgins through his son John Higgins Jr. (1772-1843).

I also found another descendant of Burr Oakley and his wife Mary Jane Higgins, and that individual is Clinton Woodcox. Clinton and I are fourth-cousins once-removed.