

The mystery has been with us for decades if not centuries now: who were the parents of Zachariah Lewis who married Rachel Bracken in Orange County, North Carolina, and was enumerated there in 1800? Thanks to both yDNA and autosomal DNA, we are closer than ever to real answers.

ZACHARIAH LEWIS HAS NO PARENTS... YET

Some Ancestry.com users have created a connection between our Zachariah and George Lewis and Anna Wheight or Colonel John Lewis and Anne Terrell. In a few trees, these couples have swapped spouses, but ***in all instances the links between Zachariah and these suggested parents are offered without source or explanation.***

First things first: **yDNA testing rules out George Lewis as a father of Zachariah.** George is part of either the R1b#2.2 or R1b#4.4A group (it would seem that more than one unrelated descendant is claiming him), as opposed to the R1b#4.3A group where Zachariah resides (tested at 111 markers). Zachariah's group contains descendants of David Lewis (d. 1773, m. Mary Crawford) of Guilford County, North Carolina.

All yDNA results in the Lewis Surname DNA Project are publicly available: <https://www.familytreedna.com/public/LEWISSurnameDNAProject/default.aspx?section=ycolored>

As for **John Lewis and Anne Terrell**, no descendant appears to have taken a DNA test yet, but it should be noted that this John Lewis is often styled "John Zachary" in the aforementioned sourceless family trees with two generations of "Zachary Lewis" before him. In the absence of any evidence and with no location or collateral line connecting him to Zachariah, it may be reasonable to consider that once upon a time someone made this connection based only on the similarity between "Zachary" and "Zachariah".

"So that means that John and Anne could be Zachariah's parents!" the hopeful and long-frustrated descendant of Zachariah may exclaim. Well, sure. And so could any of the umpty-jillion other Lewis families in Virginia, where John and Anne were from, and many of whom also aren't ruled out yet via yDNA testing. **It makes zero sense at this juncture to latch on to John Lewis and Anne Terrell as parents of Zachariah, especially when we have actual yDNA connections to consider.**

MAKING ROOM FOR ZACHARIAH'S ACTUAL PARENTS

If you are a Zachariah Lewis descendant, please do everyone a favour and unlink the above alleged parents from Zachariah. I'm not being snide; removing the connection will truly help all of us. In addition to starting to put the brakes on people mindlessly copying and pasting unvetted information, keeping Ancestry's ThruLines feature from suggesting erroneous or problematic people will make it possible for more likely candidates to show up instead.

Many people don't realise that some of the suggestions made by ThruLines are based strictly on trees, not on DNA. For example, my grandmother is a 2nd great-grandchild of Zachariah and Rachel. People that closely related to Zachariah and Rachel who are still alive are rare, and DNA test-takers from that generation are even rarer. My grandmother has not only Anne Terrell in her ThruLines but Anne's parents and grandparents. Sounds exciting, right? But when I click any of these people, all I see are descendants of Zachariah. No descendants of alleged siblings or cousins. In other words, there is no DNA connection to Anne, and the suggestions for those earlier generations are strictly based on (bad) trees. I love a suggestion as much as anyone else, but not to the point that the truth gets obscured because so many people just wanted to fill in a blank.

WHAT WAS SAID ABOUT ZACHARIAH'S ANCESTRY BY HIS GRANDSON

From *Pioneer Lewis Families*. Michael Cook. Volume 5. Family 333. Page 357: A grandson of Zachariah Lewis, George Washington Van Hoose [...], left this written statement: [... referring to his mother Lydia]: 'her father was an Irishman Zachariah Lewis, kinsman of Lt. George Lewis, who married Martha Washington and his and Martha's tombs are yet at Mt. Vernon, Virginia.' (Note: this is obviously not the widow of George Washington since she did not remarry.)"

In addition to the dodgy would-be connection to the first U.S. president, we have to take "Irishman" with a grain of salt. Given the closeness of other yDNA matches, Zachariah is more likely to be a colonial American with Irish ancestry, which may or may not be on the Lewis side. (According to his son Brackin in the 1880 census, Zachariah was born in North Carolina. Son George said Maryland that year, but he may have been referring to the stepfather who raised them and with whom they were all allegedly very close.)

WHAT yDNA TELLS US ABOUT ZACHARIAH'S ANCESTRY

The descendant of Zachariah Lewis who tested his yDNA has been grouped with descendants of the following other people:

- David Lewis 1694-1773 (three, possibly four test-takers - one person does not give dates)
- Jacob Lewis, 1750 VA - 1812 GA
- Stephen Lewis b 1778 Frederick, VA d 1845 Lewis KY
- George Lewes, b. 1570 d.1631
- William Cook, b. 1806, New Jersey
- (six undisclosed)

Who Are These People?

David Lewis (m. Ann Beeson) and **Jacob Lewis** (m. Sarah Noland) were brothers, both **sons of John Lewis and Priscilla Brooks. John is the son of David Lewis and Mary Crawford.**

Stephen Lewis is usually shown in family trees (validity unknown) as either a grandson of a David Lewis, who was **another son of David Lewis and Mary Crawford**, or a grandson of Fielding Lewis, of the "Warner Hall" Lewises. More on them in a moment.

George Lewes: the early dates given by the descendant are unfortunate. A more recent and more reliably sourced ancestor would be more useful. This tester at one point said that this was George Lewes of Benchley, Kent, England, but the location has since been removed.

William Cook: not enough information to discuss.

Essentially, what we have are 5-6 instances of people who allegedly descend from **David Lewis (1694 MD - 1773 NC) who married Mary Crawford.**

What About the "Warner Hall" Lewises?

The cynic in me notes that it's difficult to find a colonial NC/VA Lewis family tree online that doesn't hitch its pedigree with John Lewis and Elizabeth Warner of the storied Warner Hall plantation in Virginia.

In my own research I had the Warner Hall Lewises on my shortlist for eventually connecting to Zachariah, and without DNA, I still would. Let's see: "Fielding Lewis" (common Warner Hall descendant name) lived in Orange County, North Carolina, at the same time as Zachariah. The Warner Hall Lewises have a connection to George Washington's sister. They allegedly come from Donegal in Ireland. Make some allowances in Zachariah's grandson's story and this looks very promising.

However, DNA does not indicate a connection between Zachariah Lewis and John Lewis of Warner Hall. There are too many differences in results to allow Zachariah to be a descendant of that lot.

Some respectable-looking trees online say (without sources) that David Lewis who married Mary Crawford is a son of John Lewis and Elizabeth Warner. Again, DNA says otherwise.

Connecting Zachariah to David Lewis and Mary Crawford

It's easier to focus on the slightly closer yDNA connection of John Lewis, son of David and Mary. (See http://history.loftinn.com/Lewis_John_1720.htm for a copy of David's will and for additional background on John and Priscilla.)

John and Priscilla's family lived in Guilford County, in what would become Randolph County, all of which was originally Orange County. The distance between their home in Franklinville and Hillsborough, where Zachariah was enumerated in 1800, is under 40 miles.

David Lewis who married Ann (and later Penelope) left a will naming all of his children. Although some assume the list is complete or that any unnamed children died young, it is possible that Zachariah, being dead over two decades, didn't warrant a mention. Yes, he had three children, but they were raised from near-infancy by Zachariah's widow's second husband, had been living in Kentucky for most of their lives, and were themselves adults at this point.

Meanwhile, there is a gap in the list of David and Ann's children between Joab born in 1773 and Neriah born in 1778. Zachariah's birth year is estimated (from the census) to be about 1775-1778 (according to the 1800 census).

I'm not making a case for Zachariah as a son of David and Ann, but I don't think there's necessarily a case *against* it yet, either.

Other known sons of John and Priscilla include the aforementioned Jacob, Stephen, Richard, and John. As far as I know, Jacob is just as likely a candidate as David for Zachariah's father. I haven't researched enough to know when the family moved to Georgia or if there are any birth year gaps that fit Zachariah's range. My grandmother has far more DNA matches to David, but that may be for other reasons (as will be discussed below).

Stephen Lewis didn't marry until 1780. Richard Lewis is estimated as marrying in 1779, and John Jr. was a minor when Zachariah was born. Of course, Stephen may have an unknown earlier marriage or Richard may have married earlier. Or there may be other sons who died before John's 1797 will.

And, of course, the cousins via John's brothers are all also possibilities. The John Lewis family lived the closest to Zachariah, so that is where I've begun my poking.

Maddeningly sourceless items of possible interest: Some trees say that John died in Hillsboro in Randolph County. Was there a second Hillsboro/Hillsborough around this time, so close to the one in Orange County? (The 1800 census does indeed have a Hillsboro in Randolph County, but I'm still curious if it's that simple. E.g., did borders change?) Some trees also give John Lewis the nickname of "Irish Lewis". (Why? Because

he allegedly fought in an Irish regiment? Can this be linked to Zachariah's grandson saying that Zachariah was "an Irishman"?)

Autosomal DNA

In my tree at Ancestry, I have given Zachariah an unknown father and made that person the "SPECULATIVE" son of John and Priscilla. I've done this so that I can catch possible "ThruLines" theories that show matches to other John/Priscilla descendants.

AncestryDNA ThruLines-detected Matches to Descendants of John and Priscilla's Children:

- David: nine matches to four lines of descent; cM range: 8-35
- Jacob: one match; 8 cM
- Rosanna: seven matches/four lines; 6-22 cM
- Jean: no matches
- Stephen: no matches
- Richard: one match; 7 cM
- Sarah: one match; 9 cM
- John: one match; 12 cM
- *Solomon (a son via some theories): three matches/two lines; 6-26 cM

The above is promising at first glance, especially along the David/Ann descent, but several of those matches are in common with known cousins on the other side of my grandmother's family.

Matches exist at other testing sites, such as two David Lewis/Ann Beeson descendant at MyHeritage. It is difficult to weed through matches for Lewises with such common names. I have recently added a speculative link to John and Priscilla in my family tree at MyHeritage so their "Theories" feature might do some of this legwork.

When searching for the more unique name of "Beeson", I have found several DNA matches across all sites who descend from Ann Beeson's siblings, but that family was also in the New Castle County, Delaware, area at the same time as other branches of my grandmother's family (although, inconveniently, not the ones in common with the matches above!).

In short, caution is needed, and the autosomal connections to the above matches may lie elsewhere. That does change that Zachariah has a yDNA connection to these families.

SUMMARY

Without several instances and levels of segment triangulation, everything pondered above is no more than an emerging theory. **DNA-based theories are what will eventually lead us to finding Zachariah's ancestry.** I urge all descendants to test (and to upload their results any of the other DNA sites - Ancestry is the

only one that doesn't provide the necessary segment locations) and to examine their matches carefully.

The answer to Zachariah's ancestry is in sight. Please don't obscure it with "copy 'n paste" genealogy.

Shari Simonds

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