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## Testing the FAN Principle Against DNA: Zilphy (Watts) Price Cooksey Cooksey of Georgia and Mississippi

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*How accurate can a maternal lineage be when, for four consecutive generations, no document names parents or siblings? Here three powerful tools—the FAN principle, DNA testing, and the GPS—combine to solve a perennial problem.*

**W**hen courthouse fires destroy documents, researchers need productive strategies, as well as alternative sources. Proving Zilphy (Watts) Price Cooksey Cooksey's identity required turning almost every page of every record from fourteen counties in four states, but the most significant clues came from studying friends, associates, and neighbors. Mitochondrial and autosomal DNA tests for descendants of both Zilphy and her proposed kin not only support the proof argument but also substantiate an umbilical lineage built on indirect evidence and the Genealogical Proof Standard.

### FOUR UNRECORDED GENERATIONS

The problem begins with Elizabeth Jane Odom of Leake County, Mississippi, who died in 1916. According to her daughter, Elizabeth's maiden name was Boyd, her husband was Samuel Odom, and her maternal grandmother was supposed to be a "Choctaw Princess."<sup>1</sup>

These family names are correct—but not the ethnic origin.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent research would identify Elizabeth Jane's parents as James Boyd and Elmira

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1. Carrie Mae (Odom) Jeffcoat to granddaughter Elizabeth Shown, 1955, interview conducted for a school project, "Who Am I?"; author's files.

2. Four decades of subsequent research in virtually all relevant Choctaw records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs held by the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and Fort Worth; records held by the American Indian Archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City; and conventional records elsewhere failed to yield evidence of Choctaw descent.

[—?—] who, together with James's mother, Mary (Warren) Boyd, died amid an 1853 yellow fever epidemic. Left with four young children, Elizabeth Jane's father promptly remarried, moved his family to his childhood neighborhood in Newton County, and died before 1860.<sup>3</sup>

Newton is notorious among Mississippi's "burned" counties. Gone are pre-1876 land and probate records and pre-1911 marriage records, court cases, road orders, and tax and voter rolls.<sup>4</sup> With them went genealogical evidence for three to four generations of Elizabeth Jane's ancestry. Federal censuses help fill the evidence gap. In 1860 Elizabeth Jane and her new husband, Samuel Odom, were enumerated beside his father and stepmother, Shadrack and Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Jane's sister Elmira, age seven, was then in the care of a widow, Nancy Parks.<sup>6</sup> Elmira's long residence with Nancy raises a critical question: Who was Nancy that she, rather than Elizabeth Jane, should raise the orphaned Elmira?

Recent but undocumented genealogies suggest answers. They present Nancy Parks as the daughter of William Cooksey and wife "Leanna Wesley," and cite her birth in Savannah, Georgia, on 12 April 1804. Nancy's alleged brother, John "C." Cooksey, is said to have married in 1809 a widow named Zilphy Price. After John "C." died, supposedly, widow Zilphy "took care of" her father-in-law William.<sup>7</sup> If true, then Nancy would be little Elmira's sister's husband's stepmother's sister-in-law. The real relationship would prove to be much closer.

3. The lives of Elizabeth Jane and her parents, James and Elmira, are documented in Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Jane's Offspring: Scots-Irish Boyds in Georgia and Mississippi," *Historic Pathways* ([www.historicpathways.com](http://www.historicpathways.com)), 52–70, "Research" tab. For the death of James's mother, Mary "Polly" (Warren) Boyd, see "Warren–Vaughn–Ellison Bible," *NGS Quarterly* 78 (March 1990): 55–56.

4. Newton County's courthouse has burned at least three times. Alfred John Brown, in *History of Newton County, Mississippi, from 1834 to 1894* (Jackson, Miss.: Clarion-Ledger Co., 1894), 59–60, recounts the February 1864 fire set by General Sherman's army, from which records were saved. More destructive were the fires of 1876 and January 1911. For 1876, see *ibid.*, 328–29. For 1911, see *Newton Record*, Newton, Miss., 2 February 1911, page and col. undetermined. A few state-level tax rolls and a state census help to supplement the losses.

5. 1860 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., population schedule, p. 142, dwellings 951–52, families 961–62, for Frederick "Odem" and Samuel "Odem"; microfilm publication M653, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), roll 588. For the maiden name of Shadrack's wife, see Mississippi Bureau of Vital Statistics, death certificate, State File no. 24406, Elizabeth Odom (1917); Dept. of Health Office, Ridgeland, Miss.

6. 1860 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 86, dwell. 568, fam. 584, Nancy Parks household. This federal copy of the census errs often: misspelling *Shadrack* as *Frederick*, calling household head Nancy Parks age twenty-eight rather than fifty-eight, and giving young Elmira "Parks" the wrong surname. She appears correctly as "Elmira Boyd" in 1870. See 1870 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 230, dwell./fam. 71, Nancy Parks household; NARA microfilm M593, roll 742. Also, Newton Co., Miss., Marriage Book 1:104, Scarbrough-Boyd; Circuit Clerk's Office, Decatur, Miss. She married as "Miss Almira Boyd."

7. William Harold Graham, *Parks: In Fond Remembrance* (n.p.: privately printed, 2001), 31–34. While "Leanna Wesley" is widely said to be Cooksey's first wife, no record documents a woman by that name in that time and place.

Other Parks family traditions were also unsupported:<sup>8</sup>

- Nancy took in the orphaned Elmira because she was her granddaughter.<sup>9</sup>
- Four of Zilphy's children (Cader Price, John Cooksey, Samuel Cooksey, and Elizabeth Cooksey) married four Odom siblings.<sup>10</sup>
- Zilphy was the widow of Zachariah Price of Tattnall County, Georgia.
- Zilphy was the daughter of "James Rayborn Sr." and "Mikuldak" [Mahuldah] Barfoot, nicknamed Huldy.

Research would prove most of the first two points. Nancy's alleged parentage and Zilphy's assumed identity would be disproved.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, study of Zilphy, her unknown mother, and their associates would establish four generations in Elizabeth Jane's umbilical line.

#### GENEALOGICAL PROOF STANDARD

Although no direct evidence identifies Elizabeth Jane's umbilical line, proof arguments can be made for four generations. Proof arguments for each linkage rest upon indirect evidence meeting the Genealogical Proof Standard.<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Jane's umbilical line appears to be:

- Elizabeth Jane (Boyd) Odom, 1 February 1840–8 November 1916,<sup>13</sup> possibly born to
- Elmira (Parks?) Boyd, ca. 1823–1853,<sup>14</sup> possibly born to
- Nancy [—?—] Parks, 1804–1876,<sup>15</sup> possibly born to

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8. For example, see Graham, *Parks: In Fond Remembrance*, 30–32, 34; and Harold Graham, "Rev. Cader Price," *Remembering: A Quarterly Journal of the Newton County Genealogical and Historical Society* 7 (January 2008): 10–14.

9. Kelly Parks (Pattison, Miss.) to Elizabeth Mills, e-mail, 5 January 2008. Kelly's husband, David Olin Parks, and his brother William "Bill" Parks proved critical to this project. They descend from Nancy as follows: David and Bill < William "Jim" Parks < Otis Olen Parks < Simeon "Sim" Parks < Leonard Parks Sr. < William Parks < Nancy (Mrs. John) Parks.

10. Evidence supports only three Cooksey-Odom marriages. See Elizabeth Shown Mills, "William Odom (ca. 1786-1787–aft. 1870) & Wife Jane Johns(t)on (ca. 1793–aft. 10 June 1856): Research Notes," a working file updated 1 October 2013, p. 2; *Historic Pathways*, "Research" tab. No known evidence identifies Cader Price's wife as an Odom.

11. For evidence disproving Zilphy's alleged Rayborn parentage, see Elizabeth Shown Mills to Cooksey Research Group, "Possibility to Pursue: Were John & Judith [—?—] Watts the Parents of Zilphy [—?—] Price Cooksey," report, 9 September 2010, *Historic Pathways*, "Research" tab.

12. Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards* (Nashville: Turner Publishing–Ancestry Imprint, 2014), 2–3.

13. Pleasant Grove Cemetery, Conway (Leake Co.), Miss., gravestone of Elizabeth Boyd Odom; 1970 visit by author. The stone is not contemporary with her death.

14. Mills, "Jane's Offspring: Scots-Irish Boyds in Georgia and Mississippi," 52–60.

15. Nancy's daughter, Faythe Katherine "Kate" (Parks) Trammell, supposedly gave these dates. Kate believed that Nancy was born "at Savannah," and later generations have assumed Nancy was William Cooksey's child. See Graham, *Parks: In Fond Remembrance*, 31–34. For analysis of William's records, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "William Cooksey, R. W. (ca. 1745–1829): Research Notes," *Historic Pathways*, "Research" tab.

- Zilphy (Watts?) Price Cooksey Cooksey, ca. 1780–24 June 1857,<sup>16</sup> possibly born to
- Judith (Rawls?) Watts, ca. 1750–ca. 1826, wife of Rev. John Watts, Esq.<sup>17</sup>

#### THE FAN PRINCIPLE

Elusive individuals can often be identified by studying the records of friends, associates, and neighbors—their FAN.<sup>18</sup> This means treating that FAN as though all were kin. To identify a woman, the FAN principle advises: trace the men to whom she was attached. In Zilphy’s case the most important man was not her first husband John Price, who sued her for divorce in 1799.<sup>19</sup> Nor was it John Cooksey, who took out a license to marry her in 1809.<sup>20</sup> It was her second father-in-law and third husband, Revolutionary soldier William Cooksey.<sup>21</sup> Reassembling William’s life revealed repeated associations with one promising family cluster stretching across three decades and seven counties in two states.

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16. For death date, see James William Cooksey Bible pages, image copies supplied August 2008 by Kelly Parks; current owner unknown. James was a son of Zilphy and William Cooksey and a full sibling of Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom.

17. A superb work on this John Watts family is Wynema McGrew, *Watts Is My Line: John and Judith (?) Watts, Settlers of the Mississippi Territory*, vol. 1 (Hattiesburg, Miss.: privately published, 2010). For Judith, see p. 29. McGrew has meticulously documented most assertions in this 1,650-page study. Zilphy and the Cookseys do not appear. Many undocumented “trees” online identify this progenitor as John A. Watts. Of over a hundred documents created or signed by this man, none uses a middle name or initial. Multiple given names were exceedingly rare in frontier America.

18. For an overview of this principle, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, *QuickSheet: The Historical Biographer’s Guide to Cluster Research (the FAN Principle)* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2012).

19. Montgomery Co., Superior Court, “Appearance Docket, March Term 1799” [unnumbered p. 3], March term, for “John Price vs. Zilphy Price, Divorce”; Clerk of Courts Office, Mount Vernon, Ga.; microfilm 159,033, Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City. The claim that Zilphy’s husband was *Zachariah* Price is an error.

20. Tattnall Co., Marriage Book 1 (reconstructed records): 1, license, Cooksey-Price, 8 January 1809; Probate Judge’s Office, Reidsville, Ga.; FHL microfilm 206,419. John Cooksey also never used a middle initial, as some have claimed without evidence.

21. No marriage record for the widowed Zilphy and her former father-in-law is known. After John Cooksey’s 1818 death Zilphy bore two additional children, the last of whom was known to her children as the daughter of William Cooksey and Zilphy. See Mississippi State Department of Health, death certificate, State File No. 24406, Elizabeth Odom, maiden name Cooksy (1917). For William’s Revolutionary War service, see William Cuksey/Cucksey (Pvt., Shadrack Wright’s Co., 1st Regt., Ga. Cont’l. Line), pension application 1278, no. R20,354; digital images, “Revolutionary War Pensions,” *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com>), second image in digital file; imaged from *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, NARA microfilm publication M804, roll 707.

## ZILPHY: AN OVERVIEW

**A Price Husband**

Zilphy was born about 1780–84, in the Carolinas or Georgia.<sup>22</sup> She first appears by name in Montgomery County, Georgia, in March 1799, when John Price sued her for divorce just six months after they married. Young Zilphy contested the divorce through attorney Robert Flournoy. Because wives of her era had no personal funds, probably local relatives hired Flournoy to defend her, and by extension, their family's honor. The suit never came to a public hearing and the docket identifies no grounds, stating only that it was "Amended and Continued" and then "Dismissed by plaintiff's request."<sup>23</sup>

The dismissal might imply reconciliation. A closer look suggests otherwise, particularly given four seeming contradictions:

- On 8 January 1800 Zilphy bore a son, Cader Price, named for John's father. About 1802 she bore a son Reuben—not a Price family name. Both boys used the Price surname throughout their lives.<sup>24</sup>

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22. Age is approximated from the usual age range (fourteen to eighteen) when girls married on the Southern frontier. The 1850 census, the only one in Zilphy's lifetime that recorded age and birthplace, omits her. The 1880 and 1900 census entries for her surviving children attribute various birthplaces to their mother. In 1880 son James reported South Carolina. See 1880 U.S. census, Walker Co., Tex., pop. sch., enumeration district (ED) 157, p. 14, dwell./fam. 122, James W. Cooksey; NARA microfilm T9, roll 1331. In that same year the entries for sons John and Samuel report Georgia, as do those for daughters Zilphy and Elizabeth. See 1880 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., Beat 3, ED 87, p. 601, dwell. 78, fam. 73, John Cooksey; NARA microfilm T9, roll 659. Also, Bell Co., Tex., pop. sch., Precinct 5, ED 5, p. 380, dwell./fam. 135, Samuel Cooksey; NARA microfilm T9, roll 1290. Also, Leake Co., Miss., pop. sch., Beat 4, ED 51, p. 35, "Zilphy Sessums" and Beat 3, ED 50, p. 11, dwell./fam. 104, "E. Odom"; NARA microfilm T9, roll 653. In 1900 son Samuel's entry reports North Carolina. See 1900 U.S. census, Bell Co., Tex., pop. sch., Justice Precinct 5, ED 25, sheet 17A, dwell./fam. 244, Sam Cooksey; NARA microfilm T623, roll 1610. The entry for son James, also in Bell Co., reported Virginia. See sheet 12A, dwell./fam. 189, James W. Cooksey. All of Zilphy's children were dead by 1910 except Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom, whose parents' birthplaces are reported as "US." See 1910 U.S. census, Leake Co., Miss., Beat 1, ED 64, sheet 7B, dwell./fam. 117, Elizabeth J. Odom; NARA microfilm T624, roll 747.

23. For the divorce record, see Montgomery Co., "Appearance Docket, March Term 1799" [unnumbered p. 3]. No record has been found for the marriage itself. On 15 September 1798, Zilphy's widowed father-in-law, Cader Price, paid for a marriage license; but it was not he who wed. He died soon, leaving no wife. Apparently he was surety for his son John's bond and paid the fee for John's license. See the bundle labeled "Montgomery County Marriage Licenses, Inventories, and Wills, 1796–1798," unnumbered sheet labeled "List of [Fees Paid for] Marriage Licenses beginning March 22, 1796," which cites only the name of the male who paid the license fee, and loose sheet 4 for date of inventory and appraisal of Cader's estate, listed as item 25; Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow; FHL microfilm 159,033. No business papers have yet been found for Flournoy or John's attorney, Henry G. Caldwell.

24. Graham, *Parks: In Fond Remembrance*, 31–34; and Graham, "Rev. Cader Price."

- The 1805 Georgia land lottery, for which registrations occurred May 1803–1 March 1804, double-lists Zilphy in adjacent Tattnall County. In one she is a feme sole; in another the mother of two “orphans.” John Price registered separately, as head-of-household still residing in Montgomery County where he had inherited his father’s land and annually paid his poll.<sup>25</sup>
- On 8 January 1809, in Tattnall County, John Cooksey obtained a license to marry “Zilphy Price.” However, no officiant filed a return.<sup>26</sup>
- Part of Montgomery County was cut away to create Laurens in 1806, and John Price fell into the new county. Between September 1811 and May 1812 he died there leaving minor children and land he had acquired while still a resident of Montgomery. Guardians were appointed for those orphans. Zilphy’s children, Cader and Reuben Price, were not among the legal heirs.<sup>27</sup>

These contradictions can be reconciled if the 1799 divorce action were dropped in favor of an annulment. Had Zilphy and John Price divorced, the plaintiff’s petition would have gone to Georgia’s legislature for passage of a special act. No such act was passed, and no further divorce action appears in local court records.<sup>28</sup> John’s death left minor children as legal heirs. The absence of Zilphy’s sons among them suggests that John was not their legal father.

### Two Cooksey Husbands

On 8 January 1809, having just turned twenty-one, John Cooksey obtained a license to marry Zilphy, four or more years his senior with four children.<sup>29</sup> John was old enough to be the father of Zilphy’s 1806–7 son but not likely her 1804 daughter, Nancy. John, son of William, appears on no pre-1809 tax rolls where

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25. Paul K. Graham, *1805 Georgia Land Lottery: Persons Entitled to Draws* (Decatur, Ga.: Genealogy Co., 2005), 449. For John Price’s continued taxation in Montgomery Co., see the 1798–1806 tax digests, Montgomery Co., Tax Assessors’s Office, Mount Vernon; FHL microfilm 159,160.

26. Tattnall Co., Marriage Book 1 (reconstructed records): 1. The author thanks Paul K. Graham, CG, AG, for re-examining these marriage files at the Georgia state archives to verify that no return survived.

27. Laurens Co., Inferior Court Minutes, 1808–1833, passim; Probate Judge’s Office, Dublin, Ga.; FHL microfilm 410,879. See also the numerous entries abstracted in Allen Thomas, *Laurens County, Georgia, Records, 1807–1832* (Roswell, Ga.: W. H. Wolfe Associates, 1991), especially pp. 618–19, for the estate sale of “150 acres on the Oconee River in former Montgomery County, now Laurens . . . adjoining William Whitehead.” John Price’s last known appearance is his testimony, along with Mary (Cooksey) Watson, in the state prosecution of Justice John Daughtery, husband of William Cooksey’s daughter Letitia. See “State Papers in the Clerk’s Office in the Superior Court of Montgomery Co., Sept. the 2nd 1811”; Georgia Archives; FHL microfilm 159,033.

28. For Georgia’s divorce laws from the Constitution of 1789 to 1810, see Augustin Smith Clayton, *A Compilation of the Laws of the State of Georgia, Passed . . . since the Political Year 1800, to the Year 1810, Inclusive* (Augusta: Adams and Duyckinck, 1812), 98–100 (amended 1802), 312–14 (amended 1806).

29. Tattnall Co., Marriage Book 1 (reconstructed records): 1.

his father appears. He first turns up as a prospective juror (i.e., twenty-one or over) in Tattnall County soon after taking out the marriage license.<sup>30</sup>

John and William Cooksey moved across the Tattnall–Laurens county line in 1809.<sup>31</sup> In spring 1818 both disposed of their Georgia lands.<sup>32</sup> William migrated to Lawrence County, Mississippi, where he and his son William Jr.—but not John—appear on that year’s state census, drawn before 5 July.<sup>33</sup> John apparently died in spring 1818.<sup>34</sup> In 1820 both William Cookseys are household heads in two new counties cut from Lawrence (Covington and Greene). William Sr.’s household appears to include Zilphy and her children—including Zilphy’s new son, James William, born in November 1819.<sup>35</sup> In 1821 Zilphy bore Elizabeth, whose death certificate identifies her as daughter of William and Zilphy.<sup>36</sup>

Zilphy’s last union was short-lived. In his eighties, William “signed” an 1822 Covington County petition, appeared on the 1823 census of the temporary county Bainbridge carved from Covington, and in 1828 initiated a petition for a Revolutionary veteran’s pension.<sup>37</sup> During the pension proceedings he died.<sup>38</sup>

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30. Tattnall Co., “Superior Court Minutes, 1805–23,” unpaginated, for April 1809 jury list; Clerk of Courts Office, Reidsville; FHL microfilm 206,463, item 2. John was cited to appear in October but did not serve.

31. They first appeared in Laurens Co., in September 1810 when John bought a tract of land with William as his witness. See Laurens Co., Deeds E [1815–1818]: 78; Recorder of Deeds Office, Dublin, Ga.; FHL microfilm 394,594. In that interval, they likely lived on the 175 acres granted to William, as islands in the Oconee River, in 1791. See Georgia Surveyor General, Land Plat Book CC:474–75 (Washington Co.); Georgia Archives.

32. Laurens Co., Deeds G:24–25; and Deeds and Mortgages, H:23. The April 1818 term of court assigned John to jury duty at the next term; when the court convened again in October, he did not serve. See Laurens Co., Superior Court Minutes, B:65, 68–69, 71–73, 76, and 87; Clerk of Courts Office, Dublin.

33. 1818 Mississippi state census, Lawrence Co. [unnumbered p. 9], William Cooksey [Jr.] and Senr.; “Mississippi State and Territorial Censuses, 1792–1866,” film series 2528, roll 547, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), Jackson.

34. One John Cooksey surfaces shortly after this in Laurens Co., but he was an older man, a Revolutionary soldier. The proof argument that separates him from William’s son John appears in Mills, “William Cooksey, R.W. (ca. 1745–1829): Research Notes,” under the section “1819.”

35. 1820 U.S. census, Covington Co., Miss., p. 17, William Cooksey; Greene Co., p. 52, William E. Cooksey; NARA microfilm M33, roll 58. James William Cooksey Bible pages.

36. Mississippi State Dept. of Health, death certificate, State File No. 24406, Elizabeth Odom, maiden name Cooksy (1917).

37. “Citizens of Covington County, Request to Divide County, circa December 1822”; folder 13, box 6812, series 2370, Petitions, 1817–1908; Record Group 47, Legislative Papers, MDAH. Also, “An Account of the Increase and Decrease of this Population of the State of Mississippi in the County of Bainbridge for the Year 1823,” p. 3; Mississippi State and Territorial Census Collection, 1792–1866, MDAH microfilm 546.

38. William Cuksey/Cucksey pension application 1278; digital images, *Fold3*, second image. Years later, when son James William Cooksey began entering family information in a Bible, he entered William’s death date as “March the 18, 1828.” The pension application file makes it clear that the death had to have occurred after October 1828. Likely, J. W. simply misremembered the year.

### On Her Own

In 1830 Zilphy reappears as a head-of-household in upstate Rankin County, Mississippi. She had moved with her offspring—including John Parks and his wife Nancy—the Nancy who would raise little Elmira.<sup>39</sup> By 1840 Zilphy had again moved, once more following sons and sons-in-law to the East Mississippi county of Newton, just created from the 1836 Choctaw Cession.<sup>40</sup> She and her son John Cooksey are omitted from the 1850 census, although Newton's Pinckney Baptist Church chronicled their membership in that year.<sup>41</sup> In 1857 her youngest son, James William, recorded in his well-worn Bible a new entry: "Zilphy Cooksey died June the 24 1857."<sup>42</sup>

In all, Zilphy bore ten children, spaced roughly two years apart, as is typical for nursing mothers in pre-contraceptive societies:

- i. CADER PRICE, b. 8 January 1800; m. Eleanor [—?—]; d. 26 May 1872<sup>43</sup>
- ii. REUBEN PRICE, b. ca. 1802; m. Hannah [—?—]<sup>44</sup>
- iii. NANCY [—?—], b. 12 April 1804; m. John Parks, ca. 1823<sup>45</sup>
- iv. JOHN COOKSEY, b. 1806–7; m. Evaline Odom, ca. 1838<sup>46</sup>
- v. LETITIA COOKSEY, b. 1809–10; m. James Augustus Rayborn, 8 October 1829<sup>47</sup>
- vi. SAMUEL COOKSEY, b. 7 October 1811; m. Cynthia Ann Odom, ca. 1835<sup>48</sup>

39. 1830 U.S. census, Rankin Co., Miss., p. 130, "Zilpha" Cooksey, and p. 168, John Parks; NARA microfilm M19, roll 71.

40. 1840 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., p. 141, John Parks and John Cooksey, also p. 142, "Zilpha" Cooksey; NARA microfilm M704, roll 216.

41. Harold Graham, "Pinckney Baptist Church: The Early Years (1838–1862)," *Newton County Historical and Genealogical Society* ([http://www.nchgs.org/html/pinckney\\_baptist\\_church.html](http://www.nchgs.org/html/pinckney_baptist_church.html)).

42. James William Cooksey Bible pages.

43. *Rankin County, Mississippi, Cemetery Records, 1824–1980* (Brandon: Rankin County Historical Society, 1981), 71–80, "Florence Cemetery AKA Steen's Creek," in section 31, township 4N, range 2E.

44. Graham, *Parks: In Fond Remembrance*, 32, citing census records.

45. Marriage date is estimated from age of first child, Elmira, born between 2 June 1824 and 1 June 1825. See 1850 U.S. census, Leake Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 13, dwell. 219, fam. 242, Elmira Boyd; NARA microfilm M432, roll 376.

46. John Cooksey, son of Zilphy, is missing from the 1850 census. The 1860–80 censuses consistently place his birth between 2 June 1806 and 1 June 1807. See 1860 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., pp. 86–87, dwell./fam. 537. Also, 1870 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 214, dwell./fam. 108. Also, 1880 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., Beat 3, ED 87, p. 601, dwell. 78, fam. 73, John Cooksey. The 1840 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., p. 141, enumerates John in his thirties, with a young woman age fifteen to nineteen and a girl under age five.

47. Rankin Co., Marriage Book 1 (1828–35): 11; Circuit Clerk's Office, Brandon, Miss. Newton Co.'s tax records show that Rayborn died about 1848. Letitia last appears in Pinckney Baptist Church's undated minutes of 1850. The 1850 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 192-B, dwell./fam. 537, shows the widowed Letitia's age as "3"; NARA microfilm M432, roll 378.

48. *Find A Grave* ([www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)), memorial 31302237, Samuel Cooksey (7 October 1811–4 March 1902), Hillcrest Cemetery (Temple, Bell Co., Tex.), digital image by James Williams. The 1840 U.S. census, Newton Co., p. 142, credits to his household a woman in her twenties and three children under five, suggesting that he was married by 1835.



- vii. ZILPHY COOKSEY, b. 1813–14; m. Thomas Sessums, 24 September 1829<sup>49</sup>
- viii. CATHERINE COOKSEY, b. 7 June 1816; m. David Gill, 5 January 1832<sup>50</sup>
- ix. JAMES WILLIAM COOKSEY, b. 16 November 1819; m. Elizabeth Miller, 1843, and Louisa Parker, 1858<sup>51</sup>
- x. ELIZABETH COOKSEY, b. 21 July 1821; m. Shadrack Odom, 1840<sup>52</sup>

#### WILLIAM COOKSEY: AN OVERVIEW

A study of William’s neighbors and associates has led to two conclusions. First: his (and Zilphy’s) move to Mississippi was part of a migration of related families from Georgia’s Montgomery, Tattnall, Laurens, and Telfair counties.<sup>53</sup> Second: those migrants comprised a kinship cluster headed by Rev. John Watts, Esq.<sup>54</sup> The Watts clan was the only common link across those two states.

#### William’s FAN: Mississippi

The 1818 and 1820 Mississippi censuses—as well as the 1822 petition and 1823 census—place William Cooksey in an extended family comprised of John Watts, his son Thomas, and his daughters’ families surnamed Aultman, Hornsby, Lott, Rayborn, Webb, and Wiggins.<sup>55</sup>

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49. Rankin Co., Marriage Book 1:12. Four censuses place Zilphy Jr.’s birth between 2 June 1812 and 1 June 1814. See 1850 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 184, dwell./fam. 431, “Zilphy Sessions,” 37. Also, 1860 U.S. census, Newton Co., Miss., pop. sch., p. 162, dwell. 682, fam. 657, “Zepha Cissume,” 46. Also, 1870 U.S. census, Leake Co., Miss., pop. sch., dwell. 965, fam. 966, “Zelpha Samms,” 56; NARA microfilm M593, roll 736. Also, 1880 U.S. census, Leake Co., Miss., pop. sch., Beat 4, ED 51, p. 35, “Zilphy Sessums,” 67.

50. Rankin Co., Marriage Book 1:33. Also, 1850 U.S. census, Newton Co., pop. sch., fo. 176v, dwell./fam. 311, Catharine, “36.” Also, 1860 U.S. census, Saline Co., Ark., pop. sch., Calvert Twp., p. 28, dwell./fam. 177, Catharine “44”; NARA microfilm M653, roll 50. Also, *Find A Grave*, memorial 20553746, Catharine Gill (7 June 1816–13 September 1863), Marlow North Cemetery (Cane Creek, Grant Co., Ark.), digital image by Kathy James.

51. James William Cooksey Bible pages.

52. Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Shadrack Odom (ca. 1819–aft. 1870): Research Notes,” 1 August 2013, *Historic Pathways*, “Research” tab. Her death record names her parents Zilphy and William Cooksey. Mississippi State Dept. of Health, death certificate, file no. 24406, Elizabeth Odom (1917).

53. See Dorothy Williams Potter, *Passports of Southeastern Pioneers, 1770–1823* (Baltimore: Gateway, 1982), particularly 208–10, 214, 222, and 234. That migration began in November 1805, when John Lott Jr. obtained a passport from the Georgia governor to go through the Indian lands. Jesse Lott followed in November 1806; then John Lott Sr. in November 1807; and Robert, Amos, and Stephen Lott in 1809.

54. For John Watts as county justice, see Montgomery Co. court and deed books, 1790–1798. Watts’s influence is further suggested by his legislative appointment, shortly after his arrival, to the Montgomery Co. courthouse site committee. In 1806, residing in new Tattnall County, he would be appointed to the site committee for the Tattnall courthouse. See Robert and George Watkins, *A Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia . . . to the Year 1798, . . .* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1800), 529 and 619. Also, Clayton, *Compilation of the Laws of the State of Georgia*, 300.

55. In the 1822 petition, William “signed” adjacent to William “Weeb” [Webb], the husband of Mary Watts; both names were penned by the same hand. See “Citizens of Covington County, Request to Divide County, circa December 1822.”

1818 STATE CENSUS (CONSECUTIVE ENTRIES)<sup>56</sup>

<i>Head of Household</i>	<i>Significant Connection</i>
Watts, Thomas	Son of John and Judith Watts; married Elizabeth Lott <sup>57</sup>
Watts, Reuben	Son of John and Judith <sup>58</sup>
<b>Watts, John</b>	Family head
McAll [McCall], Hugh <sup>59</sup>	
Lee, Stephen	
Parker, Aron	In-law of Watts's son-in-law Mark Rayburn, next door <sup>60</sup>
Rayborn, Mark	Married Rhody Watts, daughter of John and Judith <sup>61</sup>
Altman, Thomas	Married Amy Watts, daughter of John and Judith <sup>62</sup>
Hornsby, Reuben	Son of Katherine Watts, daughter of John and Judith <sup>63</sup>
McFarson, David	Father-in-law of William Cooksey Jr. <sup>64</sup>
<b>Cooksey, William</b>	
<b>Cooksey, William, Sr.</b>	
Webb, William	Married Mary Watts, daughter of John and Judith <sup>65</sup>

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56. 1818 Mississippi state census, Lawrence Co. [unnumbered pp. 8–9].

57. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25 and chap. 1. Also John Barron, "Descendants of John Lott," (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jcbarron/lott/lott0001.htm>), individuals 10, 29, mostly documented.

58. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25.

59. William Cooksey and John Watts were closely associated in three Georgia counties with one William McCaul (var. McCall), whose children have not yet been identified.

60. Manerva (Odom) Breland to William and Jane Odom, 10 June 1856, typescript; Breland Files, Newton County Historical and Genealogical Society, Decatur, Miss. Manerva tells her parents about neighborhood deaths and identifies the widow of Aron Parker (Tabitha) as née Rayborn. Manerva was a sister to the three Odom siblings who married Zilphy's Cooksey children and sister-in-law of Zilphy's daughter Letitia Cooksey, who married Tabitha's nephew (and Mark's apparent brother) James A. Rayburn.

61. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 26.

62. Telfair Co., Marriage Book A:1, Aultman-Watts, 11 August 1810, minister's return filed by Rev. John Watts; Probate Judge's Office, McRae, Ga.; FHL microfilm 373,536. Also, McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 26.

63. The marriage of Katherine to Moses Hornsby ("Hornsbie") occurred before the families moved to Georgia. See 1790 U.S. census, Fairfield Dist., S.C., p. 150 (Moses Hornsbie) and p. 152 (John Watts, Thomas Watts); NARA microfilm M637, roll 11. Also, McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25 and chap. 4. When the widowed Zilphy moved to Rankin Co. in 1829 she was part of a migration that included Moses and Reuben Hornsby.

64. For the McPherson kinship, see William E. Cooksey (Pvt., Capt. Atkinson's Co., Georgia Militia, War of 1812), pension no. S.C. 19,478, Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Applications Based on Service in the War of 1812; Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

65. Tattnall Co., Marriage Book 1 (reconstructed records): 2.

1820 STATE CENSUS (CONSECUTIVE ENTRIES)<sup>66</sup>

<i>Head of Household</i>	<i>Significant Connection</i>
Robertson, Norvelle	He and John Watts founded Providence Baptist Church <sup>67</sup>
Watts, Reuben	Son of John and Judith
Lott, Abram	Married Zilphy, daughter of Jesse Wiggins whose wife Barbara Watts was daughter of John and Judith <sup>68</sup>
Lott, Absolom	Father of Abram Lott, above, and Philip and Elizabeth Lott (Mrs. Thomas Watts), below <sup>69</sup>
Wiggins, Jesse	Husband of Barbara Watts, daughter of John and Judith <sup>70</sup>
Lott, Philip	Husband of Mary Wiggins, daughter of Jesse by Barbara Watts <sup>71</sup>
Watts, Thomas, Esq.	Son of John and Judith, married to Elizabeth, daughter of Absalom Lott, above
Nelson, James	
<b>Cooksey, William</b>	
Dampier, Stephen <sup>72</sup>	
Webb, William	Husband of Mary Watts, daughter of John and Judith <sup>73</sup>

At this point, a working hypothesis can be formed:

In 1818, aged William, widowed Zilphy, and her children settled in this Mississippi neighborhood to join a support network of kith or kin. If so, the Watts cluster should have been their neighbors and associates in Georgia.

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66. 1820 U.S. census, Covington Co., Miss., pp. 68–69.

67. Richard A. McLemore, *A History of Providence Baptist Church, 1818–1973* (Hattiesburg, Miss.: Walter M. Lee Sr., 1969), 5 and 57. Robertson and Watts, both ministers, constituted this Greene Co. church in 1818.

68. Barron, “Descendants of John Lott,” 10 and 29–30. Also, “Georgia Marriages, 1699–1944,” database, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>), Lott-Wiggins, 13 October 1816, Telfair Co.

69. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 20, 25, and chap. 21. Also, Telfair Co., Deeds A:187, Absolom Lott to “daughter” Elizabeth Watts; Recorder of Deeds Office, McRae; FHL microfilm 327,630.

70. Ibid. In 1823 Wiggins’s and Cooksey’s homes fell in new Bainbridge County. That county’s 1823 census places Jesse Wiggins next door to “John Parkes” (whose new wife Nancy reared baby Elmira), while William and Zilphy were six households away. See “An Account of the Increase and Decrease of this Population of the State of Mississippi in the County of Bainbridge for the Year 1823,” p. 3; Mississippi State and Territorial Census Collection, 1792–1866.

71. Barron, “Descendants of John Lott,” 10 and 30–31.

72. Dampier’s origin is unproved. However, the 1814 Tattnall Co. tax list shows a William and John “Dampier” taxed five farms from William Cooksey’s son-in-law, John Daughtery (“Darrety”). See Tattnall Co. 1814 tax list; Tax Assessor’s Office, Reidsville: FHL microfilm 206,455. This series has at least two mislabeled, mis-sequenced lists; 1814 is called 1804 and 1813 unlabeled but placed where 1803 should go.

73. Tattnall Co., Marriage Book 1 (reconstructed records): 2.

*William's FAN: Georgia*

In Georgia, as in Mississippi, William led a passive life. Expanding this study to include his associates and neighbors yielded some two hundred relevant documents.<sup>74</sup> When the state offered free headright land, he accepted. When taxes fell due, he paid. When he was called to jury service, he served. When a civic problem prompted a petition, he signed with his mark. When friends needed a bondsman, he stepped up. His male associates were local kingpins in every county where he lived.

Post-Revolution, William settled in the relatively new (and burned) Washington County, Georgia, where headright and bounty land were plentiful.<sup>75</sup> On 2 May 1791 the Washington County land court granted William two warrants: 125 and 75 acres, respectively.<sup>76</sup> Eight days later both tracts were surveyed; plats depict them as two islands in the Oconee River.<sup>77</sup> Both would subsequently fall into counties of Montgomery (1793), Tattnall (1801), and Laurens (1807).

Rev. John Watts, who would become a Montgomery County justice, first appeared in Georgia three years later in the same Washington County land court. On 6 February 1792 John and his son Thomas Watts appeared before the court requesting headright grants: 460 acres for John and 200 acres for young Thomas. The land they chose lay on the Ochoopee—a waterway paralleling the Oconee twenty or so miles east of Cooksey's islands.<sup>78</sup>

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74. For abstracts and some images of all these documents, see Mills, "William Cooksey, R.W. (ca. 1745–1829): Research Notes," *Historic Pathways*. Also, see the several Tattnall area research reports archived there.

75. *Ibid.* As a veteran, William did not receive bounty land; his warrant was cashed in by Col. Elijah Clarke, in whose minuteman forces he had served.

76. "Georgia, Headright and Bounty Land Records, 1783–1909," images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org>), warrants volume "Conrad, Hannah–Coward, Zachariah," folder "William Cooxy," images 4–7. Coincidentally (or not), the superior justice of that land court was *John Watts*, a same-name man who served Washington Co. not only as a justice but also as a surveyor, a militia lieutenant colonel, and its first state representative. For a reasonably accurate chronology of this John Watts's life, see Neal Watts, "John Watts," *GaGenWeb: Washington County, Georgia* ([http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gawashin/famconnect/watts\\_j.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gawashin/famconnect/watts_j.htm)).

77. Georgia Surveyor General, Land Plat Book CC: 474–75 (Washington Co.). "John Watts, Surveyor" signed both survey plats; his chainmen are identified as "J. Watts" (apparently Joshua) and "Jno. Watts" (likely the younger man of that name who would subsequently serve as land court clerk).

78. "Georgia, Headright and Bounty Land Records, 1783–1909," warrants volume "Warsdon, James–Watts, William," folder "John Watts," images 489–90, and "Thomas Watts," images 523–24. For the location of the land, see Montgomery Co., Deeds CPG: 322–23, Recorder of Deeds Office, Mount Vernon, Ga.; FHL microfilm 218,755.

This settlement placed the Wattses cheek-by-jowl with Cader Price, whose son John would soon marry Zilphy. The land of James Hancock, who would name two sons Cader and Watts Hancock, lay below the Wattses's land.<sup>79</sup> Below Hancock lay Arthur Lott's property. His brother's offspring would marry those of John Watts in Georgia and Mississippi. In December 1793, when Montgomery County was carved from Washington County and John Watts was appointed to the courthouse site committee, they chose Arthur Lott's land.<sup>80</sup>

Watts soon became a county justice and Lott became the tax assessor.<sup>81</sup> Other close associates were Abner Davis, official county surveyor and justice; James Sartain, Cader Price's friend and also a justice; and William McCaul (for whose estate Cooksey would later be the administrator's financial surety), who served alternately with Lott as county assessor. Indeed, in the county's first decade, Lott, Davis, Sartain, and McCaul seemed to control most county activities and the disposition of county lands. To his credit, John Watts, a minister and justice, apparently did not indulge in gross self-enrichment as did some of his colleagues. As justice, however, he signed off on many of their actions.<sup>82</sup>

The Price-Watts-Lott-Davis-Sartain neighborhood grew in the 1790s. Jesse Wiggins Sr. arrived from Effingham County, Georgia, the Lotts's former residence. His son Jesse Jr. married John Watts's daughter Barsheba "Barbara" about 1793–94.<sup>83</sup> Moses Hornsby, already married to John Watts's daughter Katherine, moved from their old residence in Fairfield County, South Carolina, by January 1796 and bought 200 acres on the Ohoopie from a Watts neighbor,

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79. The period in which both sons came of age suggests that they were born in the 1790s after the three families settled on Ohoopie; their names attest the three families' closeness but the timing reduces the likelihood of pre-Montgomery connections. Cader Hancock first appeared as a taxpayer on the 1817 Tattnall roll, together with his brother James Jr. and widowed mother Jeston. Watts Hancock came of age after 1820, the last year for which the county rolls were read. See Tattnall Co. 1817 through 1820 tax lists.

80. Watkins, *Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia ... to the Year 1798, Inclusive*, 529 and 619. Perhaps coincidentally or perhaps indicative of a connection, the appointment of [Rev.] John Watts of the Ohoopie to select the Montgomery County courthouse site was simultaneous with the appointment of county justice and state representative John Watts to select the Washington County courthouse site.

81. Both offices, in this period, were appointed by the local state representative; that man was Washington County's John Watts. For the powers representatives held, see Albert B. Saye, *A Constitutional History of Georgia, 1732–1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1970), 166, quoting *Augusta Chronicle*, 26 September 1795.

82. Sartain, for example, received grants in Montgomery County totaling 440,000 acres between 1794 and 1796. See S. G. McLendon, *History of the Public Domain in Georgia* (Atlanta: privately printed, 1924), 49–54. In another representative transaction of October 1799 William McCaul, as tax collector, sold to "Abner Davis, Esquire" 26,000 acres for \$1.06¼; two days later Davis deeded those 26,000 acres to a Baltimore merchant for \$1,000—quite a tidy profit for a two-day investment. See Montgomery Co., *Deeds and Mortgages E–F (1797–99)*: 181–85.

83. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25.

Arthur Moore.<sup>84</sup> Hornsby's wife Katherine died soon after. In 1797 he remarried, sold his lands, and temporarily moved away.<sup>85</sup>

In 1797, after the creation of that year's tax roll, William Cooksey moved into their midst. Four years earlier he had applied for another grant, claiming the remaining 225 acres of headrights to which his family size entitled him. While he kept his island "swampland" in the Oconee, he chose Ohoopee "pine land" for his new grant. That new warrant had been issued in May 1793 while the area was still part of Washington County, and it had been surveyed eleven days later.<sup>86</sup> But, not until 1798 did William receive a taxable title. For a decade the tax rolls would place William amid the Watts and Lotts on the Ohoopee, not on the Oconee.<sup>87</sup>

Tattnall County records, from their 1802 inception through 1810 when Cooksey and John Watts dropped out, depict a consistent, interrelated neighborhood, with small fluctuations—like the pattern in Mississippi. Mundane details suggest Zilphy's place in the cluster. For example, John Watts's friend and in-law Arthur Lott, who is listed consecutively with William Cooksey on the 1802–4 tax digest, located his 1802 land grant adjacent to Robert Flournoy, Zilphy's attorney when John Price sued her for divorce.<sup>88</sup>

In Tattnall tax rolls William Cooksey usually appears with or near the Watts-Lott clan.<sup>89</sup> In 1808 Cooksey's future in-law Daniel Daughtery bought more land. His new tract was described as the land of Stephen Bowen "on which John Watts now lives."<sup>90</sup> In 1809, when both Cooksey and John Watts decided to leave, they both sold their Tattnall land to the same man: John B. McFarland.<sup>91</sup>

The Cookseys and the Watts are also clustered in one other significant document of that decade. The original 1805 Georgia land lottery registration for one Tattnall district survives in a small, ragged folio listing individuals as they

84. Montgomery Co., Deeds and Mortgages E–F (1797–1799): 115–16.

85. Montgomery Co., "Marriage Licenses, Inventories, and Wills, 1796–1798," unnumbered sheet labeled "List of [Fees Paid for] Marriage Licenses beginning March 22, 1796"; Georgia Archives. Also, Montgomery Co., Deeds and Mortgages E–F: 77–78, Hansby to Philip Longino, and 257–58, Hansby to James Jones. Jones simultaneously bought adjacent tracts from both William Lott and William McCaul. See *ibid.*, 254–55 and 264–65.

86. "Georgia, Headright and Bounty Land Records, 1783–1909," warrants volume "Clemmens, James J.–Cockson, William," folder "William Cocksey," image 645. Also, Georgia Surveyor General, Land Grants BBBB:360; Georgia Archives.

87. Georgia Surveyor General, Land Grants Book BBBB:360, patent to William Cooksey, 1799. Also, Montgomery Co., 1798 tax roll; FHL microfilm 159,160. Also, Tattnall Co., 1802–4 consolidated tax digest, 1805–7 consolidated tax digest, and 1808 tax roll; Tax Assessor's Office, Reidsville; FHL microfilm 206,455.

88. Tattnall Co., Deeds A,B,C,D: 93; Recorder's Office, Reidsville, Ga.; FHL microfilm 206,364.

89. Tattnall Co., 1802–4 consolidated tax digest, 1805–7 consolidated tax digest, 1808 tax roll, and 1810 tax roll.

90. Tattnall Co., Deeds A,B,C,D: 233–34.

91. The 1810 tax roll shows two new acquisitions by McFarland: 400 acres of pineland "granted to *Cocksey*" and 100 acres of pine land "granted to *Watts*." Neither deed was recorded.

registered.<sup>92</sup> Again William Cooksey is clustered with members of the Watts-Lott clan. The last name on the page is partially torn away. The remaining text at the top of that last line and the neighborhood context justify reading that final name as “Zilphy Price.”

170	<b>William Coxy</b>	1, 1 [sic]	
171	<b>Henry Duke</b>	1 draw	[illegitimate son of Letty, below]
172	<b>Letty Duke</b>	1 draw	[Letty Cooksey, child of William] <sup>93</sup>
173	John Swilly	2 draws	
174	David Payne	2 draws	
175	<b>John Watts</b>	2 draws	[proposed father of Zilphy]
176	<b>Thomas Watts</b>	2	[son of John Watts]
177	<b>Moses Hornsby</b>	[torn]	[widower of Katherine Watts]
	[torn] <b>William Price</b> <sup>94</sup>	[torn]	

The two aging family heads, Watts and Cooksey, left Tattnall after selling their land in 1809 to McFarland. Cooksey’s family went to Laurens County; Watts joined offspring in Telfair County, created from 1807 lottery lands.

Perhaps the Cookseys left because no return for John and Zilphy’s marriage was ever filed. Tattnall County’s court minutes of that era reflect numerous prosecutions of couples alleged to be living in fornication or adultery. Possibly, the Watts departure occurred for the same reason; John Watts’s daughter Amy bore a child (Willis Watts) out of wedlock that same year.<sup>95</sup> Two years later, on 7 October 1811, the elderly Rev. Watts filed a marriage return in Telfair stating that he had performed the marriage of Amy to Thomas Aultman on 11 August 1810; he did not explain why his return was so tardy.<sup>96</sup> That lapse in fulfilling the letter of the law is relevant if, as evidence suggests, Zilphy was Rev. Watts’s daughter and he used his ministerial license also to perform a marriage ceremony for her.

Although the two families apparently went “separate ways” in 1810, their new homes straddled the county line between Laurens and Telfair, and the two families would continue to interact. In December 1815, as the Wattses were

92. The statewide index is alphabetized. For a published transcription, see Graham, *1805 Georgia Land Lottery*, 449.

93. When Letty married Justice John Daughtery about 1811, her illegitimate son Henry (then called Henry Cooksey) was bound out to Bani Boyd. The 1808 tax roll places Bani Boyd adjacent to John and Daniel Daughtery. Daniel had just bought his land from Boyd’s in-law Steven Bowen, a tract described as “land on which John Watts now lives.” For Henry’s binding-out, see Tattnall Co., “Inferior Court Sitting for Ordinary Purposes, 1805–1839,” unpaginated, for 5 August 1811 minutes; Clerk of Courts Office, Reidsville; FHL microfilm 206,434, item 2. For the Daughtery-Bowen-Watts documents, see Tattnall Co., Deeds A,B,C,D: 233–34.

94. Tattnall Co., Mixed Records of the Inferior and Superior Courts, 1807–45; Georgia Archives microfilm 101 (drawer 37, box 47).

95. See McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 23 and 33.

96. Telfair Co., Marriage Book A:1.

preparing to leave for Mississippi, John's son Reuben Watts sold his Telfair property. His witness was William E. Cooksey, eldest son of William and brother of Zilphy's husband John Cooksey.<sup>97</sup>

*Naming Patterns: Zilphy's Offspring vis-à-vis the Wattses'*

No definitive list exists for Rev. John Watts, Esq., and his wife Judith's children. His headright grants after his arrival in Georgia suggest they had sixteen children.<sup>98</sup> Most lists in circulation identify fourteen to sixteen children named in Rev. Watts's and his son Reuben's family Bibles.<sup>99</sup> Nine of those children lived to adulthood; activities of seven are well documented. Numerous and continued interactions between them and their offspring provide significant evidence to support their relationship.<sup>100</sup> Records suggest that another seven, who left no known offspring, might also be included. The following reconstruction is justified from known evidence:

- i. KATHERINE WATTS, b. ca. 1769; m. Moses Hornsby, apparently before 1790<sup>101</sup>
- ii. THOMAS WATTS, b. ca. 1771; m. Elizabeth Lott, ca. 1797–98<sup>102</sup>
- iii. KEZIAH WATTS, b. ca. 1773; her name carries down in sibling lines.
- iv. BARSHEBA "BARBARA" WATTS, b. 9 February 1775; m. Jesse Wiggins Jr., ca. 1794<sup>103</sup>
- v. ELIZABETH WATTS, b. ca. 1777; her name carries down in sibling lines.
- vi. JOHN WATTS JR., b. ca. 1778–79; was a landowner in 1805, after which he died or left Tattnall County<sup>104</sup>

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97. Catherine Fussell Wells, *Telfair County, Georgia, Deed Books D,E,F and P* (Valdosta, Ga.: Wells Gen-Search, 2000), 33.

98. The two headright grants this John Watts received totaled 960 acres: 460 in 1792 and 500 in 1800. Georgia then allowed 200 acres for the male head-of-household, 50 acres for a wife, and 50 for each child or slave in the family home. John Watts was never taxed on a slave. His 960 acres would equate to allotments for himself, a wife, and fourteen children in addition to the two already married at this 1792 request. For the provisions of headright law, see Faris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 68.

99. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 16 and 23, reports that both Bibles were inherited by Mrs. R. L. Rawls who died before 1972. In her last illness the Bibles were taken by a person she trusted.

100. Much of this evidence is developed in McGrew's massive work, *Watts Is My Line*.

101. 1790 U.S. census, Fairfield Dist., S.C., p. 150, attributes a young family to Moses "Hornsbie." Also, McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25, and chapter 4, pp. 39–156, for a robust genealogical treatment of the Hornsbys.

102. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25 and Part 3, pp. 157–717, for an extensive genealogical treatment of Thomas Watts and his offspring. Thomas's reported age of "79" on the 1850 census, if correct, would place his birth between 2 June 1770 and 1 June 1771. See 1850 U.S. census, Smith Co., Tex., pop. sch., p. 56, dwell. 196, fam. 197; NARA microfilm M432, roll 915. His entry on the 1790 U.S. census, Fairfield Dist., S.C., p. 152, suggests he was already married by that time.

103. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25.

104. Tattnall Co., Deeds A,B,C,D:98, John Lott Jr. to M. Hardin, land adjacent to "Wiggins Field."



- vii. “LUCY” WATTS, b. ca. 1780–81; no further information. Her birth period matches Zilphy’s.
- viii. DICEY WATTS, b. ca. 1782; m. Nathan Lott, ca. 1797<sup>105</sup>
- ix. REUBEN WATTS, b. 24 November 1784; m. Katherine [—?—], 27 November 1805<sup>106</sup>
- x. (?) JAMES WATTS, b. ca. 1786; his name carries down in sibling lines.
- xi. (?) BARTLETT (OR BENTON) WATTS, born ca. 1788; the name *Bartlett* is carried down in sibling lines.
- xii. MARY WATTS, b. ca. 1790; m. William Webb, 8 August 1809<sup>107</sup>
- xiii. ELEANOR “NELLIE” WATTS, b. ca. 1792; her name carries down in sibling lines.
- xiv. AMELIA “AMY” WATTS, b. ca. 1794; m. Thomas J. Aultman, 11 August 1810<sup>108</sup>
- xv. RHODA WATTS, b. ca. 1796; m. Mark Rayburn, 13 March 1818, Lawrence County, Mississippi<sup>109</sup>
- xvi. SARAH WATTS, b. ca. 1800; her name carries down in sibling lines.

The names used by Zilphy and her Cooksey children and grandchildren inordinately duplicate those within this Watts family. See table 1.

#### *Associational Data*

Identity and kinship conclusions should always rest on a wide range of factors. Naming, migration, cultural patterns, and associations are critical to building a case for each person’s identity and placement in a specific family. All elements combined suggest that infant Zilphy once occupied a cradle beside John and Judith Watts’s bed. Particularly significant are six considerations:

- From the time teenaged Zilphy married John Price in Montgomery County, Georgia, to her death as an elderly woman in Newton County, Mississippi, she and her husbands are with the Wattses and their offspring. Her Rayborn and Cooksey offspring later intermarried with the Wattses and their Rayborn offspring.
- When William Cooksey (Zilphy’s father-in-law and later husband) and John Watts (Zilphy’s proposed father) left Tattnall in 1809, they sold their lands to the same man. Their sons continued the associations during their subsequent residences in Laurens and Telfair counties. After the War of 1812 both families settled in newly opened lands two states away.
- Six of Zilphy’s ten children bore names used in this Watts family: John, Catherine, Elizabeth, James, Zilphy, and Reuben—with the latter two uncommon enough to be significant.

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105. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 25 and 749.

106. *Ibid.*, 25.

107. Tattnall Co., Marriage Book 1 (reconstructed records): 2.

108. Telfair Co., Marriage Book A:1.

109. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 26.

Table 1

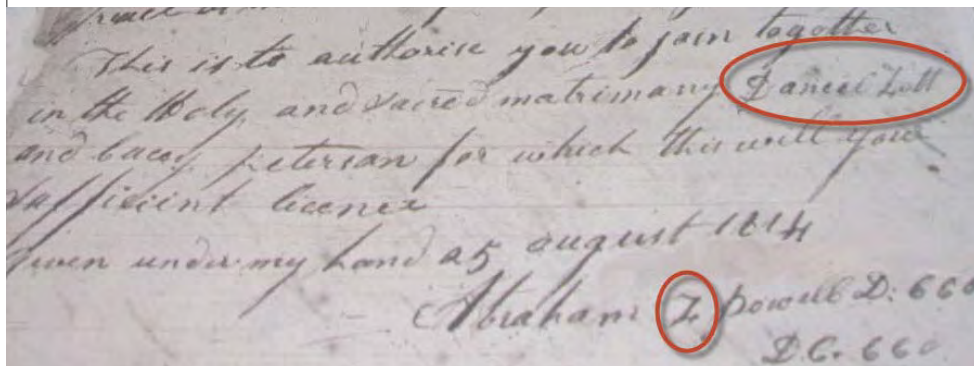
## Duplication Between Names Used by Zilphy and Her Proposed Siblings

JOHN AND JUDITH'S CHILDREN	ZILPHY'S CHILDREN	JOHN AND JUDITH'S GRANDCHILDREN	ZILPHY'S GRANDCHILDREN
Katherine Thomas Keziah Barsheba "Barbara" Elizabeth John Dicey "Lucy" ?Zilphy? Reuben James? Bartlett? (Benton?) Mary Eleanor "Nellie" Amelia "Amy" Rhoda Sarah	Catherine  Elizabeth John Zilphy Reuben James	Judith (several) Catherine (several) Thomas (several) Keziah, dau. of Barbara (Watts) Wiggins  Elizabeth (several) John (several) Dicey (several) Zilphy, dau. of Barbara (Watts) Wiggins Reuben (several) James, son of Amy (Watts) Aultman Bartlett, son of Thomas Watts Mary (several) Nellie, dau. of Barbara (Watts) Wiggins Amelia, dau. of Barbara (Watts) Wiggins Rhoda, dau. of Barbara (Watts) Wiggins Sarah, dau. of Dicey (Watts) Lott m. Wm. Hinton Powell Calvin, son of Rhoda (Watts) Rayburn Calvin, grandson of Reuben Watt Margaret, dau. of Dicey (Watts) Lott	Judy and Watts, ch. of James William Cooksey Catherine (several) Thomas (several)  Elizabeth (several) John (several) Dicey, first dau. of Samuel Cooksey Zilpha/Zilphy (several) Reuben (several) James (several) Bartlett Watts, son of Samuel Cooksey  Emily "Emma," daus. of Sam and John Cooksey Rhoda, first dau. of Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom Sarah (several) Sarah Hinton, dau. of Letty (Cooksey) Rayburn Calvin, son of Elizabeth (Cooksey) Odom Margaret (several)

- Zilphy's children gave distinctive Watts names to their own offspring: Judy, Watts, Dicey, Reuben, Rhoda, Emily/Emma (Amelia/Amy), "Bartlett Watts," "Sarah Hinton," Calvin, and Margaret.
- No recorded marriages exist for Zilphy's unions with Price or either Cooksey. That is true for five of the seven married children of this minister and court justice. Of the two recorded marriages, one was tardily recorded by Watts himself, attesting that he had performed the ceremony. He likely did so for his other children as well—including all three of Zilphy's known unions.
- Zilphy's eldest son, Cader Price, followed in his proposed grandfather's footsteps and became a prominent frontier-Baptist minister.<sup>110</sup>

The births of John and Judith's children spanned thirty years, amid which Zilphy fits in only one place. In 1780–81 the child "Lucy" was born, for whom the only known evidence is a name copied from an old family record. That birth period is compatible with Zilphy's likely age at her first marriage in 1798. Sufficient evidence exists to propose that the copied name "Lucy" was a misreading of Zilphy. In period penmanship, the two names could be confused. The sample below, for example, depicts the similarity of the letter *L* with *Z* as written in many records. Similarly, the two upstrokes *il* could be read as *u*, and the *ph* as a long-tail *s*, to create Lusy.

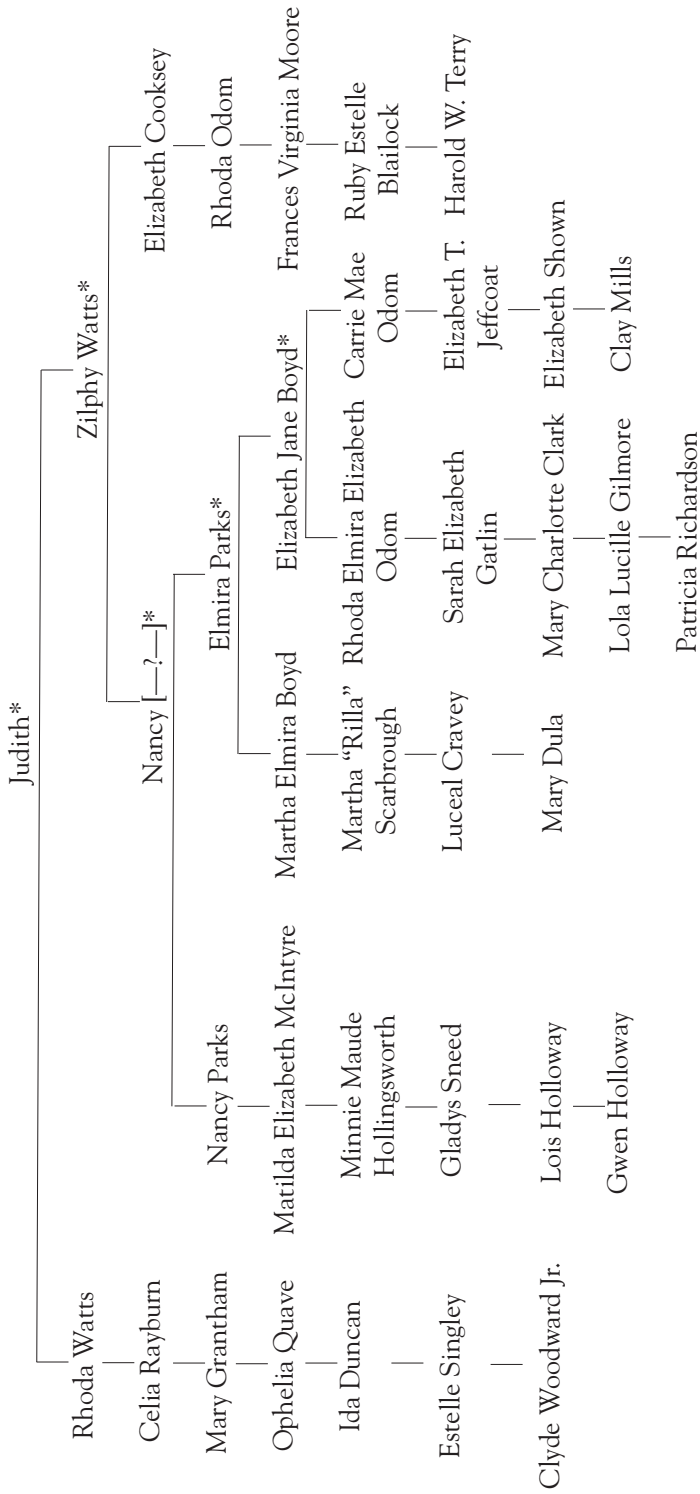
Figure 1

Comparison of Letter *L* and *Z* Configurations

Telfair Co., Marriage Book A:6a, Lott-Peterson, 1814, Abraham L. Powell, Clerk.

110. Graham, "Rev. Cader Price."

Figure 2  
 Mitochondrial DNA Matches in Lines Descending from Judith [—?—] Watts



Note: Mitochondrial DNA is identical between the last generation of each line. The five names marked with asterisks designate the five-generation mitochondrial line proposed via proof arguments built entirely on indirect evidence.

### Testing the FAN Principle against DNA

Three DNA tests used for genealogical purposes are germane to the present study:

- Autosomal (atDNA), covering 22 numbered chromosome pairs
- Mitochondrial (mtDNA), tracing mothers' umbilical lineages
- Native-American, covering markers distinctive to indigenous North Americans

If Zilphy Price Cooksey was John Watts's daughter, then the first two DNA tests might be applied. The latter two ended speculation that this mitochondrial line could be Native American.<sup>111</sup>

### Mitochondrial DNA

Figure 2 depicts six mitochondrial lines descending from Judith Watts. The first is a lineage from a documented Watts daughter, Rhoda (Watts) Rayborn.<sup>112</sup> The other five represent separate lines of descent from Zilphy.

For each generation of Zilphy's offspring, two lines of descent have been tested to ensure reliable triangulation. The last individual in each line is the individual whose mitochondrial data is used for this test. All individuals tested with the same laboratory, are Haplotype I1a1, and have identical mitochondrial values.<sup>113</sup> The mitochondrial evidence confirms that Zilphy is a close maternal

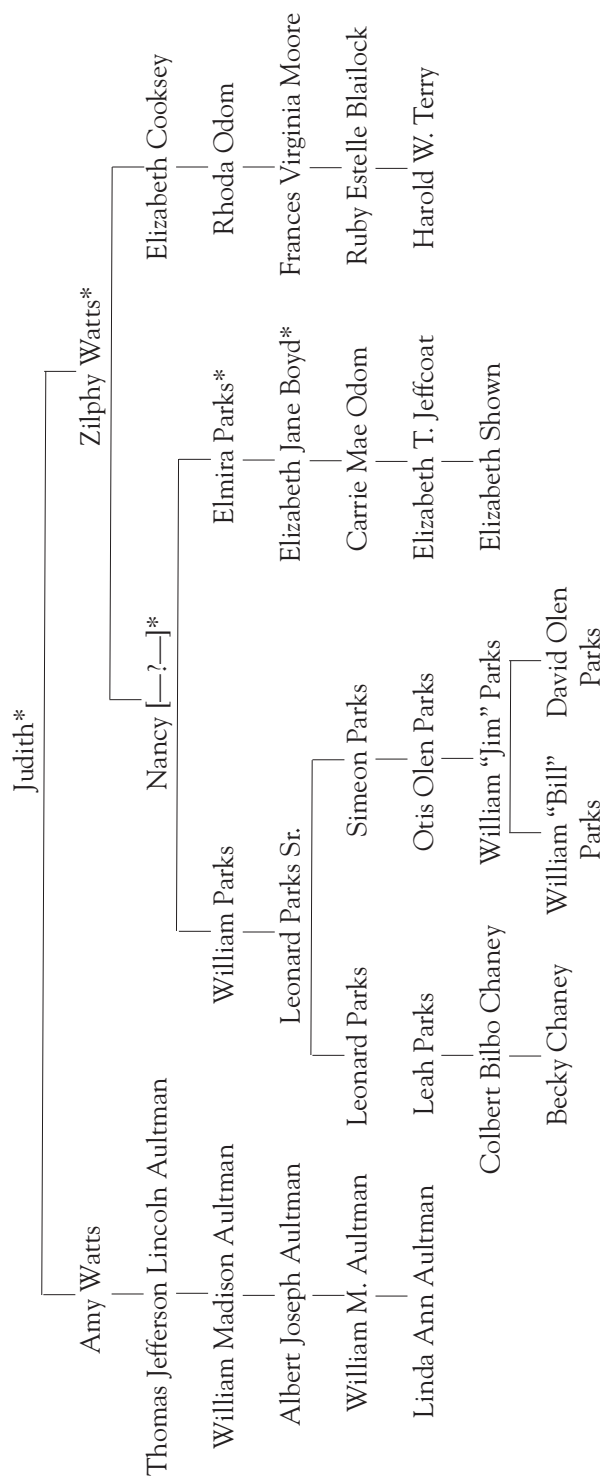
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111. A Native American test taken at FamilyTree DNA in 2001 came back negative. Several subsequent autosomal tests reveal a fractional percent of Native American-East Asian markers that map to a paternal line unconnected to the lineage under study here.

112. For the first two generations from Judith, credible evidence and arguments are found in McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, pp. iii, 22, and 26 (Rhoda Watts); 33 and 1308 (Celia Rayborn). For Mary Grantham, a proof argument remains to be developed, but see 1880 U.S. census, St. Tammany Parish, La., 5th Ward, ED 76, p. 6, dwell. 44, fam. 48, Rosemon Quave household; NARA microfilm T9, roll 471. This establishes Mary as the wife of Ophelia's father. Further work is needed, but DNA results confirm the entire lineage. Recent generations from Clyde through Estelle, Ida, and Ophelia are conventionally proved and documented in the files of Clyde Woodward, Hattiesburg, Miss.

113. All were tested by FamilyTree DNA from samples sent between 2002 and 2014. Morgan tested at HVR1 and HVR2 levels; all others tested at the mtFullSequence level. One anomaly needs addressing. Figure 1 presents two representatives of Elizabeth T. Jeffcoat: Elizabeth Shown and Clay Mills. Mills is an exact match with all other five lines. However, Shown's mitochondria differs from her son's on 1 of the 44 values. There, Shown has a heteroplasmic "mutation in process" that does not exist among any of her three children—possibly the result of a serious illness after their births or due to more complex causes. For an interpretation of this anomaly, the author thanks Roberta Estes of DNA Explain, a consulting firm that works with FamilyTreeDNA to offer personalized DNA analyses. For a basic explanation of the condition, see *National Forensic Science Technology Center*, "Heteroplasmy and Mutations" ([http://www.nfstc.org/pdi/Subject09/pdi\\_s09\\_m02\\_01\\_b.htm](http://www.nfstc.org/pdi/Subject09/pdi_s09_m02_01_b.htm)). For a scientific discussion, see Yiping He, Jian Wu, et al., "Heteroplasmic Mitochondrial DNA Mutations in Normal and Tumor Cells," *Nature* 424, issue 7288 (March 2010): 610–14; online edition, National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, *PubMed Central (PMC)* (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3176451/>).

Figure 3  
Autosomal Matches in Lines Descending from Judith [—?—] Watts



Note: The last individual in each line has one or more significantly matching segments on chromosomes 1, 4, 6, 15, 20, 22, and X. The five names marked with asterisks designate the five-generation mitochondrial line proposed via proof arguments built entirely on indirect evidence. For further discussion, see text.

relative of Rhoda (Watts) Rayborn and thus both are likely daughters of Judith, the wife of John Watts, as the documentary evidence suggests.

Asterisks on figure 2 mark the mitochondrial line at the center of this research. Credible direct evidence exists to prove parent-child relationships for the most recent four generations. However, for all generations beyond Elizabeth Jane Boyd the proposed kinship rests upon GPS-based proof arguments. If any had misidentified a mother, then the mitochondrial values should have differed. The fact that two lineages from Elizabeth Jane match the tested mitochondrial markers of Judith's proven daughter Rhoda validates Elizabeth Jane's proposed umbilical line.

### **Autosomal DNA**

Figure 3 shows five descents from Judith that have undergone autosomal testing through two testing companies. As with the mitochondrial evaluation, DNA results for Zilphy's descendants are compared to the autosomes of another of Judith's documented daughters, Amy (Watts) Aultman.<sup>114</sup> Because these individuals are seven-to-nine generations removed from the common ancestor, the shared DNA percentage is small. Statistically, for example, a test-taker would carry only 78/1000s of the autosomal DNA of an eighth-generation forebear. Of those who tested:

- Two lines from Zilphy (Shown and W. Parks) share matching segments of sufficient length with Amy's known descendant (Aultman).<sup>115</sup> Documentary research reveals no other genealogical connection with Aultman. Together, the autosomal and documentary evidence indicate that Judith and John Watts are their common ancestors.
- One line (Shown) from Zilphy's proposed daughter Nancy and one line (Terry) from Zilphy's proved daughter Elizabeth are six and five generations removed from the proposed common ancestor. They share three blocks on Chromosomes 1, 22, and X, totaling 89 centimorgans (cM).<sup>116</sup> In addition to their proposed kinship through Nancy, based on indirect evidence and verified by mtDNA,

114. For the first generation from Judith, credible evidence and arguments are found in McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, pp. iii, 21, 23–26, 31, and 33 (Amy Watts). For Thomas J. L. Aultman, a promising proof argument is being developed, but see *Find A Grave*, memorial 13571879, information by James Aultman, "Thomas Jefferson Aultman, Jr." (1827–1908), Seminary Cemetery, Covington Co., Miss. (no image). Also, Covington Co., Miss., probate minutes, Book 3, 1860–1865, pp. 71–72, 136–44, and 206–10, Thomas Aultman estate; Chancery Court Clerk, Collins; FHL microfilm 2032164. Thomas's will twice refers to "my son Thomas Aultman Junr." Recent generations from Linda Ann through William, Albert, and William Madison are conventionally proved and documented in the files of Linda Appleton, Austin, Texas.

115. Shown–Aultman: chromosome 15, length of segment, 12.6 cM. chr. 20, 14.4 cM. Brothers D.O. and W. Parks also share chr. 15 blocks with Shown and Aultman, as follows: W. Parks–Aultman: 8.2cM; D. O. Parks–Shown: 23.7cM; W. Parks–Mills: 20.9 cM. D. O. No calculation of shared centimorgans has been made for Parks and Aultman.

116. Shown–Terry: chr. 1: 15.5 cM and 14.8 cM; chr. 22: 42.3 cM; chr. X: 16.3 cM; total: 89 cM.

they also share one other line of descent stemming from the fact that Nancy's half-sister Elizabeth Cooksey and Nancy's granddaughter Elizabeth Jane Boyd married an Odom father and son. Their Chromosome X block can be mapped to the common ancestor Zilphy; their Chromosomes 1 and 22 blocks are unmapped.

- One line (Mills) from Nancy's proposed daughter Elmira shares two blocks (25.02 cM and 23.7cM) with two lines from Nancy's proved son William (Chaney and D.O. Parks), confirming the proposed kinship in the proof argument for Nancy as the mother of Elmira (Parks) Boyd.<sup>117</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Arguably, genealogy's toughest problem can be the identification of females for whom no direct evidence names a parent or sibling. One alternative is to mount a proof argument based on indirect evidence gleaned from a study of friends, associates, and neighbors. However, using proof arguments for several generations of a female line compounds the possibility that one flawed conclusion will invalidate the entire line. This paper assembles four consecutive generations entirely on indirect evidence gleaned by application of the FAN principle, using Zilphy's male friends, associates, and neighbors to identify her parentage. Mitochondrial and autosomal tests confirm the validity of the line.

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117. Mills-Chaney: chr. 4: 12.7 cM; chr. 6: 25.7 cM; total 38 cM. As shown in n. 111 above, Mills and the Parks brothers also share blocks of significant size on chr. 15. D.O. Parks-Mills: 23.7 cM; W. Parks-Mills: 20.9 cM.