

Bio: Catherine Mathews
Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2018

Catherine Mathews' story has been a challenge to piece together. Many questions remain.

Catherine Mathews was probably born 1766-1770 at the home of her parents, Fletcher Mathews and Sarah Woodhull of Mount Pleasant, in Ulster (Orange) county New York. Little is known of her childhood, but her teen years must have been affected by the turbulent affairs of her loyalist father during the American Revolution.

Mathews' family records indicate that Catherine Mathews was married to an Orange county neighbor, Jonathan Brooks. Like Catherine's, Jonathan Brooks' story seems to raise more questions than it answers. Catherine Mathews was probably the second wife of Jonathan Brooks. His chronology seems to be, roughly - born 1740-1750, married Hettie Lewis 1770, produced five surviving children, Hettie Lewis Brooks died 1790, married secondly Catherine Mathews 1795. This scenario is speculative. More details of Jonathan Brooks' life can be found in the sketch titled - Jonathan Brooks, A Collection of Records, in this database.

Returning to Catherine Mathews – if the dating above is near correct, then at the time of a 1795 marriage, Jonathan Brooks would have been about age fifty, and Catherine Mathews about age twenty-five to thirty. Several of Jonathan Brooks' children would likely have been teenagers, still in the household. A big question arises when trying to identify the children of Jonathan Brooks and Catherine Mathews. The best candidate, as a child for this couple, is Fletcher Mathews Brooks, who was probably born about 1795. There are seven others that are regularly considered as children for Jonathan Brooks and Catherine Mathews, and they are discussed in more detail in the sketch mentioned above. Presently in this database, Hester Esther Lewis "Hettie" Brooks is shown as a daughter of Jonathan Brooks and Catherine Mathews. But, she may belong to his first marriage to Hettie Lewis. The six Brooks children who are named in the Will of Mary Mathews, sister of Catherine Mathews Brooks, remain a mystery.

One of the keys to identifying the children of Jonathan Brooks and Catherine Mathews is determining when Catherine Mathews Brooks died. There is evidence that she died in the summer of 1799, but it is not conclusive.

Catherine's father, Fletcher Mathews died intestate in 1789, and the division of his primary property was made ten years later, in May 1799. The portion of property allotted to Jonathan Brooks and Catherine Mathews Brooks was described as follows:

First All that certain lot piece or parcel of land being part of the farm whereon the said Fletcher Mathews deceased lived at the time of his death and bounded as follows to wit. Beginning at the westerly line of a tract of land granted to Edward Blagg at the distance of four chains north of the Road leading from Goshen to New Windsor and then . . . [mentions – St David's Church, Road leading to Van Duzors Mills, bounds of Colvill Stewards farm] . . . to the place of beginning containing one hundred and seventy

three acres of land is set apart and allotted to Jonathan Brooks and Catharine his [wife] a Daughter of the said Fletcher Mathews.

About three months later, in August 1799, the partition is addressed again in the court records, when Elizabeth Mathews Williams' property is further divided among her sisters, and their heirs. In this August 1799 document the further allotment made to the Brooks heirs gives this identification – "*Catharine Brooks decd late the wife of Jonathan Brooks and sister of the said Elizabeth Williams deceased.*" There is a note related to corrections at the close of this August 1799 document. It is difficult to decipher, but suggests that the original document was lacking a few words that needed to be filled in later. The most important example – "*___ Brooks ___ late the wife of Jonathan Brooks.*" This could suggest that Catherine Mathews Brooks was recently deceased, and the court clerk needed to confirm the specifics! A more detailed account of these partition records can be found in this database, in the sketch titled - The Division of Fletcher Mathews' Estate, 1799. Further reflection on these records might produce a different interpretation.

Confirming the death date of Catherine Mathews Brooks would be a helpful piece of information. If she died in the summer of 1799, then she is not the mother of the six Brooks children named in her sister Mary Mathews' Will. Further clues or information would be welcome.

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Catherine Mathews in database](#)

[Sketch: The Division of Fletcher Mathews' Estate, 1799](#)

[Sketch: Jonathan Brooks, A Collection of Records](#)

[Will: Jonathan Brooks](#)

Bio of Catherine Mathews; written by Pamela Hutchison Garrett for John Markham of Chesterfield website; 2018.