

Bio: David Mathews
Pamela Hutchison Garrett

David Mathews was born about 1725, probably in Orange county New York, the son of Vincent Mathews and Catalina Abeel. As a young man he was a student at Princeton University.

David Mathews has been written about extensively. He came to the office of Mayor of New York City in 1776, and his strong Loyalist sympathies kept him in power, under British protection, until the British abandoned the capitol city in November 1783. At that time David Mathews removed to Canada with other Loyalists and served in several important positions in the new colony of Cape Breton in Nova Scotia.

Long before the events of the Revolutionary War, in 1758, David Mathews was wed to Sarah Seymour, daughter of Thomas Seymour and Ann Elsworth of New York City. Most Mathews' genealogies identify six or seven children for David Mathews and Sarah Seymour, but, as one account suggests, they were probably the parents of twelve children.

Identified children are – Catalina Mathews (married James Lamb); Sarah Mathews (speculative – married John Murray); William Tryon Mathews; Harriet Mathews (married Francis Green); David Mathews; Matilda or Martha Mathews (married William Wyly); Elizabeth Mathews; Thomas Mathews; Mary Mathews (speculative); Vincent Mathews (married Ann Ross); and Amelia Mathews (married John Ritchie). These children and their siblings spread out to England, Canada, Australia, and the United States.

Unlike his siblings, David Mathews is not named in the 1784 Will of his father Vincent Mathews. The portion that would have been his, was passed on to his children. This probably has to do with David Mathews' flight to Canada with the Loyalist remnant about the same time.

Eventually David Mathews established himself near the town of Sydney, in the Cape Breton area of Nova Scotia. This was his home for the last fifteen years of his life, and the place where he wielded his power as president of the Council, naming several of his sons and sons-in-law to government positions. It is not known when his wife Sarah Seymour Mathews died. There is evidence of a daughter Amelia Mathews being born about 1785, when Sarah would have been age forty-five.

A record of a baptism in the Cape Breton colony raises the question of whether or not David Mathews had a late life child:

19 March 1793 read: Then baptized Wm a natural son of David Mathews Atty Genl and Mrs Docla Marshall.

Further discussion of the child "Wm" and his likely parents is found under David Mathews jr, in this database.

David Mathews lived out a long and varied life – dying at Cape Breton in August of the year 1800.

*Hon David Matthews, former Mayor of New York City, President of the Council and Commander in Chief of Island of Cape Breton, died in Sydney.
[source] Columbian Centinel (Massachusetts); 20 Aug 1800.*

Twenty years following David Mathews' death, a petition appeared in a New York City newspaper, related to the selling off of property that had passed from Vincent Mathews to the children of his son David Mathews. The petition is helpful in identifying some of David Mathews' children and grandchildren, but it also raises questions:

To the Honorable Justices of the State of New York, to the Supreme Court of Judicature - The petition of Harriet [Green] and Mary Mathews of Medford, in the state of Massachusetts, respectfully sheweth, That your petitioners are each of them respectively seized in fee simple, as tenants in common, together with the persons hereinafter mentioned, and with some persons unknown . . (fortieth part of property in the town of New Windsor, county of Orange) . . conveyed (1749) to Vincent Mathews, the grandfather of the petitioners . . . And your petitioners further shew, that Elizabeth Beekman, of the city of New York, is seized as aforesaid of ten other equal undivided fortieth parts of same; that Thomas Mathews, Susan Lamb, Charlotte Clark, and Elizabeth Mathews, all of whom, as your petitioners are informed and believe, reside out of the jurisdiction of the United States of America, are each respectfully seized . . that Sarah Murray, who as your petitioners are informed and believe, resides in the city of Savannah, in the state of Georgia, is also seized . . that Vincent Mathews, now deceased, at the time of his death, was seized, leaving as his sole heir, Vincent Mathews, who as your petitioners are informed and believe, resides in the city of Savannah, in the state of Georgia; that Amelia Ritche, now deceased, at the time of her death, was seized . . leaving as her sole heir, one child, of whose name and place of residence your petitioners are ignorant; and that Martha Wylly, now deceased, at the time of her death was seized . . leaving as her heirs at law, Alexander C Wylly, Thomas B Wylly, William C Wylly, Vincent Wylly, Elizabeth Wylly, Margaret Wylly, and Mary Wylly, all of whom, as your petitioners are informed and believe, reside out of the jurisdiction of the United

States of America, and Matilda Chambers, who is now deceased - leaving as her heirs at law, two or three children, of whose names or places of residence your petitioners are ignorant.

[seeking to sell and divide]

Dated November 22, 1820; Harriet Green, Mary Mathews

[source] American (New York City) 9 February 1821.

Further detail on the people named in this petition can be found in this database. See the sketch titled "Petition of 1821, David Mathews' Descendants".

In this database I have been particularly interested in exploring the family relationships of David Mathews. For readers interested in knowing more of David Mathews' career, several articles are listed below.

Do you want to know more?

[Link to David Mathews in the database](#)

[Sketch: Petition of 1821, David Mathews' Descendants](#)

Further Reading:

"The Bench and the Bar" from The history of Orange County, New York; Russel Headley, 1908.

They Came From Away: Yanks, Brits and Cape Breton; David and Pamela Newton; iUniverse, May 11, 2010. (see googlebooks online)

[David Mathews; from Wikipedia](#), the free (online) encyclopedia.

[David Mathews; by Robert J Morgan, 1979](#); from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol 4 (online); by University of Toronto, 2003.

Biography of David Mathews; written by Pamela Hutchison Garrett for Markham of Chesterfield website; 2018.