

## Peter Mathews and Benjamin Fletcher – What’s the Connection?

by Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2015

There is good evidence for a familial relationship between [Benjamin Fletcher](#), who served as governor of New York 1692-1698, and [Peter Mathews](#), Fletcher’s “commander of the fort”. Peter Mathews is my 8xgreat-grandfather, so I have long been interested in the connection. But, despite diligent research, over many years, I have never been successful in determining their relationship. I suspect that Benjamin Fletcher is uncle to Peter Mathews, or perhaps they are cousins of a sort. I remain uncertain whether [Peter Mathews’ daughter](#) or [granddaughter](#) was the Catherine Mathews who married John Markham of Chesterfield, but either way, Peter Mathews remains a person of interest in my family history search.

In 1697-98, when Benjamin Fletcher was being driven from his governorship, his successor [Lord Bellomont](#) wrote a letter, remarking on Peter Mathews, “My first Lieutenant's name is Peter Mathews, bred up from a child with Col. Fletcher, and 'tis at his house that the angry people of this town have a club and hold their cabals.” ([Lord Bellomont to Secretary Vernon, October 1700](#)) The statement “bred up from a child with Col Fletcher” could be interpreted in different ways, but coupled with other evidence, it supports a relationship between the two men whereby an older Col Fletcher may have raised up a younger Peter Mathews in his home. A christening record for Fletcher places his birth around 1640. Knowing nothing of Mathews’ parentage, or birth, I have speculated that he was born around 1665.

Benjamin Fletcher was christened in 1640 at the church of St Lawrence Jewry in London, second son of [William Fletcher](#) and [Abigail Vincent](#). His father, William Fletcher was a freeman of the Worshipful Company of Clothiers (Haberdashers) in London, and was noted as a linen draper. He was also among the Irish Adventurers who invested in the brewing wars in Ireland. The Vincent family members were also London merchants, holding prominent positions with the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers.

Benjamin Fletcher was probably about age five when his father died. His mother eventually remarried to Christopher Webster, and Fletcher probably grew up near London. There is evidence that Benjamin Fletcher was left a “small patrimony” in Ireland, and as he chose the military for his profession, he removed to Ireland as a young man. During his years in Ireland, Benjamin Fletcher met and married [Elizabeth Hodson](#), daughter of [John Hodson](#), Bishop of the Diocese of Elphin in Ireland. Their home was in the area around county Roscommon.

The only record placing Fletcher and Mathews together in Ireland appears in 1691, when they served together in the [Princess Anne Regiment](#):

24 March 1691; Whitehall; Commissions . . . for Francis Napper, gent, to be lieutenant of that company whereof Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Fletcher is captain in the regiment of foot commanded by Colonel John Beaumont; for John Fairbrother, gent, to be ensign in the same regiment; for Peter Mathews, gent, to be quarter-master in the same regiment; and for Leonard Lloyd gent, to be adjutant in the same regiment.



At the time of Benjamin Fletcher's New York appointment in 1692, we again find his name coupled with Peter Mathews:

. . . for Colonel Benjamin Fletcher to be captain of the company of foot, in New York, of which Colonel Henry Slaughter was late captain; for Peter Matthews, gent, to be Lt of the company of foot in New York of which Col Benjamin Fletcher is Captain . .

Benjamin Fletcher and Peter Mathews went on to several years of service together in New York, Fletcher making rising appointments and generous grants to Mathews. After five-plus years of service in New York, cries were raised against Governor Fletcher, and he was recalled to England in April 1698. His family accompanied him home to England, and eventually returned to Ireland where Fletcher died in 1703. Peter Mathews remained with his family in New York, and died there in 1719.

Despite the close association between Fletcher and Mathews, I have never located any record that clearly shows a familial tie. It is really the Mathews family names that hint at the connection. Peter Mathews' sons were named Fletcher Mathews and Vincent Mathews – the surnames of Benjamin Fletcher's parents. Also, both Peter Mathews and Benjamin Fletcher had a daughter named Catherine. Some of the answers may rest with Peter Mathews' wife [Bridget](#). To date, her maiden name is unknown. Was she related to Benjamin Fletcher?

One of the more curious findings I have come across appears in the burial records of St Michan Church in Dublin Ireland:

Benfletcher Mathews, who was driven out of Athlone; buried 7 Apr 1691  
Hugh Fletcher, son of Christopher Fletcher and Jane his wife; burial 10 Apr 1691  
Elizabeth Mathews, wife of Vincent Mathews; buried 7 Jul 1696  
[source] The Register of St Michan, Dublin 1636-1685; Berry, 1907.



**The Vaults of St Michan Church, Dublin Ireland**

The people represented in the St Michan records must surely hold answers to questions I have been pursuing, but they remain elusive. I have written about what was happening in Athlone in the spring of 1691, in a sketch titled **Athlone Ireland 1690-1691**. But, I have found very meager evidence for the other players – [Benfletcher Mathews](#), Hugh Fletcher, Christopher Fletcher, Elizabeth Mathews and Vincent Mathews.

The searching will continue. I remain hopeful that someone has clues that I have not yet come across. I would be delighted to collaborate with others on the Fletcher and Mathews families. Peter Mathews and Benjamin Fletcher – What's the Connection?

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Peter Mathews in database](#)

[Link to Benjamin Fletcher in database](#)

[Sketch: Athlone Ireland 1690-1691](#)

[Letter: Lord Bellomont to Secretary Vernon, October 1700](#)

[Sketch: The Princess Anne Regiment of Foot 1685 – 1692](#)