

Bio: Mary Mathews

Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2018

The story of Mary Mathews and the seven "children" named in her Will remains as a mystery to Mathews family researchers. The fact that Mary retained the Mathews surname throughout her life, suggests that she was never married. The possibility remains that she married a man named Mathews, or that she resumed her maiden surname after a failed marriage, but neither of these seem likely. So, who are the seven children named in her Will, written in 1816 and probated in 1821? I have not been successful in obtaining a copy of Mary Mathews' Will, but refer to an abstract:

Mary Mathews of New Windsor. Recorded Liber F, page 405. Will made 27 July 1816; probated 20 June 1821. Sons - Franklin, Harry, David, Ellsworth (all minors). Daughters Elizabeth Brooks, Katharine Brooks (minors). Sally Thompson (no relationship given). Executors - Thomas C Waters (nephew), David R Arnell. Witnesses - Methuselah Baldwin, Robert C Hunter, Fletcher M Brooks.
[source] Orange County [New York] Wills, 1787-1831: with added genealogical notes; Mrs. James A. Weller, Jr.

"Sally Thompson" was the oldest among Mary Mathews' children. Prior to her marriage to Oliver Thompson she was identified as Sarah Mathews. It seems most likely that Sarah Mathews was born outside of wedlock, and that she lived, during her childhood, with her mother and six half-siblings in Orange county New York.

This indenture made the fourteenth day of December in the year one thousand eight hundred and eleven, Between Mary Mathews of the town of New Windsor in Orange County of the first part, and Sarah Mathews of the same place of the second part, Witnesseth that the said Mary, for and in consideration of the sum of five dollars . . . paid by the said Sarah . . . hath granted, bargained . . . All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land situate lying and being in the town of New Windsor in said County being the one equal half of a certain tract of one hundred twenty acres of land which fell to Mary Mathews on partition at the death of Fletcher Mathews of whom she was an heiress, bounded by the south edge of the Goshen road, then by the road leading by the house of Anthony Carpenter, then by the lands purchased by Fletcher Mathews of Mills . . . the whole intended to be conveyed by this deed being sixty acres of land as by reference to the clerks office will more fully appear . . . Mary Mathews; witness - Oliver Thompson, Fletcher M Brooks

Orange County New York Deed Book T, page 374.

Mary Mathews also names in her Will four sons and two daughters. These sons and daughters are all surnamed Brooks, and are shown as minors in 1816, when the Will was written. It seems likely, but is not certain, that these Brooks children were born in rapid succession between about 1802-1812, when Mary was in her 30's and early 40's. Was Mary Mathews their natural mother? Who was their father? What was Mary Mathews' relationship with their father?

Mary Mathews was the youngest of six daughters born to Fletcher Mathews and Sarah Woodhull of Orange county New York. She was probably born in the 1766-1770 time period.

Catherine Mathews, an older sister of Mary Mathews, married a neighbor Jonathan Brooks. Mathews' researchers have long suspected that the Brooks children named in Mary Mathews' Will were actually the children of her sister, Catherine Mathews Brooks. This remains as a possibility, but several pieces of evidence seem to make it unlikely. Catherine Mathews Brooks' story is also not clearly defined. She was probably born in the same 1766-1770 time period as her sister Mary, and married Jonathan Brooks about 1790-1795. Catherine Mathews was the second wife of Jonathan Brooks. It is believed that Catherine Mathews Brooks had two children, Fletcher Mathews Brooks and Hettie Brooks, before her death in the summer of 1799. This scenerio is not confirmed, but you can read more about Catherine Mathews and Jonathan Brooks under her entry in this database.

Another idea that has been explored by Mathews' researchers is that Mary Mathews had a long term relationship with her brother-in-law Jonathan Brooks, following her sister's death in 1799. And, that this relationship produced the six Brooks children named in Mary Mathews' Will. This idea is not proven, but it is the scenerio reflected in this database!

A point to consider - Benjamin Franklin Mathews, one of the children named in Mary Mathews' Will (written 1816, and probated 1821), is also named as a son in the Will of Jonathan Brooks (written and probated in 1811). But, what about the other five Brooks children named in Mary Mathews' Will? Census and tombstone records are consistent in confirming the birth of Benjamin Franklin Mathews about 1803. This is five years after the presumed death of Catherine Mathews Brooks. He appears to be the oldest male in Mary Mathews' household. Did Jonathan Brooks include him in his Will as the representative of the five other Brooks children he had with Mary Mathews?

Obviously this Mary Mathews story contains more questions than answers. In the 1990's I participated in a very helpful correspondence with Thomas Hamm - related to our mutual interest in the Mathews family. His wife, Mary Reynolds, is a descendant of Mary Mathews through her daughter Sarah Mathews Thompson. I fully credit Hamm and Reynolds for opening up the Mary Mathews story to me. Mary Reynolds has contributed some excellent records at the FindAGrave website which would be of interest to researchers trying to understand the Mary Mathews' story. For more - See Sarah Mathews #4112 in this database.

Mary'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 Mary Mathews was described as follows:

All that part of the Estate of the said Fletcher Mathews deceased being in two pieces and are bounded as follows to wit, one of which begins at the south edge of Goshen road a few rods west of the late dwelling house of the said Fletcher Mathews at the middle of the East Division road thence . . . [mentions - by the

dwelling house of Anthony Carpenter, one hundred acres which the said Fletcher Mathews purchased of ___ Mills, Goshen Road] . . . to the place of Beginning. The other Begins at a swamp oak tree . . . [mentions - farm bought by the said Fletcher Mathews from Christopher Coleman, Silas Piersons Land, East Division Road] . . . place of the Beginning containing . . . both of which lots contain in the whole ninety acres of Land is set apart and allotted to Mary Mathews a Daughter of the said Fletcher Mathews.

It is clear from the map attached to the property division that Mary Mathews received the family home of her parents. This is probably where she lived out her entire life. Mary Mathews died in 1821, and is probably buried in a Mathews Family Cemetery on the home property. A deed appearing 1833 in the records of Orange County New York provides a further clue:

This Indenture made the first day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty three Between Benjamin F Brooks of the Town of Hamptonburgh Orange County and State of New York of the first part and Gilbert Gerow of the Town of Blooming Grove County and State aforesaid of the second part . . . sum of Five Thousand dollars . . . All the equal undivided five sixth part of the Estate of Fletcher Mathews deceased the first of which lots is bounded as follows Beginning at the South edge of the Goshen road a few rods west of the late dwelling of the said Fletcher Mathews deceased at the middle of the East Division road . . . Excepting and reserving the burying Ground as the same is now laid out upon the said premises containing the remains of Fletcher Mathews and Family. Together with . . . In witness whereof the parties to these presents have hereunto interchangeably set their hands and seals the day and year first above written. Benjamin F Brooks

[source] Orange County New York Deed Book 46, page 545-550.

A few further records related to Mary Mathews:

1790, 1797; [abstracted from the Will of Elizabeth Mathews Williams] Elizabeth Williams, wife of Henry A. Williams and daughter of Fletcher Mathews, Esq, deceased. To Henry Williams Beekman, son of Thomas Beekman and my sister Sarah, his wife, all my estate . . . ; to my sister, Polly Mathews, my negro girl named Rosannah, to have at her own disposal; my negro boy named Hank, to my husband, to be done with as he directs but never subject to the payment of any debts of his contracting. I appoint my husband, Henry A. Williams and my mother, Sarah Mathews, executors; Dated March 5, 1790. Witnesses, Thomas Waters, Nathaniel W. Howell, attorney, of Ontario Co., N. Y., Jason Hand. Proved, January 9, 1797.

[source] Collections of the New York Historical Society . . . ; printed for the Society in 1907.

1799; Fletcher Mathews died intestate and the division of his property was made 24 May 1799. (Orange co, NY Deed Book G pg 86-92) These papers include a map, identifying his property and names six daughters.

1800 Census of Orange county New York; New Windsor
Jonathan Brooks; 1 0 1 0 2 - 1 1 0 1
indicates: 1m0-10; 1m16-25; 2m45+; 1f0-10; 1f10-16; 1f26-44

1810 Census of Orange county New York; Blooming Grove
Jonathan Brooks; 0 0 1 0 1 - no females
indicates: 1m16-25; 1m45+
nearby - John I Brooks

1810 Census of Orange county New York; New Windsor, page 289
Mary Mathews; 4 0 0 0 0 - 1 2 0 1 0
indicates: 4m0-10; 1f0-10; 2f10-15; 1f26-44
neighbors - Clinton, Coleman, Jackson, Conklin, Burtis, Nathaniel Strong

1820 Census of Orange County New York; New Windsor
Mary Mathews; 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 0 1
indicates: 2m0-10; 2m10-16; 1f10-16; 1f16-25; 1f45+
neighbor surnames - Moore, Stewart, Knap, Lewis, Conkling, Beatty

1821; Died - On the 18th (?) inst, Miss Mary Mathewes, of the town of New Windsor.
[source] Orange County Patriot (Goshen New York); 25 June 1821.

1821; Mary Mathews of New Windsor. Recorded Liber F, page 405. Will made 27 July 1816; probated 20 June 1821. Sons - Franklin, Harry, David, Ellsworth (all minors). Daughters Elizabeth Brooks, Katharine Brooks (minors). Sally Thompson (no relationship given). Executors - Thomas C Waters (nephew), David R Arnell. Witnesses - Methuselah Baldwin, Robert C Hunter, Fletcher M Brooks.
[source] Orange County [New York] Wills, 1787-1831 : with added genealogical notes; Mrs. James A. Weller, Jr.

1825; Sheriff's Sale - By virtue of two executions to me directed, I shall expose to public sale, for cash, at Mr John Felter's Inn, in the village of Montgomery, on Saturday the 7th of May next . . . all the right title and interest of Gabriel Jackson, in and to the following described lands and tenements, situate in the towns of Blooming Grove, and New Windsor, bounded as follows, to wit: On the north by the lands of Daniel Brown; on the east by the lands of John and Fletcher Brooks; on the south by the Highway, and on the west by the lands belonging to the heirs of Mary Matthews, deceased. Dated 22 March 1825. AL Ball Sheriff.
[source] Orange Farmer (Montgomery New York; 9 April 1825]

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Mary Mathews in database](#)

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

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