

Mary Ann Branam's Parents

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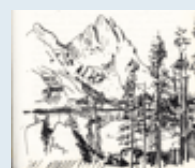
👤 by **Michael Hill** » Tue Dec 01, 2015 8:24 am

This post is a work in progress—I'll be editing and adding to it. Right now, it's just a rough draft.

I believe that Mary Ann Branam, wife of Joseph William "William" Swearingin, was the daughter of Beveridge Branam (1782–1861) and Elizabeth Napier (1803–1885). I'll present circumstantial evidence below. Note that *Branam* and *Branham* are two spellings often used interchangeably and other variants such as *Brannon* and *Brandon* were also used by relatives of people mentioned below.

What I know about Mary Ann Branam who married William Swearingin

- She married William Swearingin in Jackson County, Alabama on 2 Aug 1851. Her name on the certificate appears to be Mary A. Branhan or Branham. This is the source for her surname.
- According to family bible pages in the possession of Sheryl Patterson, she died October, 1888 in Franklin Co., Arkansas.
- Census:
 - 1850: can't find her.
 - 1860: "Mary A.", born in Alabama in 1830/1831, cannot read and write
 - 1870: "Mary", born in Alabama in 1830/1831, cannot read, cannot write
 - 1880: "Mary", born in Alabama in 1829/1830, cannot read, cannot write



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Who I think her parents were: Beveridge

Branam and Elizabeth Napier

I first learned of Beveridge Branam (1782–1861) and Elizabeth Napier (1803–1885) from a family tree posted on ancestry.com for somebody who has an autosomal DNA match with my dad. Then a Google search found an internet posting by Janice Knowlton in which she quoted from a document in her possession that is apparently an extract from a family bible. It includes the following entry for a daughter of Beveridge Branam and Elizabeth Napier:

“

Mary an Branam was bornd the 27 day of October 1829

I then found a pension application file for this Beveridge Branam, which contains the same birth record quoted from their family bible. In the pension application file, Beveridge's widow Elizabeth states that they had lived in Jackson County, Alabama.

Autosomal DNA Clues

My dad and three of his sisters did autosomal DNA testing through 23andMe. Between the four of them, the following segments were identified by 23andMe as being of West African origin:

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Chr	Start	End	% of Genome
6	41,684,645	103,611,878	1.0%
7	106,068,163	139,589,797	0.6%
9	4,317,825	9,001,207	0.1%
10	33,437,213	44,868,257	0.2%
15	24,205,188	34,940,830	0.2%

After seeing these results, I made it my top genealogical priority to figure out which line or lines these segments came from. As I worked with the DNA data from 23andMe, FTDNA, AncestryDNA, and GEDmatch, it became apparent that most or all of these West African segments probably came from a single line on my grandfather's side of the family. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that all of the segments most likely came from my GG grandmother Mary Elizabeth Swearingin, daughter of William Swearingin and Mary Ann Branam.

Here's some of what I found about each of these West African segments:

Chromosome 6: 41.6–103.6

- K.M., a descendant of William Swearingin and Mary Ann Branam through their son James William Swearingin, matches from 71.0–91.2 (14.2 cM).
- Janice Knowlton, a descendant of Beveridge Branam (1782–1861)

and Elizabeth Napier (1803–1885) through their daughter Martha/Mattie, matches from 41.0–71.0 (22.2 cM).

- Several other people match along this West African segment, about half of them African American.

Chromosome 7: 106.0–139.5

- J. Branam, a descendant of James Branham (1778–1850) and Sarah Etheridge (1783–1845), matches from 106.1–135.0 (22.7 cM) and 135.5–139.7 (7.5 cM). He also matches my dad and aunts on other segments of European origin. According to 23andMe, this chromosome 7 segment is Mr. Branam's only segment of African origin. Of note, although Mr. Branam's autosomal DNA is more than 99% European, he has a West African paternal haplogroup (E1b1a7a).
- P.F. matches 106.1–139.7 (30.6 cM). I haven't been able to correspond with her, but she also matches on a European segment and the chromosome 15 West African segment.
- Several other people match along this West African segment, some of them African American.

Chromosome 9: 4.3–9.0

- E.C., a descendant of Joseph William Swearingin (1830–1901) and Mary Ann Branham (1829–1888) through their son Isaac C. Swearingin, matches from 4.5–16.2 (22.4 cM), spanning both the West African segment and an adjacent European segment. (E.C. also has another common ancestor through my grandmother, but the fact that she doesn't match my dad's maternal first cousin on this particular segment indicates that this is a paternal match for my dad and so through the Swearingin/Branam line.)

Chromosome 10: 33.4–44.8

- No clues on this segment.

Chromosome 15: 24.2–34.9

- P.F. matches 25.8–34.6. Although I don't know anything about her ancestry, the fact that she also matches on the chromosome 7 segment indicates that this chromosome 15 segment is from the same line as the chromosome 7 segment.

AncestryDNA Matches

AncestryDNA doesn't provide segment match details (chromosome number, start position, and end position), but my dad has the following matches on Ancestry:

- R.P., a descendant of Beveridge Branam and Elizabeth Napier through their daughter Lucinda (wife of George Clay Campbell, who gave testimony in Beveridge's pension file), matches my dad on two segments for 61 cM.
- At least three people who claim to descend from James Branham and Sarah Etheridge (same ancestors as J. Branam, noted above)

have material matches with my dad.

Conclusion

I believe that my ancestor Mary Ann Branam (wife of Joseph William Swearingin) was the daughter of Beveridge Branam and Elizabeth Napier. Here's a summary of why I believe this:

1. The DNA evidence is pretty compelling, particularly the matches my dad and his sisters have with two descendants of Beveridge and Elizabeth. At a minimum, the DNA evidence indicates that Mary Ann Branam was somehow related to both Beveridge Branam and James Branham (husband of Sarah Etheridge).
2. In years of trying, I haven't found any other candidates for Mary Ann Branam. This one fits well.
3. According to the pension file, Beveridge and Elizabeth lived in Jackson County, Alabama for about 20 years. This is the same county where Mary Ann married in 1851.
4. I can't find Beveridge and Elizabeth in the 1850 census and I also can't find Mary Ann in that census.
5. There's a 7 Nov 1804 marriage bond for "Beaverage Brannum" and "Sally Brannum" in Grainger Co., Tennessee (when Beveridge would have been 22 years old). "James Brannum" & "Beaverage Brannum" signed the bond (with their marks).^[6] Most online family trees for James Branham, ancestor of a few of my dad's DNA matches including J. Branam, mistakenly cite this marriage bond as being for him and Sarah Etheridge, but it's clear that the James Brannum on the bond was the surety and not the groom.

Elizabeth stated in the pension file that Beveridge only married once. But given Beveridge's age when he fathered children with her (Beveridge was some twenty years older than Elizabeth and in his mid-forties when their first child was born), it seems likely that this was a first marriage for the same Beveridge. And given the DNA evidence that my dad is related to descendants of James Branam and Sarah Etheridge, it's possible that the surety was that James—and that James and Beveridge were brothers. They were both born in Virginia within a few years of each other.

West African DNA

The DNA evidence also suggests that Mary Ann Branam had a substantial amount of West African DNA. There are several references on the internet to the surname Branam/Branham being associated with Melungeons. Given that Beveridge was from Virginia, he or members of his family very well could have been considered Melungeon. The pension application file states that he was 5'7" tall with black hair, black eyes, and a dark complexion. The paternal haplogroup of J. Branam (who matches my dad on the chromosome 7 segment as well as some European segments) seems to support this possibility.

It's possible that some of the West African DNA segments mentioned here came from William Swearingin, but I haven't yet run across anything to indicate that this is the case. For now, I'm assuming that they probably all came from Mary Ann Branam.



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