

Meek/Meeks Families of Virginia

Meek Group F Introduction

The Meek/Meeks DNA Project¹ has established Y-DNA signatures² for a significant number of early American ancestors based on tests of living descendants. This allows for a determination of which Meek(s) ancestors were related and which ones were not related. Combined with genealogies Y-DNA shows five major groups one of which is designated as Group F and includes the ancestors Priddy Meeks, Athe Meeks, Nacy Meeks and Littleton Meeks. Y-DNA 37 STR³ marker tests on their descendants indicate that they all shared a common Meek(s) ancestor.

The haplogroup⁴ of Group F men is defined by the SNP⁵ marker FGC36506⁶. The path is; R-P311>P312>R-L21>L513> S5668>A7>S5979>L193 (S5982)>ZS4581>Z17817>BY615>FGC36506 P311 and his son P312 is predominantly found in Western Europe. L21 is one of the larger groups in P312 and L513 is a major branch of L21. Men in the L193 subclade will have a similar Y-DNA signature but includes dozens of surnames which may have originated in Scotland. All men named Meek in Group F will be positive for R-FGC36506.

The following STR markers values are typical for men with the L193 SNP; DYS607=16, DYS406s1=11, DYS534=14, DYS617=13, and DYS640=12. Men named Meek(s) can be distinguished from other L193 men by DYS391=10, DYS447=24, and DYS572=12.

Two members of the project whose Meek families currently or recently live in Scotland match the Y-DNA of Group F. They represent a branch or branches of the Meek family that did not migrate to America in the 1700's. The R-L193 haplotype is consistent with a Scottish origin. The known European branch can be distinguished from the U. S. branch by the markers CDY=40, 41 and DYS641=10. The U. S. branch will have CDY=38, 41 and DYS641=11.

Genealogy

Historically the American progenitor of this family has been recorded in genealogies as William Meeks born about 1725 (source for date unknown). His children were reportedly born in Virginia. However, this is not documented and William Meeks is first mentioned in the 1777 tax list of Surry Co., NC. He died in Greenville Co., SC in 1797. His most frequently mentioned sons are Priddy Meeks born about 1747-1751, Athe Meeks born about 1750-1756, Littleton Meeks born 8 Feb 1766 and Nacy Meeks born about 1768. Also mentioned are John, Jesse and Martin.

Various genealogies report that his father was also named William who came from England and he had a brother named John. The source for these items is Dr. Priddy Meeks, a son of Athe Meeks and grandson of William Meeks. He wrote;

"William Meeks came from England, he had two sons, John and William. They lived in Virginia. William Meeks married and had three sons, Priddy, Athe and Jesse. His wife died; he married again and had two sons,

¹ <http://meekdna.com>

² 37 Y-DNA STR marker results. AKA DNA haplotype, signature or profile

³ STR=short tandem repeat

⁴ Haplogroup=large population of men defined by a single SNP marker

⁵ SNP=single nucleotide polymorphism

⁶ Big Y test at FTDNA on kit #159822

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Middleton and Nancy. They lived in Georgia. My father had two sisters that I remember, Candice Williams and Susannah Mitchum. My father, Athe Meeks married Margaret Snead and had ten children."⁷

The authenticity of the handwriting was validated by Dalton Meeks who wrote;

"This is from a loose sheet that appears to be cut from a book similar to his journal. It is in Priddy's own handwriting. A photocopy was obtained by Athe Meeks (b.1911) from a descendant of Priddy's oldest daughter Elizabeth Dalton."

However, there is little documentation to support Dr. Priddy Meeks' statement. These pages of the journal were written 11 Oct 1879 from memory at age 85. He had Littleton's name wrong and as will be seen later there is some question as to whether William was the father of Nancy and Littleton. The reader must decide how much weight to give Dr. Meeks statement in view of the other evidence available. Other evidence includes lack of research and documentation, age, proximity to events and facts derived from Y-DNA testing. Each fact may be evaluated separately or in combination with other facts. It is acknowledged some portions of the unpublished pages do provide genealogical support for his immediate family and some aspects of the history of his father.

One of Dr. Priddy Meek's wives, Sarah Mahurin, is reported to have been a granddaughter of Priddy Meeks. They may well have had a collective knowledge of Priddy's status within the family that they may not have had about the other named uncles.

One of the few proven facts from genealogy concerning relationships is that on 7 Jan 1797 William Meeks transferred his property to "Athe Meeks my son" in Greenville Co., SC court records. Therefore it is accepted that Athe Meeks was a son of William Meeks.

The genealogical efforts on the American Meeks family have been helped by some unique given names. Priddy, Athe, Littleton and Nancy (Ignatius) are very rare names for any Meek or Meeks families during the latter half of the 1700's. So rare that one can follow the very common name William Meeks by following his son Athe from Surry Co., NC to Greenville Co., SC⁸. Unfortunately Athe is the only son of William Meeks that can be proven genealogically. This is significant because there is some genealogical information that suggests that Littleton Meeks may have been related to John Meeks of Hanover Co., VA⁹. Hanover Co., VA deed records dated 2 October 1788 show that Littleton inherited land from John Meek of Hanover Co., VA. Unfortunately no will has ever been found. Deed records also show one Martin Meeks inherited land from John Meeks. There are no known records that place William in Virginia but Athe and Priddy do appear in a couple of records in the 1770's. Generally there is little documentation for Athe, Priddy, Littleton and Nancy until after their respective marriages.

Interpretation of Y-DNA

Overall Y-DNA results for descendants of Priddy, Littleton, Nancy and Athe show that these four ancestors shared a common Meek(s) ancestor. Who that ancestor was or when he lived is not

⁷ Unpublished pages from the Journal of Dr. Priddy Meeks, 1879

⁸ Deed Book D p. 294, Greenville Co., SC

⁹ Hanover County, Virginia Deeds, 1783-1792, Abstracted and compiled by Rosalie Edith Davis

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revealed by DNA alone. It does not prove by itself that the four men were sons of any particular person or what their relationship might have been. Because there are multiple descendants from two or more sons of three of the American ancestors one can project the ancestral signature for the group. In addition one can see what the Y-DNA signature of Athe, Priddy, Nacy and Littleton might have been. A caveat is that with only one descendant for Priddy Meek one cannot be sure the descendant's results represents the ancestors values on the key markers especially DYS 456. Additional descendants for testing are desirable and would increase the level of confidence for some conclusions.

A more in-depth analysis of Y-DNA results relies on two markers. They are DYS 576 and DYS 456. These markers mutate faster than other markers and one must carefully review all data to insure the proper conclusions.

Three descendants of Littleton through three sons, four descendants of Nacy through two sons as well as two Scottish members have DYS 456=16. One descendant of Priddy Meeks and the four descendants through two sons of Athe Meeks have DYS 456=15. Therefore the ancestral value for DYS 456 is 16 and Priddy and Athe carried a mutation of DYS 456=15. This marker will, in most cases, distinguish descendants of Athe and Priddy from those of Littleton and Nacy. More importantly this mutation splits the American Group F family into two related branches. They are labeled here as subgroups F1 for Athe and Priddy and F2 for Littleton and Nacy.

As indicated above the relationship between William and Athe has been established genealogically. In that regard William is also part of subgroup F1. There is little actual genealogical proof that William was the father of Priddy Meeks. The Y-DNA signature of the descendant of Priddy is consistent with those of Athe and Dr. Priddy Meeks, aided by his wife Sarah a granddaughter of Priddy, may have been correct in this case Priddy being his uncle.

William Meeks' Y-DNA would have looked very much like Athe's Y-DNA. Mutations do occur between father and son since they start somewhere. But one would not normally expect to see any difference between William and his sons on key markers once recent mutations are filtered out. If Priddy was a son of William and had DYS456=15 then William definitely had DYS456=15 because he would have had two sons with that value.

One descendant of Priddy, four descendants of Nacy through two sons and the two Scottish member have DYS 576=19. This cuts across subgroup lines and is presumed to be the ancestral value of DYS576. The four descendants of Athe have DYS576=18, DYS576=19 and two not tested for that marker. The two members with results connect with Dr. Priddy Meeks and therefore DYS576=18 is presumed to be a recent mutation. Athe would have had DYS577=19.

There are three Y-DNA tests for descendants of Littleton Meeks. One descends through his son William Sheridan Meeks and another descends through his son Jesse. Each has the same results of DYS 576=20. The third test from a third son, Mark, has DYS576=21. This value is not inconsistent with the other two. It may be a recent mutation from 20 to 21. Therefore it is likely that Littleton also had DYS 576=20. This marker will, in most cases, distinguish descendants of Littleton Meeks from those of Priddy Meeks, Athe Meeks and Nacy Meeks.

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One deviation from the ancestral values does not set Littleton so far apart from Nancy so as to preclude any possible relationship. However Littleton's mutation at DYS576=20 combined with both Priddy and Athe's mutation at DYS 456=16 does limit the possible relationships between subgroup F1 and subgroup F2.

Limitations of the Data

Past and present genealogical efforts on the American Group F family as well as interpretation of Y-DNA results has been influenced by the sketchy genealogy provided by Dr. Priddy Meeks in 1879. Based on the memory of an eighty-five year old man and his wife we were told that the great grandfather William Meeks came from England and had sons William and John. Dr. Priddy Meeks named his father Athe Meeks son of William Meeks and uncles Priddy, Middleton, Nancy and Jesse. He also listed the names of Priddy and Jesse's wives and children.

Research from official documentation reveals that Athe Meeks was in fact the son of William. Deed records tell us that Littleton inherited land from a person in Virginia named John Meeks. In addition one can see that Littleton and Nancy associated with each other and named children after one another. Athe and Priddy migrated along a northerly route while Littleton and Nancy migrated along a southerly route.

Y-DNA evidence tells that Athe, Priddy, Littleton and Nancy shared a common ancestor named Meeks. Y-DNA evidence also tells that descendants of Athe and Priddy shared a mutation DYS456=15 while the rest of Group F had DYS456=16. Finally Y-DNA evidence tells us that descendants of Littleton had a mutation DYS576=20 while all others had DYS576=19.

There are limitations to all three areas of discussion. Dr. Priddy Meeks did not conduct genealogical research or present a proper genealogy. At an advanced age he wrote down some memories about family members some of whom he had little contact with for most of his life. This author's experience is that many family stories become corrupted in small or large ways over time. The reader must decide how much weight to give what Dr. Priddy Meeks wrote. The major point at issue is were Athe, Priddy, Littleton and Nancy brothers and sons of William Meeks. It is not necessary to accept or reject every data point in Dr. Meeks papers. Each point should be evaluated.

Needless to say there is precious little information in the official records concerning the early years of this family. Connecting any particular man named William Meek(s) to any given records is problematic due to a lack of identifying information. This author has personal knowledge that there were other unrelated Meek(s) families in and around Hanover Co., VA.

In one regard the members of Group F are fortunate that their Y-DNA has the mutations it has. Many groups do not have significant mutations that allow for subdividing a family into branches. However, additional tests, particularly for Priddy Meeks, would provide a higher level of confidence for some of the hypothesis. Tests on additional descendants could possibly show that Priddy had a different value. However, one should not assume anything from a lack of evidence and it would be inappropriate to assume that the single descendant of Priddy has a mutation that his cousins would not have. The evidence is strong that Athe carried DYS456=15 and it should not be surprising that someone thought to be his brother would also have that mutation. Additional tests will eventually resolve this issue.

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Conclusions:

Known facts and their limitations were presented above. By combining genealogical and DNA evidence some clarity may be achieved. But with gaps in the data all of the questions cannot be answered. Hypothesis 1 through 3 below have a high degree of confidence and should be considered nearly proven. Hypothesis #4 is hopefully non-controversial despite a less than high level of confidence regarding Priddy's ancestral values.

Hypothesis #1: Athe Meeks, Priddy Meeks, Littleton Meeks and Nancy Meeks shared a common ancestor named Meeks. Who that ancestor was or when he lived is not revealed by Y-DNA alone. This is based on fourteen 37 marker Y-DNA tests and the same surname.

Hypothesis #2: The marker DYS456 splits American Group F family into two observable genetic branches with Athe and Priddy in subgroup F1 where DYS456=15. By virtue of the genealogical connection between Athe and William Meeks, William Meeks is included in F1. Subgroup F2 includes Littleton Meeks and Nancy Meeks where DYS456=16 and represents the value of the common ancestor of both subgroups of the American Group F family.

Hypothesis #3: The marker DYS576 splits subgroup F2 where Littleton carried DYS576=20.

Hypothesis #4: William Meeks was the father of Athe Meeks and Priddy Meeks. Athe's relationship with William has been established genealogically. This is based on the fact that both Priddy and Athe carried the DYS456=15 mutation. In addition Dr. Priddy, aided by his wife, seems to have known slightly more about Priddy than he did Littleton and Nancy. This hypothesis implies William also carried DYS456=15 because two possible sons had that value and one is proven to be a son.

Hypothesis #5: William Meeks was not the father of Littleton Meeks and Nancy Meeks. This is based on Hypothesis #2 and discounts what Dr. Priddy Meeks wrote about his uncles.

For William Meeks to have been the father of all four men he would have had two sons with mutations. If William had DYS456=15 then Nancy had a mutation at DYS456 and Littleton had 2 mutations at DYS456 and DYS576. If one discounts the single test for Priddy and suggest that Priddy and William had DYS456=16 then Athe alone had a mutation at DYS456 and Littleton had a mutation at DYS576. The first condition is less likely than the second but either condition would be unusual as a man would not normally produce sons who had two and possibly three mutations.

The only contradictory evidence is Dr. Priddy Meeks' journal. It is not unusual for older relatives to get details about the family confused. Dr. Priddy Meeks appears to have known less about Littleton and Nancy than he did about Priddy.

Hypothesis #6: Littleton Meeks and Nancy Meeks may or may not have been brothers.

Genealogically Nancy interacted with and migrated with Littleton. They named children after each other and did not name children after Athe or Priddy. If any of them were brothers one would suspect that Nancy and Littleton were. If that is true the mutation DYS576=20 must have

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first appeared when Littleton was conceived. (Mutations occur during mitosis.) There is no genealogical proof that Littleton and Nancy were brothers. Y-DNA only says they were related. The different values in DYS576 are a negative factor in the absence of other evidence. However, it does not preclude them from being brothers.

Hypothesis #7: There is insufficient evidence to determine anything about relationship between Group F ancestors and John Meeks of Hanover Co., VA.

John Meeks of Hanover Co., VA appears to have a connection to at least Littleton Meeks. Even if he was not Littleton's father he may have had a relationship with Group F ancestors. Is he the brother of William mentioned by Dr. Priddy Meeks? This author doubts that. However, there are so few records available for John Meeks that it may never be known if he was related or not.

Summary:

In researching William Meeks one is confronted with a pitifully small amount of factual data. For more than 100 years people have been forced to rely on a sketchy genealogy written from memory by an 85 year old patriarch of one branch of the family. Despite the efforts of many people only one fact has been verified, Athe Meeks was a son of William. The unpublished pages of Dr. Priddy Meek's Journal are an important genealogical document. But its value or weight must take into consideration that much of the information about William and his family cannot be verified.

Y-DNA has now brought new facts to the family historian even if those facts look different from traditional genealogical facts. Like any collection of genealogical facts some are stronger than others and some seemingly weak facts become stronger when combined with other pieces of data. Y-DNA has proven that William, Athe, Priddy, Littleton and Nancy were related and part of the same Meeks family. This was not proven before. But Y-DNA also suggests that William was not the father of Littleton and Nancy. This runs contrary to the traditional view of the family but this author is not the first person to put forth that hypothesis. There may well have been a more extensive and complex family that immigrated to the United States than originally thought.

Y-DNA mutations are infrequent events. Here we have four ancestors, long thought to be brothers, leaving descendants with three slightly different Y-DNA signatures. It is difficult to believe that these four ancestors had one father. This may create conflict with people who grew up with not just a tradition but one started by such a respected person as Dr. Priddy Meeks.

It is also acknowledged that the addition of Y-DNA evidence does not provide definitive answers to many questions. Such is the way of genealogy as well as genetic genealogy. "More research is needed" seems always to be the last sentence in every genealogy.

Disclaimer: This author is not related to this Meeks family. This author is not a geneticist, mathematician or scientist of any kind. The experience applied to this set of results is 50 years of genealogy and 12 years working with the Meek/Meeks DNA Project.

