

## News, Updates, & More

# Varner Family Genealogy

### IN THIS ISSUE:

|                                                                   |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| From the Administrator .....                                      | 1 |
| Questions/News.....                                               | 2 |
| George Varner of Missouri Direct Line...                          | 3 |
| Riggs/Varner Connection.....                                      | 3 |
| Finding the William Virgil Varner &<br>Billy Joe Varner MRCA..... | 4 |

August 2016

### FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Copies of old newsletters and additional genealogy information can always be found on the Varner Family website.  
<http://brucevarner.com/VarnerGenealogy.htm>

I am toying with the idea of video recording the talk at next year's reunion. The recording could then be available to watch from the website. It could be used by those who attended and wish to re-watch some portion of the discussion. It could also be watched by those who could not attend in person.

This requires a whole new level of technical effort for me at the reunion, so I only want to consider it if people feel it would be a useful idea.

My fear is that doing so could result in people not attending future years of the reunion, assuming that they could just watch it from home instead. Such action would inevitably result in the reunion itself falling by the wayside and ceasing to exist. Let me know.

---

I believe there needs to be some explanation about the recent emphasis of Autosomal DNA in this newsletter and genealogy in general.

I am sure that those of you who have not participated in DNA testing are feeling somehow left out. Please do not think that. The Autosomal or any other DNA testing, in no way replaces good old genealogy legwork. DNA cannot replace those detailed, long used genealogy methods. It is supplemental.

Autosomal DNA testing is doing a great job of providing new leads. For this reason it will continue to be a large point of focus that results in new genealogy breakthroughs.

Think of Autosomal DNA as being similar to some methods used in the past. A relative tells you for the first time about a long lost cousin. Or, someone calls you for the first time and says they believe you might be related.

You take what they say and start comparing details. Where were they from? Where did their parents or grandparents come from?

Soon you may have enough family details to discover a link between your family and theirs. Or, after research you discover that no link can be found.

This is exactly what autosomal DNA does. Provides the initial possibility that there could be a link. Only by pursuing details of that lead with the other person do you have the possibility of eventually proving or disproving any linkage. It is helping.

---

I have been appointed as a co-administrator for the Varner Surname Project at Family Tree DNA. I hope that this will provide me with new knowledge that could help solve so of our roadblocks. We shall see.

---

### QUESTIONS / NEWS

**Q:** Linda Cushman commented in an email about this May's reunion.

"Everyone really enjoyed the program, and it looks promising to have new information for next time. I'll soon be getting on the DNA testing bandwagon. It gets more interesting and exciting all the time. The only complaint my kids had during the program was not taking more time at the beginning to explain how the Williams/Varner/Newtons all fit together and let people introduce themselves. We were together, but not "together". I'm hoping we will have another big crowd next year and can have a chance to meet and get to know some of these people better."

**A:** Thanks Linda. That was my fault. It was not until after the reunion that this occurred to me also. You were also not

the only person to make this comment. I think that it was particularly noticeable this year because of the number of new people who attended.

I will make a point of putting aside some time next year to do just that. I was thinking that maybe we could spend some time just before and during dinner, to introduce and recognizing folks. I will see if I can come up with some method to not only have people introduced, but also have some sort of visual to understand how each family plugs into the overall picture.

Please provide me with some feedback on your ideas of how to best achieve this.....

---

### George Varner of Missouri Direct Line DNA

Not all advances being made are on the Riggs side. The same expanded usage of autosomal DNA is also opening up for the genetic Varner line. Billy Joe Varner's DNA was uploaded to GedMatch.com.

I will be doing comparisons and hopefully sending out information requests to possible autosomal matches before the next newsletter.

We also need to start delving more deeply into where Billy Joe Varner and William Virgil Varner families had that most recent common ancestor (MRCA). Hopefully this can also help us nail down

George Varner of Missouri's ancestor blanks. This is a subject that several of us need to work on.....

---

### Riggs/Varner Connection

It seems like the discussion this year about the usefulness of autosomal DNA has had an impact. It has resulted in people completing DNA testing for the first time. As important, people are moving towards placing their DNA onto GedMatch.com once they have received results.

Several points must be remembered about autosomal DNA.

- You must specifically tell your company to have Autosomal DNA testing completed.
- The Autosomal testing is NOT automatically completed when you order other tests. As an example, if you have one of the Y-DNA (male to male) or mtDNA (female to female) tests conducted, Autosomal testing may not automatically be part of that test. You must specifically ask and pay for Autosomal.
- Autosomal DNA results are more and more being successfully used to identify new genealogy leads (See other places in this newsletter)

The benefits of using GedMatch.com once you have your autosomal DNA:

- By default your Autosomal DNA test results are only available for comparison with others, through the

company in which you ordered your tests.

- There are 3 major DNA testing companies- Family Tree DNA (FTDNA), Ancestry DNA, & 23&Me DNA.
- These companies are there to make money. Therefore they do not believe it is in their best interest to share their data with the other companies. This means that you are limited to only receiving matches if the other person has tested with the same company as you.
- GedMatch.com is a volunteer organization. Their free website accepts DNA results from any of the DNA testing companies.
- Once uploaded onto GedMatch.com your DNA is continually matched against everyone else who has uploaded to the database.
- You then have your Autosomal DNA compared to those you would never have had the ability to compare with before.

Varner and Newton GedMatch.com members are having more matches available than ever before. This is leading to more clues about some of those blank spaces in all our genealogy.

This is not a magic bullet. Rather, a whole new, previously unavailable source of information that can be accessed to help determine if, and how previously unknown cousins fit into your family tree.

There is exciting new developments involving the Riggs descendants in Washington state!

You might remember that in the last newsletter we had made contact with Destiny Wellendorf, whose autosomal DNA comparisons indicated a reasonable match with Warren and I.

After exchanges of family trees, it seems obvious that Destiny descends from Edmund Riggs. While there are some discrepancies in those trees, it is likely that those can be cleared up as we proceed.

Also very exciting is the fact that further conversations with Destiny reveals the name of at least one living male to male descendant of our Edmund Riggs who might be willing to submit DNA. This would get us one step closer to additional confirmation of family ties!!!

Hopefully direct contact with the individual can be made shortly. I believe this will open several doors containing much new information.

---

### **Finding the William Virgil Varner & Billy Joe Varner MRCA**

It is time that we start getting re-acquainted with those Varner's who lived in North Carolina.

If William Virgil Varner's lineage is confirmed back to John Varner in North

Carolina<sup>1</sup>, our side of the family need to again study the Varner's coming from and through the state of North Carolina.

I am sure that many of us over the years have dug into, those Varner's who moved into and through North Carolina in an attempt to establish a connection with our George Varner of Missouri. No such connection had previously been established.

Now, with the DNA matches between William Virgil Varner and Billy Joe Varner, this angle must be pursued again to try and make a connection to our George Varner of Missouri.

You should note that the match between William Virgil and Billy Joe was a 4 deviation match. The projected generations since the two line intersected was 4.7 generations. That leaves a lot of leeway between possible generations. It is less likely that the connection was fewer than 4 generations back. Possibly the connection is 5 or 6 or more generations ago. Y-DNA matches with that much deviation leave a lot of wiggle room.

Remember that William Virgil & Billy Joe are each other's only currently known Y-DNA matches. Their Y-DNA is so uncommon that there is little doubt that both are related to the same Varner line. It is just a matter of how far back. I

---

<sup>1</sup> Descendants of John Varner, a pdf by Cheryl Varner Walker

say this to ensure that no one just assumes that the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) occurred in North Carolina. The connection could very well be in another location, during more distant generations.

Here is a quick overview of the John Varner family of North Carolina. Some of the book references contain family connections that many now believe to be incorrect. Take them with a grain of salt.

Janice B. Palmer's book "Varner, Verner, Werner Families of America" ca. 1995, says the following about the John Varner in question.

"John Varner II, aka John Varner, Sr., son of John Varner I., (b. mid-1760's, d. ca. early 1826. probur Davidson Co. NC) married on 04 May 1784 at Rowan Co. NC to Rebecca Davis"<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that she then says: "...No known researcher descends from this family....".<sup>3</sup> Janice herself, although not descended through this line, looked at records and drew relationship conclusions.

Janice Palmer's book goes on to reference the Will of John Varner of Rowan Co. North Carolina. In that Will are mentioned eight children: Matthew,

---

<sup>2</sup> Varner, Verner, Werner Families of America by Janice B. Palmer, 1995 Kissing Cousins Publishing, p. 291

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Nancy, Thomas, John, Lucy, Polly, William, and Eli.<sup>4</sup>

Three of those children: Matthew, Lucy, and Eli are recorded in the book as having remained in North Carolina for their lifetime.

Nancy, Thomas, John, Polly, and William do not have references to their eventual whereabouts. (Other records add two additional children to this list: Elizabeth and Rebecca.)

Janice records John Varner II as being the son of John Varner I. John Varner I is established as being the son of Johann Adam Werner.<sup>5</sup> The FTDNA Varner Surname Project in recent years has Y-DNA tested several established descendants of Hans Werner. The Y-DNA of those known descendants is totally different than samples of Billy Joe & William Virgil Varner. This means that Billy Joe and William Virgil cannot descend from Johann Werner. This would seem to reveal that John Varner of North Carolina had to have been fathered by someone other than Johann's son John.

In Gerald H. Varner's books "Varner Families of the South, Vol. 1 & 2" ca. 1995, the following is mentioned in volume 1.

---

<sup>4</sup> Varner, Verner, Werner Families of America by Janice B. Palmer, 1995 Kissing Cousins Publishing, p. 291

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

"Two Varner brothers, Adam and John moved from Baltimore, MD. And settled on the Uwharrie and Yadkin rivers in the North Carolina wilderness prior to the Revolutionary War. They farmed and raised families there, in Rowan (later Davidson) and Randolph counties."<sup>6</sup>

"The author believes but has not proven that Adam Varner and John Varner's patents were Hans Adam Werner....."<sup>7</sup>

"What sons and daughters did John Varner have? There is positive proof for three: John Varner, Jr., Jacob Varner, and Matthew Varner. George Varner was probably John's son also. Fredrick and Henry may have been, but no firm proof was found."<sup>8</sup>

Later in his book, Gerald listed from the Will of John Varner eight children.

Notice that Gerald attributed four new possible sons to John Varner. Jacob Varner, George Varner, Fredrick Varner, and Henry Varner.

I have spoken with Gerald Varner. He states that he now believes much of his statements about additional children are likely incorrect. Gerald took much of the ancestry of this Varner line from Janice

---

<sup>6</sup> Varner Families of the South by Gerald H. Varner, 1995 Self Published, p. xvii

<sup>7</sup> Varner Families of the South by Gerald H. Varner, 1995 Self Published, p. 20

<sup>8</sup> Varner Families of the South by Gerald H. Varner, 1995 Self Published, p. 19



Palmer's book that many believe was also wrong.

We do not want to be too hard on these earlier genealogists however, because they did the best with what they had. There was no DNA testing, and no one person could accumulate all the needed information. Therefore they needed to rely heavily on much information supplied by others.

A third book by Foy E. Varner Jr. called "Varners of the 1800s South" ca. 2008,<sup>9</sup> contains valuable information about Varner's of the time. Foy's purpose behind the book was to try and make sense of all the common Christian names that seemed to crop up over and over again. John Varner, George Varner, and other reoccurring first names seemed to re-appear so often, that trying to distinguish who is who nearly impossible.

Foy found what seemed to be far too many individuals with these common first names. More than the records would seem to support. He felt that it was likely, individual researchers where coming across these ancestors and when they did not fit what the researcher was looking to find, would be wrongly attributed as a different person.

The book is difficult to wade through and does not definitively resolve many

similarities. But, it does layout the possibility or likelihood of when references could be for the same person rather than multiple people.<sup>10</sup>

What I discovered was that the connection possibilities are many.

- We cannot currently say who John Varner's father was.
- We are fairly clear on John Varner's children. They were: Nancy, Thomas, John, Mary Polly, Eli, Elizabeth Betsy, William, Matthew, and Rebecca.
- There were several other Varner's in this part of North Carolina during this timeframe, and therefore several who could have been direct ancestor to George. Those include, but not limited to: Alexander Varner, David Varner, Adam Varner, Matthew Varner, James Varner, Jacob Varner, Henry Varner, George Varner, and Fredrick Varner.
- It now seems more likely that even with the nearby location of many Varner's, several likely belonged to distinctly different Varner families.

Our George Varner of Missouri was of the same generation as the children of John Varner of North Carolina. It seems like John did not have a son named George. Therefore, maybe one of the other Varner's in the area were a cousin or brother to John and that our George

---

<sup>9</sup> Varners of the 1800s South, by Foy E. Varner Jr., 2008 Self Published in pdf format.

---

<sup>10</sup> I have Foy Varner's pdf book & can freely forward it to anyone who requests this interesting information. Note: Info gathered from this or any other book should be cited if used for other uses.....

could be a son of that person? Remember that Fredrick did live in North Carolina for a time before moving to Oglethorpe Co. Georgia.

Some common Christian names can be seen in the names George Varner of Missouri gave his children. Some cannot. Some of the names given to the ancestors of William Virgil Varner can be seen in these names. Many others cannot.

It would appear from conversations with Foy Varner, the administrator of the Varner Surname Project at FTDNA, proof for many of the Varner lines seem to stop, or gap in North Carolina, and that several Varner lines have this same situation of sorting out which North Carolina Varner's belonged to which Varner family.

With the commonality of names, the lack of descriptive details in census and other records of the time, this is the location of stumbling blocks for many a Varner researcher.

Maybe an approach could be to find as many Varner trees online as possible that connect back to North Carolina. Determine how many have been DNA tested, and eliminate those lines one by one. I believe that is what the Varner Surname Project with FTDNA is trying to accomplish.

Just trying to think out loud here.....

Dog days of summer are upon us and soon children will return to school. Even with the other tasks that life brings, don't forget to spend some time working on your genealogy.

Do not think of "working on genealogy" as just studying census records. Having ideas and suggestions on tracks to follow are just as important. Please share those suggestions. Even if you cannot follow up on such suggestions yourself, the idea may be just what someone else was looking for.

***Bruce Varner***