

Is a Burnett the Father of George H. M. Walker?

The question of who was the father of George H. M. Walker, born 1793 in Rutherford Co., NC, to Mary "Polly" Moore, is a significant one for many Walker descendants. He is my 3rd Great Grandfather in my mother's line. Because he was apparently born out of wedlock, there are (as yet) no records of his father's name and this represents a significant brick wall to further Walker family research.

Looking at Walker family trees on Ancestry.com, many people have apparently made a "leap of faith" by deciding his father was William B. (or D.) Walker, one son of Col. John Walker (1728-1796), who was a patriot officer during the Revolutionary War and whose family lived in Rutherford Co. at the time of George's birth. The problem is that there were several Walkers living in the county at that time and another strong possibility could be a son of John Walker (1748-1820).

To try and resolve this problem, I turned to DNA testing, specifically of the Y-chromosome DNA (Y-DNA) which passes only from father to son (paternal lineage). For a good introduction to Y-DNA testing and its use in genealogy, I recommend the [FamilyTreeDNA Learning Center](#). As both John Walkers, mentioned above, have male descendants whose Y-DNA results are in the Walker Surname DNA Project on the FamilyTreeDNA website, this approach seemed like it would provide a means of matching DNA results,

Because my Mother was a Walker (not my father), I asked two male descendants of George H. M. Walker do Y-DNA testing for comparison to the two John Walkers. One tester was my first cousin and a descendant of George's son, Charles McQuiller Walker (1827-1909) and the other was a fourth cousin and a descendant of another son, Osborn S. Walker (1829-1904).

"Our" Y-DNA results are included in the public [Walker Surname DNA Project](#), under the DNA Results section, in Group GR-94 (Kit Nos. 916889 & 918216), showing Haplogroup I-M253. (A haplogroup is a genetic population group of people who share a common ancestor.) The results do not match any Walker descendants, including those with paternal ancestors from Rutherford County in Groups GR-01, GR-15 and GR-30 (Kit Nos. 49397, 49191, 28589 & 16928), all showing a different Haplogroup R-M269. In fact, there are no testers with the Walker surname that match my cousins' results (matches are only viewable in the private section of the FamilyTreeDNA website).

What the private section of the FamilyTreeDNA website does show for matches to our DNA results are many testers with earliest known ancestors having surnames Burnett, Eaves & Appleby and ties to North Carolina. These can be seen in the public [Burnett Y-Chromosome Project](#), under the DNA Results section, in Group I1-B (Descendants of Thomas & Jesse Burnett, also matching Buckner Eaves) all showing Haplogroup I-M253 or subclade (i.e., subset) I-PH5300. The more extensive tests for my first cousin

(Kit No. 916889) match best with those of the descendants of Jesse Burnett (1733-1824), particularly at marker STR DYS635, which may be a family-defining marker for Jesse's male descendants.

The Burnett Y-Chromosome Project is a very active group of people researching their Burnett heritage. Its administrators, Terry Barwin & Susan Hunt, have been very helpful to increase my understanding of Y-DNA testing and how to interpret its results. They maintain a [Burnett Master DNA Tree](#) on Ancestry.com that combines information from conventional genealogical research with data from Y-DNA tests. This tree and others, such as the [Burnette/Foster Master Family Tree](#), indicate that Jesse Burnett was living in Rutherford County at the time George H. M. Walker was born. But he also had several sons of the right age to father a child. So, I now believe George H. M. Walker's father was a Burnette – but which one?

I am moving forward by entering information into my family tree, with a “placeholder” son of Jesse Burnett shown to be the father of George H. M. Walker and including all other related Burnetts. I hope that the uncertainty will be resolved (or at least reduced) as additional records are found. I am planning a trip this March to the Genealogical Society of Old Tryon County in Forest City, NC, where extensive records are available for Rutherford County. I also await the results of more extensive Y-chromosome testing ([Big Y](#)), which should be completed in a month or so for my first cousin.

If George H. M. Walker is one of your ancestors and you also have an interest in resolving the question of who his father was, I encourage you to begin your own investigations into the North Carolina Burnett families. You might also want to have Y-chromosome testing done for one or more direct male descendants of George to independently evaluate my findings.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

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