

Father of Amos Project
(Who was William Edgar's Grandfather?)

For several generations our family has been trying to solve a genealogical mystery: Who was William Edgar McCulloh's grandfather?

William's paternal genealogy is as follows:

William Edgar McCulloh (buried in Florin, PA)

Amos McCulloh (Died 1876 - buried in Ft. Loudon, PA)

Unknown (Mary Ann McCulloh (1802 - 1857 lived in the Little Cove, burial location unknown)

John McCulloh (buried in The Little Cove, PA)

George McCulloh (died in Greene County, PA; burial location unknown)

Archibald McCulloh (immigrant from Ireland - died in 1814 in Lexington, KY)

As you will note from the above genealogy William's line is not a direct unbroken paternal line. The name of William's grandfather is not known and that is the mystery we are trying to solve: Who was William's grand-father? Years ago my grandfather and others spent time trying to figure this out. For some time it was even thought that Amos was a *brother* of Mary Ann McCulloh, not her son. They never did discover who William's grandfather was but did conclude, based on an annotation discovered in Mary Ann McCulloh's bible, that Amos was her *son*. We don't know who added this note, or when, and we may never solve the mystery but I believe someday, through the "magic" of DNA, we will learn my great-great-great-grandfather's identity.

DNA testing has really become an incredible tool in genealogy research. You may already know how this works but if not let me try to briefly explain a pretty complicated process. We all have DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid.) The main role of DNA molecules is the long-term storage of information. DNA is often compared to a set of blueprints or a recipe, or a code, since it contains the instructions needed to construct other components of cells. The DNA segments that carry this genetic information are called genes. Males have y-DNA. This DNA is passed down *unchanged* from father to son. (y-DNA cannot be passed down through a female since they can only pass down X chromosomes) Although DNA is made up of *millions* of repeating four letter sequences, genealogy y-DNA tests use only a few dozen to a few hundred of the locations of these sequences known not to mutate. I have had my DNA tested and if my father was tested he would have *exactly* the same number sequence as me. As would my brother, my two sons, my grandsons, my grandfather, and my great-grandfather, William Edgar McCulloh, his father and so on for thousands of years back in history. This is what makes DNA testing so valuable for genealogy research.

My DNA sequence has been entered into a large database that regularly compares all the results in the database looking for sequence matches. Currently there are hundreds of thousands of DNA results in this database and it is being added to all the time. So far no exact matches have been found for our DNA. But someday a male in the ancestor or descendants line of William's grandfather will be tested and have his results entered into the database and a match will be found. We will then finally have a last name with which to begin our research anew.

Even though we don't yet have a match we have learned several important things so far from my DNA results:

1. We know from the results of my test which have been compared to the results of two McCulloh descendants of Archibald Scott McCulloh (Mary Ann McCulloh's brother) that my DNA does not match theirs and we therefore do not carry the McCulloh DNA. Why is that important? If our DNA had matched then that would have told us that Amos's father was a McCulloh from our line; either Mary Ann's own father John, or her brother, uncle or a cousin whom she never married and who is not recorded in the genealogical record. So for the first time we can conclusively state that William's father Amos was definitely not the result of incest. Had my DNA matched the DNA from the descendants of Mary Ann McCulloh's brother we would have had to consider that to be a real possibility no matter how distasteful the prospect.
2. For the same reasons given in item 1 above we also can conclusively state that William's father Amos is not Mary Ann's brother. We have always know that it was very unlikely that William's grandmother Elizabeth would have conceived a child in her mid 50's but the DNA test results and comparison prove that she did not.
3. William's grandfather was not a native American. Grandpa speculated on more than one occasion (maybe he was kidding) that maybe Mary Ann got involved (voluntarily or involuntarily?) with an Indian. My DNA results show that our unknown ancestor is most definitely of European descent with the highest probabilities being shared equally between Scottish, Welsh or French origin.