

Family Record of George Cunningham of Berkeley County, [West] Virginia, and Probable Parentage of His Second Wife Ruth

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Family records are sometimes passed down through descendants for generations. If we are lucky, we may acquire the family Bible with original handwriting and publication date. However, often, we have to settle with a copied or typed family record whose provenance is, like the Cunningham family record below, unknown. Comparison with other sources validates the accuracy of the data with some minor discrepancies. While this record teases us by not identifying the maiden names of George Cunningham's wives, study of other records identifies the probable parents of his second wife Ruth who was the mother of four of his five children.

Family Record

George and Lydia Cunningham were married September 7th 1758

Robert Cunningham born October 11th 1759

Lydia Cunningham died August 30th 1774

George Cunningham and Ruth married March 20th 1776

George G. Cunningham born January 3rd 1777

Oct

Lydia Cunningham born January 3rd 1779. William [no other information]

Rhoda Cunningham born August 8th 1782

Levi Cunningham born September 4th 1783 or 4

* 43540 Clivedon Court, Ashburn, Virginia 20147-4540; www.virginiaancestry.com. This is Mr. Dunn's third article on the ancestry of the women who married into his Cunningham line and he is currently preparing an article on the ancestry of George Cunningham. Dunn is a professional genealogist researching Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland families. His specialties include brick-wall problem resolution, land records and platting. He is an instructor for the Virginia research course at the Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research, Samford University, and can be contacted at victor.dunn@virginiaancestry.com. All Frederick County, Virginia, deed, order and will book entries were accessed at the Circuit Clerk's Office, Winchester and all Berkeley County, West Virginia, deed and will books were accessed at the Berkeley County Clerk's office, Martinsburg. All websites accessed 13 January 2010.

Levi and Alcinda Cunningham married February 22nd 1816
 William H. Cunningham born January 18 1817
 Ellen Cunningham born January 10th 1818¹

Other records confirm the accuracy of the above family data. The will of George Cunningham of Berkeley County, written 16 May 1807 and proven 17 October 1811, identifies all of the above children and indicates that George Geddes Cunningham was his eldest son by his present wife who is named as Ruth Cunningham.² Lydia Cunningham is named as the wife of George Cunningham of Frederick County (Berkeley County was formed from Frederick in 1772), millwright, in a 1763 Loudoun County deed.³ Lydia's tombstone located at Morgan Chapel in Berkeley County indicates that she died 31 August 1774, a one day discrepancy from the above.⁴ Levi Cunningham's tombstone indicates that he died 7 December 1864 aged 81 years, 3 months and 5 days which calculates a birth date of 2 September 1783, very close to the dates above.⁵

IDENTIFYING RUTH (—?—) CHENOWETH CUNNINGHAM'S PROBABLE PARENTS

A 1779 Berkeley County deed identifies Ruth Cunningham, wife of George, as the late widow of Absalom Chenoweth, deceased.⁶ Ruth and Absalom married prior to 11 December 1766 when they witnessed the Quaker wedding of Jacob Rees and Hannah Kirk.⁷ The Mill Creek Baptist Church register of members indicates "Ruth Chenoweth alias Cunningham died Feby 26th 1815."⁸ Although no record has been found indicating a birth date or age for Ruth, her marriage prior to December 1766 and the birth of her last child in 1783 or 1784 suggest she was born in the late 1730s to mid 1740s.

¹ The above information was provided to the author via a typewritten record faxed on 12 October 1998 from Gene Cunningham of Fredericksburg, Virginia, who obtained the information from Ken Cunningham per notes left by the late Sydney Stuart Cunningham of Richmond, Virginia who was a grandson of the above William H. Cunningham and 2nd great grandson of George and Ruth Cunningham.

² Berkeley County, West Virginia, Will Book 4, pp. 445–446, George Cunningham will.

³ Loudoun County Deed Book C, 1761–1763, pp. 681–683, Cunningham and wife to Rutherford, deeds of lease and release, 10 August 1763; Loudoun County Circuit Clerk's Archives, Leesburg.

⁴ Berkeley County Historical Society, *Cemeteries of Berkeley County, West Virginia, Vol. 1: Arden, Gerrardstown & Mill Creek Districts* (Martinsburg, W.Va.: the society, 2006), 189.

⁵ Mt. Pleasant Meeting Cemetery, Rt. 622 (Cedar Creek Grade) near junction of Rt. 629 (Laurel Grove Rd.), Frederick County, Virginia; Levi Cunningham marker, read by Victor S. Dunn, 13 August 1999.

⁶ Berkeley County, West Virginia, Deed Book 5, 1778–1782, pp. 399–400, Chinoweth's executors to McKown, deed of release, 16 November 1779.

⁷ Hopewell (Frederick County, Virginia) Monthly Meeting, Births, Marriages, Burials, 1671–1817, 1758–1939, pp. 17–18 (microfilm); Steward Bell Jr. Archives, Handley Library, Winchester.

⁸ Mill Creek Baptist Church (Berkeley County, West Virginia), Minute Book, 1757–1928, p. 5 of membership list that appears before the minutes; miscellaneous microfilm 472; Library of Virginia, Richmond.

Absolom Chenoweth left a will in Berkeley County in 1773 naming wife Ruth Chenoweth and Morgan Morgan as executors. His will indicates underage children but does not name them.⁹ An article published in 1922 identifies Absolom's children as James (born 21 December 1767, died 12 May 1815) who married Rebecca Bruce, Absolom Chenoweth, and Ann Chenoweth who married James Boggs.¹⁰ The source identifying the elder Absolom's children is not given. However, other records suggest that James, Absolom and Ann were the orphans of Absolom. On 16 February 1795, George and Ruth Cunningham sold 134 acres to James Chenowith and Absolom Chenowith as tenants in common. This land was part of a larger tract that George obtained from the Northern Neck Proprietor's office.¹¹ Ruth did not release her dower interest in the land which was common when parents conveyed land to children. Tax lists identify Absolom as the brother of James.¹² Berkeley County marriage records indicate that "Anna Chenaoth" married James Boggs on 29 November 1787.¹³ The 1810 census for Berkeley lists Ann Boggs immediately after George Cunningham.¹⁴

Various researchers have attempted to identify Ruth's ancestry. At least two publications list her as Ruth Morgan, probably based on Morgan Morgan serving as co-executor of Absolom Chenoweth's estate.¹⁵ Ruth is not named as a daughter of Morgan Morgan in his will and no contemporary sources have been located that identify her as a Morgan.¹⁶ Another family history identifies her as possibly the daughter of James and Hannah Carter based on omnastic clues, but without other evidence.¹⁷

One clue to Ruth's parents may be the middle name of her son George Geddis

⁹ Berkeley County, West Virginia, Will Book 1, 1772–1788, pp. 19–20, Absolom Chenoweth will.

¹⁰ Arthur L. Keith, "The Chenoweth Family," *Tyler's Quarterly Magazine*, 3 (January 1922): 187, 191. The article cites the family Bible of James Chenoweth for his marriage record and birth and death dates.

¹¹ Berkeley County, West Virginia, Deed Book 12, p. 29, Cunningham and wife to Chenowiths, deed of sale, 16 February 1795.

¹² James and Absolom Chenoweth entries, Win Winship's District, 1796 and 1797 Berkeley County Personal Property Tax List: unpaginated, Record Group 48, Auditor of Public Accounts; microfilm 41, frames 472 and 541; Library of Virginia, Richmond.

¹³ Berkeley County, West Virginia, "Church Marriage Register," p. 23 (digital image) "Vital Research Records Project," *West Virginia Division of Culture and History*, (http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_select.aspx), marriage search for James Boggs in Berkeley County.

¹⁴ 1810 U.S. census, Berkeley County, Virginia, p. 57, line 18, Ann Boggs; (digital image) *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>); citing National Archives and Records Administration microfilm M252, roll 66.

¹⁵ See Dick D. Heller, *1979 History of Adams County, Indiana* (Decatur, Ill.: Adams County Historical Society, ca 1980), 50; and Shirley D. Harris, *The Chenoweth Family in America: Some Descendants of John Chenoweth b. ca 1682* (Scottsville, Ky.: Gerald Printing Service, 1994), 230.

¹⁶ Berkeley County, West Virginia, Will Book 3, pp. 122–124, Morgan Morgan will.

¹⁷ Marie Thompson Eberle and Margaret Shipp Henley, *Carter Cousins*, Volume Two (Wyandotte, Oklahoma: Gregath Publishing Co., 1997), 184.

Cunningham. Geddis is a variation of the surname Gaddis.¹⁸ All Gaddises found in colonial Frederick County records appear to be connected to the family of William Gaddis and his wife Priscilla Bowen. William apparently settled in Frederick County prior to 13 November 1744, as he is likely the William “Gaddy” mentioned in a road order on that date.¹⁹ On 9 March 1752, William received a Northern Neck grant for 139 acres in Frederick County.²⁰ This tract of land lay next to a parcel owned by Absolom Chinoweth’s father John.²¹ On 12 June 1750, Henry Bowen of Frederick County deeded 10 acres of land for and in “consideration of the love good will & affection that I bear to my son in law William Gaddis and Priscilla his wife.”²² In 1762, William Gaddis of Frederick County received a grant for 421 acres of land which a later deed indicates was located in Hampshire County, Virginia.²³ When William wrote his will on 11 October 1772, he identified himself as a resident of Hampshire County. The will, proven 9 March 1773, names wife Priscilla Gaddis who with son John Gaddis was to serve as executor. Priscilla was to distribute William’s estate among his children “in the best manner that divine wisdom may direct her.”²⁴ The will does not name William’s children with the exception of son John who is referred to as the heir-at-law in a later deed.²⁵ A family record indicates his birth date as 7 October 1741.²⁶ Priscilla later moved to Fayette County, Pennsylvania, and is buried at the Baptist Church Graveyard located at Uniontown, Fayette County. Her tombstone inscription indicates she died 17 February 1796 at 78 years of age [born 1717–1718].²⁷

¹⁸ For an example, see Frederick County Order Book 2, 1745–1748, p. 135; James Haworth assignee of *William Geddes vs. Richard Mercer*, order, 7 August 1746.

¹⁹ Frederick County Order Book 1, 1743–1745, p. 222, George Hobson, road petition, 13 November 1744.

²⁰ Northern Neck Land Grants H, p. 123; “Virginia Land Office Patents and Grants / Northern Neck Grants and Surveys” database and digital images, *Library of Virginia* (<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>), entry for William Gaddis, 1752.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Northern Neck Land Grants M, p. 309, entry for John Chenoweth 5 October 1764. For Absolom as the son of John see Frederick County Will Book 4, 1770–178, pp. 61–63, John Chenoweth will.

²² Frederick County Deed Book 2, 1749–1752, pp. 155–156; Bowen to Gaddis and wife, deed of gift, 12 June 1750.

²³ See Northern Neck Grants M, p. 87, “Virginia Land Office Patents and Grants / Northern Neck Grants and Surveys” database and digital images, *Library of Virginia* (<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>), William Gaddis entry 10 December 1762 which identifies the land as in Frederick County. Hampshire County, West Virginia, Deed Book 9, 1792–1795, pp. 25–28, Gaddis to Buzzard, 20 October 1792; microfilm 11; Library of Virginia, Richmond, identifies the land as located in Hampshire County.

²⁴ Hampshire County, West Virginia, Will Book 1 (transcripts), 1756–1835, pp. 37–38, William Gaddis will (microfilm); Library of Virginia, Richmond.

²⁵ Frederick County Deed Book 19, 1780–1783, pp. 146–150, Gaddises to Henshaw, lease and release, 7 November 1780.

²⁶ John Gaddis, “Gaddis Papers, 1751–1879,” p. 7; Family History Library microfilm 20,455, item 4.

²⁷ J. Percy Hart, *Hart’s History and Directory of the Three Towns: Brownsville, Bridgeport, West Brownsville...* (Cadwallader, Pa.: the author, 1904), 449; (digital image) *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>).

A 1912 Fayette County, Pennsylvania, history names the children of William and Priscilla Gaddis as Thomas, John, Robert, Henry and Anna who married Levi Springer.²⁸ The four alleged sons and Levi Springer owned contiguous parcels of land in North Union and Menallen townships in Fayette County.²⁹ Thomas's Revolutionary War pension application indicates he was born in Frederick County, Virginia, on 28 December 1742.³⁰ Both Robert Gaddis and Levi Springer also left records in Frederick or Hampshire counties prior to moving to Pennsylvania.³¹ Virginia military records note that a William Gaddis served in the Revolution and died in 1777 "while in the service of the United States and left no legitimate issue, but left a brother John Gaddes the oldest brother and heir at law of the said William Gattis."³²

Another probable son of William and Priscilla Gaddis was Rees Gaddis who in 1767 witnessed a Quaker wedding along with John Gaddis and in 1771 witnessed another Quaker wedding with William Gaddis, Sarah Gaddis and John Gaddis.³³ By 1797, Rees Gaddis had moved to Campbell County, Kentucky.³⁴ In 1809, Ruth's son Absolom Chenoweth sold his livestock and furniture to his brother James Chenoweth in Berkeley County, (West) Virginia.³⁵ This is also the last year Absolom appears on personal property tax lists in Berkeley.³⁶ He is probably the Absolom Chenoweth who is listed next to Rees Gaddis on the 1810

²⁸ John W. Jordan and James Hadden, *Genealogical and Personal History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania*, 2 Vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1912), 2: 27–28; (digital image) *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>).

²⁹ See John H Campbell, *North Union Township Map* (1917, revised; Harrisburg, Pa.: Department of Internal Affairs, Penn., 1949), and Campbell, *Menallen Township Map* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Department of Internal Affairs, Penn., 1921) RG 17, Records of the Land Office, "Warrantee Township Maps," *Pennsylvania State Archives, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission* (<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r17-522WarranteeTwpMaps/r17-522WaranteeTwpMapMainInterface.htm>), maps under Fayette County.

³⁰ Thomas Gaddis (Col., Revolutionary War, Pennsylvania), pension file S4292, *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files*, M804; National Archives, Washington, D.C. (digital image), *Footnote.com* (<http://www.footnote.com>: accessed 26 November 2009).

³¹ On 14 January 1779, Robert Gaddis attended the Quaker wedding of Evan Jenkins of Hampshire to Elizabeth Cunrod see Hopewell (Frederick County, Virginia) Monthly Meeting, Births, Marriages, Burials, 1671–1817, 1758–1939, p. 74 (microfilm); Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley Library, Winchester. Levi Springer is named in the will of his father. See Frederick County, Virginia Will Book 2, 1752–1761, pp. 415–416, Dennis Springer will.

³² Uriah Springer affidavit, 4 November 1824 in William Gaddis (private, Continental Line, LOMC 6669), Entry 86, Virginia Land Office Military Certificates, 1782–1876, Record Group 4, Records of the Virginia Land Office; microfilm 13, frame 641, Library of Virginia, Richmond.

³³ Hopewell (Frederick County, Virginia) Monthly Meeting, Births, Marriages, Burials, 1671–1817, 1758–1939, pp. 22, 29 (microfilm); Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley Library, Winchester.

³⁴ Jana Sloan Broglin, *Campbell County, Kentucky, Wills and Estates Book A, 1794–1816* (Indianapolis, Indiana, 2000), A4.

³⁵ Berkeley County, West Virginia, Deed Book 21, p. 463, Chenoweth to Chenoweth, deed of sale, 22 August 1809.

³⁶ Absolom Chenoweth entry, James Wilson's District, 1809 Berkeley County Personal Property Tax List: unpaginated, Record Group 48, Auditor of Public Accounts; microfilm 42, frame 457; Library of Virginia, Richmond.

census of Campbell County, Kentucky.³⁷ Campbell County tax lists were also studied and Absalom Chenoweth does not appear on the 1807 through 1809 lists. The 1810 list is missing and he is first found in the 1811 tax list on 27 April 1811, the same date as Rees Gaddis' entry.³⁸ This suggests that Absalom followed his putative uncle Rees Gaddis to Campbell County.

In addition to the possible kinship migration of Ruth (—?—) Chenoweth Cunningham's son Absalom to join his maternal uncle, there are several other notable Chenoweth-Cunningham-Gaddis connections:

- § John Gaddis and Henry Bowen, probably Priscilla Gaddis' brother, witnessed the 1766 Quaker wedding of Jacob Rees and Hannah Kirk along with Absalom and Ruth Chenoweth.³⁹
- § On 23 October 1780, John Gaddis son, heir-at-law and executor of William Gaddis dec'd and Priscilla widow and relict and executrix of said William Gaddis dec'd of County of Yohogania, Virginia, sold land in Frederick County owned by William Gaddis, deceased. One of the witnesses to the deed was George Cunningham who proved the deed in the Frederick County court.⁴⁰ The Gaddises may have chosen George to witness the deed because he was a close relation despite the fact he was a resident of Berkeley County at that time.
- § A register of members of the Mill Creek Baptist Church of Berkeley County lists Ruth Chenoweth and Priscilla Gaddis consecutively.⁴¹ Priscilla is the only Gaddis listed on the membership rolls suggesting that she may have lived with her daughter Ruth after the death of her husband and prior to moving to Fayette County, Pennsylvania.
- § In a Berkeley County deed dated 1777, George Cunningham and wife "Perscilla" sold land in Berkeley County. Curiously the deed was only

³⁷ 1810 U.S. census, Campbell County, Kentucky, p. 29 (inked), lines 10 and 11, Rees Gaddis and Absalom Chenoweth; (digital image), *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com>); citing National Archives and Records Administration microfilm M252, roll 9.

³⁸ Campbell County, Kentucky, 1807–1811 Tax Books, unpaginated entries, arranged chronologically; all surnames in C and G initial alphabet sections read; Family History Library microfilm 7,911.

³⁹ Hopewell (Frederick County, Virginia) Monthly Meeting, Births, Marriages, Burials, 1671–1817, 1758–1939, pp. 17–18 (microfilm); Stewart Bell Jr. Archives, Handley Library, Winchester. Henry Bowen, Junior is named as a son of Henry Sr. per Frederick County Deed Book 3, pp. 149–150, Bowen to Bowen, Deed of Gift, 5 February 1754 which also indicates Henry Sr. was about to move.

⁴⁰ Frederick County Deed Book 19, pp. 146–150.

⁴¹ Mill Creek Baptist Church, Minute Book, 1757–1928, p. 4 of membership list that appears before the minutes.

signed by George and there was no dower release recorded.⁴² It appears that the scribe of the deed incorrectly identified the wife of George Cunningham, perhaps using her mother Priscilla's name instead of Ruth's.

§ At least three of William Gaddis's probable children named daughters Ruth, perhaps after their sister.⁴³

A member of the wife's family was often named as co-executor of the will when a man died leaving a young widow. Therefore, researchers might expect a Gaddis family member to help administer Absalom Chenoweth's estate rather than Morgan Morgan. The omission of a Gaddis family member named as an executor is likely explained because all of the family had moved from the Berkeley County area to Hampshire prior to Absalom's death in 1773. Absalom's choice of Morgan Morgan as executor was likely based on his friendship with his neighbor who was a respected member of the community.⁴⁴ Morgan, who was appointed as a justice of the peace in 1773 and later served as sheriff of the county, likely understood the legal issues involving probate and was capable of looking after Ruth's best interests.⁴⁵

Based on the evidence found to date, William Gaddis and his wife Priscilla Bowen were likely the parents of Ruth (—?—) Chenoweth Cunningham. Ruth's estimated birth date range of the late 1730s to mid 1740s fits into the family of William and Priscilla Gaddis, who was born 1717–1718. Ruth could have been born prior to or after the known birth dates of their apparent two eldest sons, John and Thomas Gaddis born 7 October 1741 and 28 December 1742 respectively. Naming patterns, family and church associations and migration support this conclusion.

⁴²Berkeley County, West Virginia, Deed Book 4, pp. 195–196; Cunningham and wife to Ridgway, Deed of Sale, 17 June 1777.

⁴³For Ruth, daughter of John Gaddis see John Gaddis, "Gaddis Papers, 1751–1879," p. 7; Family History Library microfilm 20,455, item 4. Clinton County, Ohio, Will Book B, pp. 149–152, Thomas Gaddis will (1834); FHL microfilm 568,56. Fayette County, Pennsylvania, Will Book 1, pp. 230–231, Levi Springer will (1823); FHL microfilm 861,065. According to a Springer family genealogy, Levi married twice and his daughter Ruth was by his wife Ann Gaddis per Ruth Beckey Irwin, *A Springer Family History: Some Descendants of Dennis Springer and Ann Prickett, including Family Histories for Prickett, Gaddis, McIntire, Shepherd, Van Meter, Boyles, Bellatti, and Girton* (Decorah, Iowa: Anundsen Publishing Co., 1987), 29–30.

⁴⁴A grant was made in Absalom's name after his death and identifies Morgan Morgan as a neighbor. See Northern Neck Land Grants R, p. 294; "Virginia Land Office Patents and Grants / Northern Neck Grants and Surveys" database and digital images, *Library of Virginia* (<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>), entry for Absalom Chinworth, 1779.

⁴⁵See J.E. Norris, *History of the Lower Shenandoah Valley Counties of Frederick, Berkeley, Jefferson and Clarke*, (1890, reprint; Berryville, Va.: The Virginia Book Co., 1972), 292 and William Thomas Doherty, *Berkeley County, U.S.A.: A Bicentennial History of a Virginia and West Virginia County, 1772–1972* (Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Co.,) 383.