

The Durham - White Connection

A Brief Synopsis of
The Thomas Durham File
January 2022

By G. Edward Neal

Introduction

This is a synopsis of "*The Thomas Durham File*" by the same author, which is expected to be published in some form in 2022. This article, or synopsis is being released prior to that publication to ensure that the information, which I consider to be very important to the descendants of Thomas Durham, is not lost should the publication not occur for whatever reason.

It may be that some will not accept the truth as presented here or any truth that is not within the boundaries of what they already believe. If so, then this should serve to spur more research and questions geared toward uncovering additional facts that could possibly change this truth. One should never, however, disregard one truth without solid evidence to the contrary. Since this is a synopsis it does not contain all facts or evidence that one would normally hope to see but it is based on evidence presented in *The Thomas Durham File* and one can also find supporting documents in the article *The Real James Durham* by the same author. I actually gave an obvious clue in that article that I expected would, and should have, raised a lot of comments and questions from researchers of this family. One can draw many conclusions from that but in some ways it may explain why there are mistakes in this genealogy, including the ultimate sin of identifying the wrong ancestors.

While supported by genealogical evidence, the main conclusion regarding the origins of Thomas Durham is based primarily on Y-DNA tests that not everyone truly understands. The complications of explaining DNA tests also make it somewhat difficult for some to accept the findings of these tests. While some DNA tests used in genealogy are or can be questionable, Y-DNA tests can be absolutely reliable and considered indisputable. Y-DNA may not necessarily tell you how someone is related, but if two people have matching Y-DNA, they are related by blood. That's a 100% fact.

Using Y-DNA from a male descendant of David Milton Durham, I have had regular and extensive SNP testing and analysis done on the DNA and the results are quite clear regarding what family the Y-DNA belongs to. And tests from known Durham relatives, such as David Milton Durham's brother Isaac Durham confirm it. As do tests from descendants of a John Durham. There is also a known Talley family in Hanover County Virginia with matching Y-DNA and they are believed to have been White orphans adopted by a Talley family. In addition to the Talley family, there is also a Thurman in Hanover County with the same Y-DNA but, like Thomas Durham, we are not sure of his exact origin within the White family. We do know, however, from SNP testing that the Talley, Thurman and Durham families represents different branches of the White family.

The Durham – White Connection

Thomas Durham, aka Thomas White, was born circa 1740s perhaps in Hanover County Virginia. His cousin, or perhaps uncle, John Durham was born there circa 1728. John Durham was most likely the son of Samuel White and Eleanor Durham who is believed to have been the daughter of James Durham Sr. and Elizabeth of Hanover County. John was apparently born out of wedlock and was given his mother's name of Durham. The information on John Durham is based on Y-DNA tests and the records of St. Paul's parish in Hanover County. Thomas White is believed to have taken the name of Durham from this John Durham who was, in addition to being his cousin or uncle, believed to also have been his stepfather. Thomas Durham's exact relation to John Durham is not known but what is known, is based on available documented facts and Y-DNA tests which are indisputable.

The papers of Alexander Brown show that John Durham, Mastin Durham and Thomas Durham entered "old Amherst" between 1761 and 1776. Old Amherst was a reference to that part of Amherst County Virginia that later became Nelson County. Deeds show that John Durham, Thomas Durham and James Durham (Thomas' son) lived on the north fork of the Tye River in the area of Amherst that later became Nelson County¹. We know from his revolutionary pension application that Mastin Durham was born in 1755 in Hanover County Virginia. Mastin Durham was also in the will of John Durham as were John's other children. Thomas was not in the will but he is also believed to have died prior to the will being written.

It has been wrongly thought, including by this author, that this line of Durhams were of Albemarle County, but this is totally incorrect. There was a David Durham of Albemarle County that I will address a little later that may or may not have been related. What the records show, and more specifically the tax records² and deeds, is that Thomas Durham lived in Amherst County. The tax records of Amherst County Virginia show that Thomas Durham had a son James Durham who was born circa 1766, a son sometimes referred to as Davy and sometimes as Milton Durham who was born circa 1768 and a son Isaac Durham born circa 1772. References to Davy and Milton were obviously to David Milton Durham who used both David and Milton interchangeably. Tax records also indicate that Thomas Durham may of had at least two other children but if so, they either died young or were females we have not been able to identify. I believe they may have died young.

These records, the Alexander Brown papers, deeds, tax records etc., all serve to place John Durham and his son Mastin Durham and Thomas Durham together in Amherst County and living near each other. Thomas Durham was without question connected to John Durham somehow. John Durham and his children, including his son Mastin did move on to North Carolina but Thomas remained in Amherst County. There are many plausible reasons why Thomas did not move with the others but it seems a little odd nevertheless. Particularly if John was his father. In any event,

¹ See Attachment B

² See Attachment A

the tax records of Amherst County clearly identify Thomas Durham's three sons, which in turn allows the connection to the Casey County Kentucky Durhams.

The first Durham born generation in this unique Durham line:

Children of Thomas (White) Durham and his first wife whose name is not known. Thomas' second wife was Mary Fitzgerald a widow of James Fitzgerald Sr.

1. James Durham b. 1766 m. Catherine Fitzgerald
2. David Milton Durham b. 1768 m. Jane Coleman
3. Isaac Durham b. 1772 m. Judith Oglesby

The Amherst County marriage records³ show that James Durham, Thomas' son, married in 1793 to a Catherine Fitzgerald whose mother was named Mary Durham on the record. My analysis of the record is that Thomas Durham's first wife, and mother of his children James, David Milton and Isaac, died and Thomas remarried the widow Mary Fitzgerald who was also the mother of a Bartlett Fitzgerald et al. Mary is believed to have been the widow of James Fitzgerald Sr. of Orange County Virginia who died circa 1789.

The tax records seem to indicate that Thomas Durham, aka Thomas White, died in Amherst County circa 1797. His children, 1. James Durham remained in Amherst/Nelson County, 2. David Milton Durham moved to Casey County Kentucky and 3. Isaac Durham moved first to Christian County Kentucky then to Hamilton County Illinois.

We can also connect the Casey County Kentucky Durham's with the Amherst/Nelson County Virginia Durham's through David Milton Durham's son James. As I outlined in a separate article titled "*The Real James Durham*", James Durham returned to Nelson County Virginia from Casey County when he was young and probably a teenager. He married in Nelson County a Lorinda Taylor and later returned to Casey County circa 1828. The Casey County death record of their son Isaac W. Durham shows his parents as James Durham and Lorinda Taylor. Lorinda Taylor has somehow been erroneously mis-identified as Lorinda Warner and James has been mixed up with other James' as clearly shown in "*The Real James Durham*".

There was a David Durham in Albemarle County Virginia that may have been related to John Durham through his mother Eleanor Durham but if so, there is no evidence to prove it. This David did buy 250 acres of land from John Durham in Albemarle County but that doesn't prove a relationship. We do know from Y-DNA tests, however, that this David Durham was paternally a Kirby. We also know from the processioning records of Hanover County that a William Kirby processioned and later owned the land of James Durham Sr. Therefore, the Durham's and Kirby's of Hanover County were closely associated. They could be different families however.

As previously stated, John Durham was probably the son of Samuel White who was the son of John White Sr. of New Kent/Hanover County Virginia. Y-DNA also clearly identifies that these Whites are also related to a White family in New Jersey who are believed to have come from Kent County England circa 1680s. There are no known genealogical records that connect the New

³ See Attachment C

Jersey Whites with the Hanover County Whites so we do not know the exact relationship. We may very well find the connection may be in England.

It should be noted and clearly understood that John Durham may have been born a White and adopted by a Durham, as it appears Thomas Durham was. Evidence seems to suggest, however, that John was the son of Eleanor Durham but that has to be considered somewhat speculative. That Thomas Durham was a stepson to John Durham is also speculation but what is fact and indisputable is that John and Thomas were closely related, as Whites, and closely associated with each other as Durhams. And while Y-DNA establishes that they were closely related by blood, it also indicates that they were not father and son as we had originally thought. So, while we may not know the exact relationship between John Durham and Thomas Durham, Y-DNA clearly establishes that both were paternally Whites.

When viewing the ages of John Durham's children, it is obvious that he had two wives. I believe his first wife was a widow White with a child named Thomas. John Durham and his first wife then, the widow White, also had Mastin Durham and possibly one other child before dying. Her son Thomas White then, would be a half-brother to Mastin Durham and as such became Thomas Durham. It may also be, however, that Thomas White was an orphan, and/or an illegitimate child, that was adopted or simply taken in by his White relative, John Durham. We most likely will never know Thomas Durham's full story but what we do know is that his father was a White and that he somehow became Thomas Durham and subsequently became the progenitor of a unique Durham line. His story then, as much as we know it, needs to be told so it can take its rightful place in history.

To briefly summarize what the above states based on documented evidence:

Thomas Durham of Amherst County Virginia was the father of James Durham, David Milton Durham and Isaac Durham. Y-DNA clearly establishes that Thomas Durham's father was a White and that Durham was his adopted name.

Therefore, Thomas' son James Durham did not have any children but if you are a descendant of David Milton Durham or his brother Isaac Durham, your surname under normal circumstances, should have been White and not Durham.



A Word About DNA

Although DNA is widely used in genealogy today, it is probably safe to say that most people do not understand how it works. Therefore, we need to at least take a brief look at it. There are actually three different DNA tests being used and the effectiveness between the three varies greatly.

1. mtDNA is mitochondrial DNA and is passed down from the mother to her sons and daughters. Her daughters will pass this on to her children but her sons will not pass it on to his children. While this may have some uses in genealogy, the water gets very muddy after a couple of generations. For example, I got my mtDNA from my mother as did my sisters. My sister passed this same mtDNA on to her children but I did not pass it on to my children, who got their mtDNA from their mother. So, I have the same mtDNA as my sister's children but her children and mine do not have the same mtDNA. I see very little use in it for genealogy but it may identify some recent cousins.

2. atDNA is autosomal DNA and is a combination of DNA from both parents that is passed on to their children. atDNA is sometimes effective in identify cousins and other relatives within a few generations but like mtDNA it can get a little muddy after a few generations.

3. Y-DNA is the male Y Chromosome and is passed down from father to son. It is in my opinion the most effective DNA test one can take for genealogy. The one drawback of course is that women, who do not have Y-DNA, cannot take the test. It is perfect for separating families with the same surname who are not related. It also will identify family lines where an adoption has occurred or where someone in the line has been born out of wedlock, which happened in the past more often than some realize. One question I have seen is how do you know what a male ancestor's Y-DNA looks like that was born hundreds of years ago. Well, the beauty of Y-DNA is that my Y-DNA, with some minor mutations, looks exactly like the Y-DNA of my Neal ancestor who was born in the late 1600s in Ireland and we don't have to disturb his sleep to found out.

In this case, descendants of Thomas Durham through his sons David Milton Durham and Isaac Durham have Y-DNA that has been identified as White Y-DNA. So, if two brothers, David and Isaac had the same Y-DNA, that can only mean it's the Y-DNA of their father Thomas Durham. It also proves David and Isaac were brothers, as we also know from genealogical records. It can also only mean that Thomas Durham's father was a White.

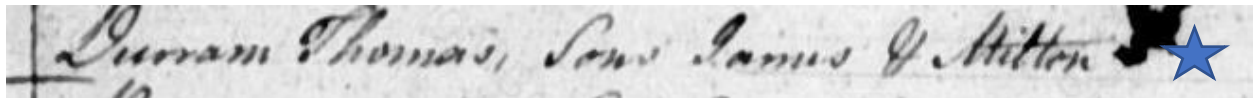
Descendants of Mastin Durham, who is known to be a son of John Durham, have the same Y-DNA as Thomas Durham. Therefore, John Durham's father had to also have been a White. Ordinarily this would mean that Thomas was also a son of John Durham and that is what was initially thought. Additional DNA SNP testing, however, indicates that John and Thomas were closely related but were not father and son. This is based on Thomas Durham having a SNP that Mastin Durham did not have. If they were both sons of John Durham, they both would have all the same SNPs.

SNPs are basically errors made when cells make a copy of themselves before creating a new cell. They don't happen that often but when they do, they remain a part of our DNA sequence. SNPs are useful in identifying branches of a family as in this case. It does require a full SNP testing though which can be a little expensive. It was worth it, however, because it showed that Thomas Durham was not a son of John Durham as initially thought. It also helped somewhat in identifying other branches within the White family. We do not have enough tests as yet to identify who Thomas' father might have been but perhaps someday we will. There is a concerted and dedicated effort on FamilyTree.com to sort out this White family line.

ATTACHMENT A

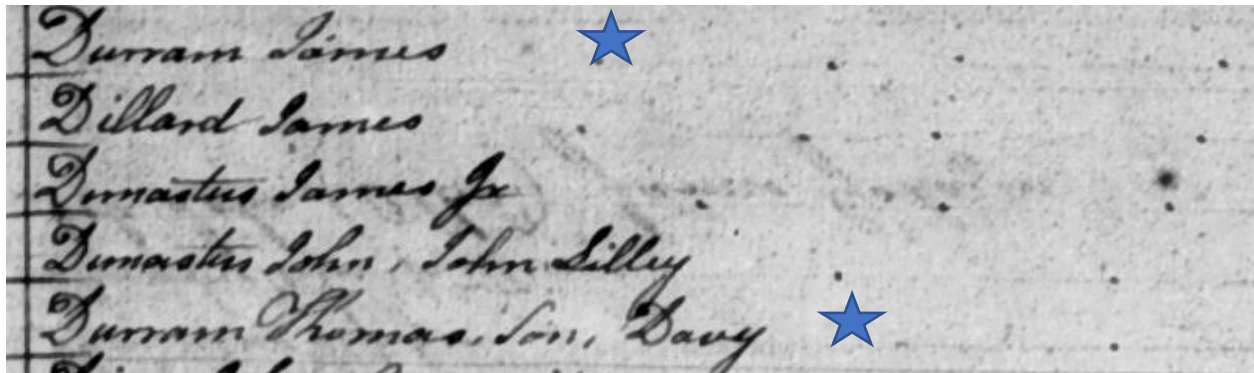
The following are examples taken from the Amherst County Virginia Tax lists showing Thomas Durham and his three sons. The 1790 list shows Thomas with his two oldest sons James and Milton, with 1790 being the first year Milton is listed. Please note that David Milton Durham is listed as Milton sometimes and Davy or David at other times. The 1791 list shows James being taxed and living on his own. The 1793 example shows Thomas' two youngest sons, David and Isaac with Isaac being listed for the first time which means he turned 21 in 1793 prior to 10 March or in 1792 after 10 March. The name is more likely to be spelled Durrum in the early tax records and Durham in later years.

1790



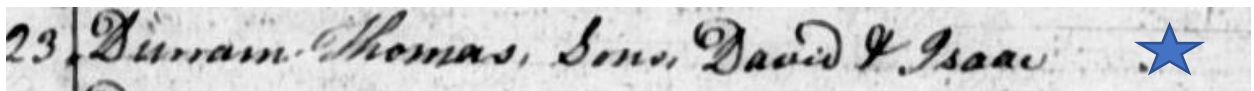
Durrum Thomas, Sons James & Milton ★

1791



Durrum James ★
Dillard James
Dumastus James Jr
Dumastus John, John Silley
Durrum Thomas, Son, Davy ★

1793

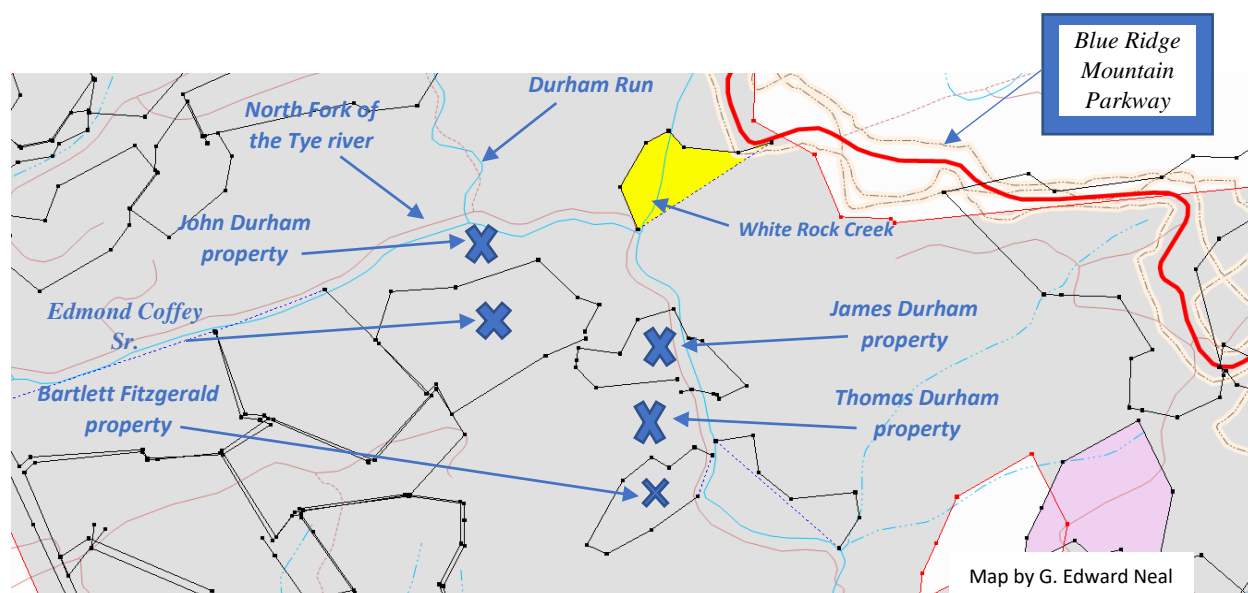


23. Durrum Thomas, Sons, David & Isaac ★

Attachment B

This is a map of Nelson County Virginia showing the north fork of the Tye river on Fork Mountain where the Durham, Fitzgerald and Coffey families lived. These types of maps of course are only snapshots in time. For example, James Durham didn't own the land shown here until after his father Thomas died. At that point he may have owned his father's land as well as the land he bought. Or it may be that the sons sold Thomas' land and split the money which seems more likely. Bartlett Fitzgerald's land was later owned by a Daniel McDonald and then by James Durham, etc.

The property locations are approximate of course but are fairly accurate. The actual property lines are based on the metes and bounds as given in the deeds. If the property lines are not shown, such as for Thomas Durham's property, the information was not available but the location is based on adjoining property deeds. For example, some of the metes and bounds markers given in the deed for James Durham show his land adjoined Thomas Durham's. And the same for Bartlett Fitzgerald's deed. Thomas Durham's land then had to be between these two properties.



(The base map was generated using Deedmapper 4.2.)

Attachment C

This is an exact replica of the marriage record of James Durham and Caty Fitzgerald as found in the Amherst County Virginia Register of Marriages.

Date	Husband	Wife	Parent of Husband or Guardian	Parent of Wife or Guardian	Surety & Witnesses
10/8/1793	Durham, James	Fitzgerald, Caty (Catherine)	Durham, Thomas	Durham, Mary Mother	Bartlett Fitzgerald J. Ballinger
				(Bartlett)	William Coffee
				Fitzgerald, Patrick	Samuel Meridith
				Brother	
		Each of Amherst Parish			

As a single document, this record contains an unbelievable amount of information. Such as:

1. James Durham's father was Thomas Durham which corroborates other records.
2. Catherine "Caty" Fitzgerald's mother is identified as Mary Durham. The record also shows that Caty has at least one brother named Patrick Fitzgerald, which means Caty was born a Fitzgerald, which in turn means her mother Mary, who is now a Durham, was once a Fitzgerald by marriage. It also means that she has remarried to a Durham.

There is no record to show that she married Thomas Durham but there were no other Durhams in the area and the inexorable logic of this and other information, says that she was probably a Fitzgerald widow that married James Durham's father Thomas Durham.

3. If the Mary Durham in the record was previously Mary Fitzgerald a widow, and that seems to be a 100% safe educated assumption, then that also means Thomas Durham was a widower prior to remarrying. By extension then, that means the mother of Thomas' children, James, David and Isaac, died prior to 1793 and possibly in the late 1770s to early 1780s. Possibly of childbirth or related complications.

My conclusion from this and other records is that Mary Fitzgerald, widow of James Fitzgerald Sr. of Orange County Virginia, went to live with her son Bartlett Fitzgerald, circa 1788/89, who lived on the north fork of the Tye River in Amherst County next to Thomas Durham, as deed records show. As a widower, Thomas Durham married the widow Mary Fitzgerald and then Thomas's son James married Mary's daughter Catherine.