

A Journey Through My Female Past

My name is Robert Black. I'm a native born Canadian, and for twenty-five years was a clergyman and seminary professor. At mid-life I re-tooled, and since have been a Jungian psychologist in private practice in the Toronto area. The great continuity in my life has been genealogy. From earliest memories, my well known seemingly exotic American born grandmother -- source of alluring "ethnic" foods like grits, ice cream floats, iced coffee, cake donuts and date squares -- entranced me with stories of her own grandmother's Abolitionist activities and odd Quaker phrases.

It did not take me long to learn that Anna Barbara, the spouse of an American immigrant known as Peter Kivett, was my most distant known mitochondrial ancestor - eight generations back. But no matter how hard I searched, Anna Barbara's origins seemed to be as mysterious as those of her husband, although even less known. After allowing this mystery to fester away for years, in late 2013 I did a Google search for her and her husband. The first substantial hit was the Peter Kivett Family Association [PKFA] website, the contents of which I devoured with admiration and great interest. Almost immediately I approached the webmaster to express my thanks and to report on my unusual connection to our common ancestress. In his response he "blew me away" by proposing to find a PKFA member or members who would cover the cost of a mt-DNA test on me. Our shared optimistic vision was that such a science based test might lead to a possible identity of Anna Barbara's ancestry.

Evolving Genealogy:

We have all traditionally thought of our genealogy in terms of long lines of people sharing a common surname. When I first started researching more than fifty years ago, nothing tickled me more than being able to tack someone else onto one of those lineages. Society as a whole had long emphasized the importance of men at the expense of women. Beginning in our parent's lifetime, society started to change in how it thought about and treated women. I came to realize that this conventional way of thinking was, to use a hot word, "patriarchal." There is certainly nothing wrong with fathers, but to be honest, I started to become even more curious about mothers, with whose marriage their birth surname still became lost. For this seasoned genealogical researcher, success with the task of reconnecting a female ancestor with her surname and family of origin has now become the ultimate thrill and satisfaction.

Science to the Rescue:

Over the past couple of decades developments in the study of human genetics have stepped in to help, at least a bit. Now the direct line of female ancestors can be tracked through a genetic test, and genealogists are slowly beginning to use this additional information to "break through the brick wall" of stymied research in female lines.

Here is a tiny bit about this science: Our DNA – deoxyribonucleic acid – is a protein molecule that encodes the genetic instructions used in our development and functioning. This complex biological information storage system, turns out to be incredibly robust. It can be tested in a wide variety of ways. Two types of DNA are particularly useful to genealogists, because they do not change except for rare and random mutations. The Y-chromosome (the short form known as yDNA or Y-DNA) is carried only by men. But everyone carries a ring of DNA inside every cell, whose function is to help the cell metabolize oxygen. This is called the mitochondrial DNA (mt-DNA). Unlike the y-DNA, it is inherited only from the mother – extending in a long line of mothers going back thousands of years.

As before noted, my direct female line extends through a known paper trail back to Anna Barbara (Unknown) Kivett. I'm definitely not the only such person alive, but as it turns out, I was the first to identify myself to the Peter Kivett Family Association as having that direct connection to our common ancestress.

Here is my story of that connection:

With conventional, paper research it wasn't hard to trace my "female line" direct lineage. My well known mother was born **Barbara Ruth Moore** (1927-2005), and of course I knew as well her own mother, born **Lauretta Ethel Davis** (1890-1980). Barbara, besides being a wife and mother, was a keyboard musician and piano teacher who served as an organist both in a local congregation and a hospital chapel. Her mother, Ethel, likewise was a practicing Christian who played music for the Methodist congregation in the village of Demaine, Saskatchewan, where her husband ran the general store and dabbled in real estate.

Stateside readers of this story are usually curious to learn how someone from an early colonial and Patriot background could wind up establishing a line in Canada. This one goes this way: I was born in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada, as was my mother. But my grandmother, Lauretta Ethel Moore, (as she became in 1921) was a native of Kansas. Her father, a Methodist minister, had died when she was six. Her mother "Nora" remained a widow with Ethel and her five surviving siblings in a Wichita city house left to her by her late husband's church, struggling to make ends meet by baking, sewing, and washing clothes for neighbors. Being adventurous, as well as in need of summer jobs, in 1913 a still single 23 year old Ethel agreed to do childcare for friends "improving land" in far off western Canada. At the time, by breaking sod and building a farm in rural Saskatchewan these friends from Kansas were being offered free grant of Canadian land, which after a time they could sell and return to the States with the cash.

However, fate in the form of romance appeared for my grandmother Ethel while away on this across the border assignment. Not long after arriving in Canada she met and fell in love with a neighbor woman's brother, Bert Moore. Fate in the form of WW-I struck in 1917 when Bert was drafted into the military and assigned to other parts of Canada for extended periods. Parts of these she spent helping her mother back at her city home in Wichita, but their love proved stronger than unwanted separation. They stayed in touch. A few years after war's end, Bert had built a house and bought a store in Saskatchewan. By now he was so settled into loyalty to things Imperial that Ethel's attempts to convince him to emigrate to the States to wed were futile. With these restrictions, the only option that love gave was for Ethel to emigrate to marry and become Bert's wife on the Canadian prairie she had also grown to love. Her only everlasting regret was the loss of her US citizenship – a loss partly overcome through transplanting her embedded heritage of "America the Beautiful" and "Stars and Stripes Forever" in her four children and ten grandchildren. So perhaps readers living in the USA can fondly think of her as one of their more successful female secret agents.

Ethel's mother back in Kansas, as mentioned before, had been married to a Methodist minister named Britton Davis (1858-1896). Her birth name was **Leonora Estella Woody** (1863-1943). She was a native of Chatham County, North Carolina. ("Ah-ha!", some of you will be saying, "Now we are getting closer to Anna Barbara Kivett.") She was a birthright Quaker and her parents, both Quaker preachers, were deeply and vociferously involved in implementing pro-African American programs in the occupation government of North Carolina during the period of Federal reconstruction (1865-1877). When the reins of power were handed back to locally-elected officials, their very lives were threatened for such radical activity. Out of growing fear they were forced to join in the extensive Quaker exodus out of North Carolina. Theirs was to a farm in Rose Hill, Butler County, Kansas. Unfortunately "Nora" lost more than her extended family, as left behind or relocated to other parts of the Midwest. Shortly after their arrival in

Kansas her father John Milton Woody (1835-1878) died of typhoid, leaving her mother **Leanna Lydia Cox** (1840-1923) a widow. Leanna kept their farm just east of Wichita operating and waited nine years to marry another preacher, Philip Sylvanus Commons (1826-1893).

The hardy Leanna Cox, in turn, was the daughter of a major Quaker campaigner named Isham Cox (1815-1894), a "mover and shaker" of the Cane Creek Monthly Meeting and a trustee of Guilford College. There is much documentation that remains from and about him, including some correspondence with the woman he convinced to become a Quaker and marry him in 1837, **Lavina Eunice Brower** (1815-1878). Her conversion brought some difficulties, as the story is that she inherited slaves from her Brower family. Her acquired Quaker beliefs caused her to feel duty bound to free them, yet there was no legal way in North Carolina to educate them. Education was "a Quaker thing" that they believed enabled one not just to survive, but to flourish in a free life. Lavina's yet to be son-in-law, Milton Woody, taught these slaves secretly - at this time legally prohibited. Then, around 1858 he accompanied them to Indiana where relatives found them employment. My grandmother Ethel when yet a teenager, later met one of them who was visiting her grandmother Leanna Cox Woody Commons. They had flourished, as rejoined exiles from NC on a porch in Kansas talking about past flights for new lives.

Lavina's Methodist and slave-holding father was Col. Abram Brower (1785-1864), a businessman and farmer. He sat in the North Carolina state legislature representing Randolph County during the years 1821-27 and 1829-34. This Internet link offers several pictures of the large house in Liberty NC of which it is reported that Lavinia's mother, **Lydia Scotten Brower**, (1785-1869) was once the mistress:

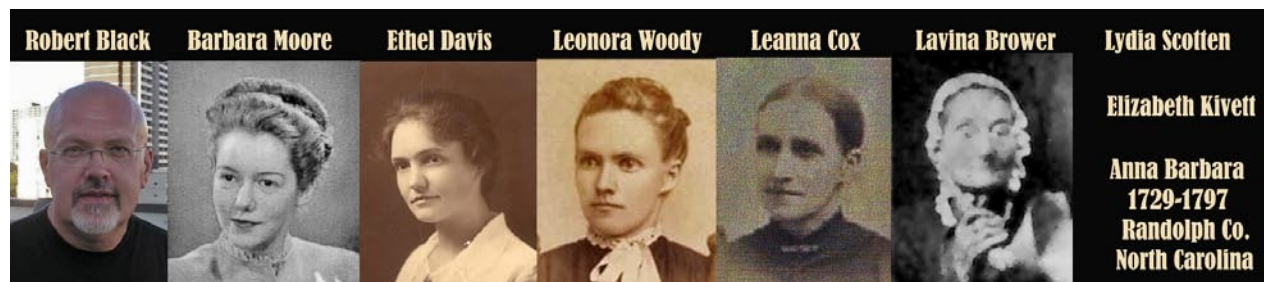
<http://randolphhistory.wordpress.com/2009/03/27/abram-brower-house-liberty/>

We can extrapolate from its size, and from what has been preserved by the Randolph County Historical Society, that as the spouse of a politician, merchant, land-developer, and farmer, and mother of his seven children, Lydia was a woman of influence and importance in that region.

This may also apply to Lydia's mother **Elizabeth Kivett Scotten** (1762-1835), whose husband John Scotten died in 1823 in time for the widowed Elizabeth to petition the Randolph County Court for a year's allowance. Court records show that the widowed Elizabeth bought one of her husband's two slaves, and her son-in-law Abram Brower bought the other. Elizabeth's own estate, of size to warrant such, is recorded as having been filed for probate in February 1836.

Finally, for now, this Elizabeth Scotten was named in the will of Peter Kivett (1726-1794) as the daughter of he and his wife **Anna Barbara (Unknown)** (1729-1797). Piety is shown to have extended into Anna Barbara's life from the inscription left on her stone in McMasters Cemetery: *"All you my children as you try to remember, Here your mother lies. My job above this earth is raised to Jesus, There to sing his praise."*

The female players in this real life story, depicted by this series of available images, has been long stopped here. Now it has a new mt-DNA pathway into an emerging more distant past.



Guidance on into a Far Distant Ancestral Past:

I learned during my early university studies, from anthropology, that since our legal and political systems in the West have tended to emphasize property inheritance by men, the male of the species usually had more of a reason to stay put in a locality, and as a general tendency, did not often travel far from their ancestral areas. On the other hand, women almost always “married out” and in time a mitochondrial lineage could travel tremendous distances.

I found that this was certainly true on the male side of my genealogy. I had a test of my Y-chromosome in 2003, and found that the birthplace of my great-grandfather in Scotland was in the same area as his genetic ancestors are on record for the previous eight thousand years!

Anna Barbara’s lineage, on the other hand, is rare but widely scattered. Her Haplotype H6a1b3 identified by my test, according to literature available on line in 2013, is found in less than one tenth of one percent of the European population! The future can only shed more light on this elusive line. It is hard to make firm conclusions about it – but from the presently-available evidence, it is possible that her immediate ancestors were from the region of Bern, Switzerland, where an unusual four-tenths of a percent of the identified H6a1b3 population has resided. She herself may not have been born there, nor her mother or grandmother, although it is possible.

The most likely scenario in my mind, with the presently-available evidence, is that she was born in the area where Holland and Germany meet, the area most devastated in previous centuries by the wars between France and the German princely states. Paper history reports resettlement of those areas by German-speaking people drawn from surplus populations in Germany, Switzerland, the Hanseatic states, and other culturally-Germanic populations. The story behind this story, of course, is the religious wars of the 16th century, and the apparent (and not surprising) fact that our ancestors behind Anna Barbara were committed Protestants.

No genealogist ever writes a conclusion -- by definition, a family tree is alive and keeps on growing world without end. There is always more to know. But I will say by way of farewell that the question of Anna Barbara and her female-line ancestors is now, for me, brought into bright and sharp focus as a result of this test. Additional test results will follow from other people descended from her presently unknown sisters and female cousins, and in time the mystery of Anna Barbara's origins WILL be solved. But even now, with the facts of her specific, yet mysterious, and highly scattered female-line lineage known, we know there is an exciting tale to be discovered. We have a first hint that our ancestors in the female line behind her are hardy and widely-travelled. And we could probably safely say they were faithful and committed women from whom it can only be an honor and a blessing to descend.

by Robert Black, as told to Bill Kivett