

James Tarpley - Mary Oldham Argument

Virginia

The debate about the wife of James Tarpley Jr.

(the question may be- "Which James Tarpley Jr. are we talking about?")

The Oldham family heirs have claimed that James Tarpley (born 8 May 1692 North Farnham Parish, Richmond Co., VA) actually married Mary Oldham rather than Mary Camp. In her article "Who was the Mary, wife of James Tarpley of Richmond and Brunswick Co., VA?", published in *The Virginia Genealogist*, Vol. 37, No. 1, p. 38, Jan.-Mar. 1993 Margaret Macdonald claims that Judge Zelma Wells Price in her book on her ancestry, Of Whom I Came, From Whence I Came published in 1963 made some serious genealogical errors. Ms Macdonald contends that she over looked key facts that should have told her that the James Tarpley of Brunswick,. the son of James Tarpley who married Mary Biddlecomb, had married Mary Oldham.

It is conceivable that Mary Oldham did marry a James Tarpley. However, the numbers of records verifying the marriage to Mary Camp or Mary Oldham are virtually non-existent. Judge Price was basing her information on what was "good family sources" and Ms Macdonald is basing it on census, tax records and known wills. She gives no real proof of a recorded marriage any more than Judge Price. She is largely using naming patterns and a few existing records and is making some leaps of faith about the longevity of James Tarpley. According to Russ Williams' construction of Judge Price's research, Ms Macdonald seems to have skipped one generation of the Tarpley family and merged two different James Tarpley documents into one individual. According to her, James Tarpley Jr. is born 8 May 1692 and dies in 1781 in Brunswick County at the age of 89. The first birth date does belong to [James Tarpley](#) (b. 8 May 1692 North Farnham Parish, Richmond Co., VA), in my records, but who, according to other researchers, died about 1765 perhaps in or near Charlotte Co., VA. There is no will or record to verify this. He is, according to Judge Price, the James Tarpley who married Mary Camp 5 Jan 1733/34 King and Queen Co., VA. They in turn have a son, James Tarpley Jr. (b. 21 Jul 1743 North Farnham, VA), who is about the right age to have married but we have no wife listed for him. (see James Tarpley II of my records)

The death date Ms Macdonald uses for James Tarpley may be more accurately placed to the James Tarpley, son of William Tarpley (b. 16 Mar, 1695), according to my records, who in turn was the son of James Tarpley and Mary Biddlecomb. William Tarpley's wife is Mary. It is possible that William may have married an Oldham. This son of William, James Tarpley, seems to have married a ----- Williams, dau. of John Williams (b.c1701 d. 1751) whose wife is Mary. Other early Tarpley deeds suggest that this James Tarpley's wife is Tabitha. Some researchers have listed Tabitha as an Oldham. James and his wife Tabitha made a sale on Sept. 30, 1779, to Drury Matthews in fee simple, 200 acres of land in the Parish of St. Andrews in Brunswick Co., before Thomas Edmunds, William Walker, and John Hawkins, because it was convenient for her to travel to the courthouse to renounce her dower. Two of the men were to make sure that she did so voluntarily. John Hawkins and William Walker reported to the court on Jan. 30, 1781, that she did so. These documents do not make any references to any Oldham family in any capacity, even as a witness, whereas, you do find Hugh Williams listed. He seems to be a possible brother of Tabitha. Although Ms Macdonald states that Hugh is not the brother of Mary Tarpley, he could be the brother of Tabitha since Winifred Tarpley is listed as a niece in his will of 30 Oct 1780.

The will (of my records) gives the death of James Tarpley I who is not disputed by either Judge Price or Ms Mcdonald. If the James Tarpley of my records existed there is no will to base his death date on. The only usable Tarpley will of the approximate time period is the one argued by Ms Macdonald to fit her 89 year old ancestor. This is the last will and testimony of James Tarpley found in Brunswick County, Virginia, order Book 2, p. 167, as follows:

Will of James Tarpley

In the name of God Amen I James Tarpley of the parish of Saint Andrews and County of Brunswick being of perfect sense and memory to make and ordain this my last will & Testament in manner and form following Imprimis I give and bequeath to my son John Tarpley one feather bed & such furniture as can conveniently be made, and my blacksmith tools that he has now in possession. **Item** I give and bequeath to my Daughter Winifred Tarpley one feather bed & furniture one cow & calf, my mother less colt, and my woman's saddle at my wife's death, one pewter dish and bason & six pewter plates and my chest of drawers. **Item** I give and bequeath to my son William Tarpley my two work steers cart & wheels, great bible, casks of all kinds, and all my tools of all kinds not already given, **Item** I give and bequeath to my sons Thomas & James Tarpley to each of them one shilling. **Item** all the rest of my estate I lend to my loving wife during her natural life and at her death to be equally divided between my following children, viz: John, Charles, William and Winifred Tarpley, Sarah Elmore, and Elizabeth Alling. **Item** I make and ordain constitute & appoint my two sons John and William Tarpley my whole & sole Executors of this my last will and Testament In witness whereof I here-unto set my hand and Seal this 22d day of July 1780. Item my will desire is that my Estate be not appraised.

Signed Sealed published &
declared in presence of
Hugh Williams
Charles Matthis
Drury Matthis

The will above does not make a reference to any Oldham connections but the Williams connection is made with Hugh Williams as a witness. So even if this James Tarpley is the same person it still does not give an Oldham family connection. It does not have the correct children listed according to the N. Farnham Parish records. The James Tarpley of my record doesn't have a child named Charles or William, and he does have a Mary that is not listed. It seems that this will is better suited for James Tarpley, son of William Tarpley below.

The **James Tarpley** below (b. c 1752 d. 1791 of Russ Williams records) is listed in the will of William Tarpley and is the one with the references to the Oldham family in Brunswick County. This James made his Last Will and Testament in 2 Nov. 1791. Proved 6 Feb 1792. He lived in Charlotte County, Virginia and named one of his sons Oldham Tarpley who married, Mary, widow of William Brown. The will of this James Tarpley is quoted by Ms Macdonald as proof of the marriage of James Tarpley (born 8 May 1692) to Mary Oldham. Certainly Winifred Tarpley, James' sister, marries Isaac Oldham. The family lineation that I have below comes from the records of Russ Williams.

William Tarpley family

William Tarpley (son of James Tarpley I and Mary Biddlecombe)
born: 16 Mar, 1695 * d. ? m. Mary _____

Mary Tarpley b. Dec. 7, 1723 * m. George Taylor (son of Simon Taylor) had five children
John Tarpley b. Sep. 29, 1729* d. after 1782 m. a Starling or Tillman)
James Tarpley b. Dec. 8, 1731* d. St. Andrews Parish, Bruswick Co., VA 1780-81 m. _____
Williams (dau. of John and Mary Williams)
Hannah Tarpley b. Jan. 6, 1735 North Farnham Parish, VA*

*childrens birthdates listed in North Farnham Parish rec. [McGhan p. 457] [records of Russ

Williams]

James Tarpley family

James Tarpley (son of William Tarpley and Mary___)
 b. Dec. 1731 d. St. Andrews Parish, Brunswick Co., VA 1780-81
 m. _____ Williams (dau. of John and Mary Williams)

John Tarpley md. Agnes Moore 1 June 1775 Chalotte Co., VA.
 Winnifred Tarpley md. Isaac Richard Oldham 29 Dec. 1786 Brunswick Co., VA

William Tarpley m. Betty Almond Jr. (dau. of John Almond) Jan. 1782 Charlotte Co., VA
 Thomas Tarpley m. Milly Moore 16 oct 1786 St. Andrews Parish, Brunswick Co, VA (relative
 of Samuel Moore)

James Tarpley b. c1752 d. 1791 Cornwall Co., VA m. (? possibly Mary Oldham)

Charles Tarpley (resident of Brunswick Co, VA 1773)

Sarah Tarpley m. James Elmore d. before 1804 , lived Charlotte Co. VA

Elizabeth Tarpley m. _____ Alling

[records of Russ Williams]

James Tarpley family

James Tarpley (son of James Tarpley and _____ Williams)
 b. about 1752 d. 1791 Cornwall Parish, Charlotte Co., VA
 m. _____ unknown (?possibly an Oldham)

Mary Tarpley m. John Eudailey 1 Oct. 1787 by Rev. Thomas Johnston

Elizabeth "Betsey" Tarpley c. before 1806 m. David Michael Miller 15 Sep 1791 by Rev.
 Edward Almond

William Tarpley d. Charlotte Co., 1794 m. Mary Oliver (dau. of John Olliver) 29 May
 1792

Robert "Robbin" Thomas Tarpley m. Jancy Gears 5 Apr. 1799 Prince Edward Co., VA (dau.
 of Thomas Gears

John Tarpley

Oldham Tarpley m. Mary (widow of William Brown) June 1810

Peterson Tarpley

Nancy "Ann" Tarpley b. 2 July 1768 Brunswick Co., m. Carloss Featherston 28 Aug 1794

[records of Russ Williams]

The Oldham connection may have gone back much earlier in the Tarpley and Oldham family than any of these researchers indicate. The Kentucky Family Records, Vol. 1 page 65 lists The Tarpley Oldham bible. It has Tarpley Oldham born on August 24, 1765, no place of birth is given but he is supposed to have married Polly (his first wife died Oct. 1812) in Franklin Co., VA. in 1790. He dies May 21, 1837 probably in Kentucky. They had ten children, one son named Tarpley Oldham born Mar 9, 1800 who dies 1810 and another son, James Tarpley Oldham born Feb. 20, 1816 who died Feb 13 1893. This Tarpley Oldham could not be the child of Isaac Oldham and Winnifred Tarpley, the sister to James Tarpley, because they didn't marry until 1786 according to my records.

The connection of [James Tarpley](#) (of my records) to the [Mary Camp](#) family is no easier to make. Judge Price does seem to be developing a family with little to no presently available documentation. What

records she may have had have been lost in subsequent years. None of this precludes the fact that any of these James Tarpleys may have had a first or second marriage to a Mary Oldham or that James Tarpley actually married a widowed, Mary Oldham who may actually have been originally of the Camp family. MS Macdonald has used deductive reasoning to come to her conclusion that this is the only possible explanation based on her discovery of only three Mary Tarpleys in Virginia. She states that there is twenty years difference in the ages of James and Mary. She also claims that Mary Oldham was born 25 June 1712 in Farnham Parish, Virginia, the daughter of John Oldham who lived in the same area of James Tarpley (son of James Tarpley and _____ Williams). This means that our suspect James Tarpley was twenty years old when she was born, he could easily have been married and raised other children before she was of marriagable age. It seems very reasonable to me based on discoveries in my other families that James could probably have had a second wife or even third wife and a prior family within the twenty years difference, especially if he has the kind of virility and longevity Ms Macdonald is projecting. Even Ms Macdonald says "The younger James Tarpley seems not to have married before 1733." She seems to be using the marriage date that we have for Mary Camp, as the marriage date to Mary Oldham and all subsequent children hers alone and I have no earlier marriage date for James. The will used to identify Mary Oldham as a Tarpley was not made until 29 Jan.1765.

Ms Macdonald brings up an interesting series of coincidences and documents that do need to be fitted into the makeup of the Tarpley, Camp, and Oldham family history. But based on present information in her records, conflicts over dates, and other researchers best efforts, I am not convinced that we have all the facts or the correct individuals. The birth date of Mary, daughter of John and Sarah Oldham on June 25, 1712 is coming from the North Farnham Parish records but there is no marriage record for either Mary Camp or Mary Oldham to a James Tarpley. The date of birth Ms Macdonald uses is very troubling. The elimination of this James Tarpley/Mary Camp marriage would drastically alter the ancestral line and eliminate the Tarpley / Brashear families. I need more proof, bible records, marriage records or other wills to nail this down. There are simply too many Tarpleys and Marys in the same region with the same names to make easy assumptions even if they are living on the same property. Until such time as as firm documentation is found, I will maintain the Mary Camp marriage and family as listed.

1777, June 23 - James Tarpley (of Ms Macdonald's records) is excused from paying further levies. No reason is given but it is theorized by Ms Macdonald that it was due to being eighty-five years of age. I have seen other examples for being excused including being lame or injured. I would also have expected that he would have received this kind of excuse at an earlier age than eight-five since very few people survived to this ancient age at that time. [Brunswick Co., VA Order Bk. 13, p. 156]

1779, March 6 - James Tarpley Sr.(of Ms Macdonald's records), sold to Wiliam Tarpley all of Brunswick, 200 acres for £100. James and Mary Tarpley were to have use of the plantation during their lifetime. Thomas Tarpley was a witness. [Brunswick Co., VA Deed Bk. 13, p. 243]

sources:

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web pages created by Elroy Christenson- elroy@next1000.com - last updated 8/10/10