



# Could Susanna [106] Stedham Be the Natural Mother of Samuel [166] Stidham?

By just two generations, a chance of autosomal DNA testing would be just out of reach of providing a credible answer

*By Richard L. Steadham*

One of the big disappointments we took away from the results of the Stidham\* Family DNA Study back in 2000 was that participants descending from one major branch of the Adam line, that of Samuel [166] Stidham, were found *not* to be carrying the same Y-chromosome fingerprint as others in the study. Participants descending from Lucas, Benedictus and a different branch of the Adam line, all carried closely matching Y-chromosome signatures. The branch in question stemmed from the family of Christopher [33] Stedham and his sons Adam [102] and Zacharias [105] Stedham.

In the “Cartledge Connection” article (Issue #46, Spring 2010, page 14), we delved into the possibility that the genetic father of Samuel *may have been* Edmund Cartledge, Jr., who lived on the eastern side of the Susquehanna River in Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania, not far from Christopher Stedham, who resided on the western side in York Co. It was noted that an exact Y-67 marker-match had been found between one of Samuel’s descendants and one from the Cartledge DNA project at Family Tree DNA, proving a recent common ancestor between them.

Our late President, David Stidham, a descendant of Samuel [166] Stidham himself, believed his line was *still* genetically descended from Timen Stiddem, though not on the male side. He concluded it must have been through a Stidham\* daughter who would have carried the blood of Dr. Stid-

dem down his line, even if not through the Y-signature. If that *was* the case, after searching the family tree for a possible candidate, I now believe that female was *more than likely* Susanna [106] Stedham, daughter of Christopher and Johanna Stedham, as well as sister of both Adam and Zacharias Stedham.

Here’s what we know.

Susanna was born 14 Apr 1729, probably in New Castle Co., Del., the same as her two older brothers, though we don’t know her exact birth location for sure. It could have been in York Co., Pa., where she would later marry Robert Mills, Jr., also of York Co. The date of this marriage is unknown. This union produced four children: Mary, Susanna, Elizabeth and John Mills, all born circa the late 1740s to the early 1750s, though exact years are uncertain.

And now a question arises.

Jack Stidham states in *The Descendants of Dr. Timothy Stidham, Vol. 1*, that Samuel [166] Stidham was born in 1747. But, was it in the Old Bladen District of North Carolina as he had surmised in his book, or could it have been back in York Co., Pennsylvania? I’m suggesting it was the later.

Susanna was 17 to 18 years old and still unmarried (if my supposition holds water) when Samuel was born, which if she *was* his natural mother, created a most unpleasant family problem for her parents, not to mention the unsavory reputation she would carry with her as a young unmarried woman. Could the solution to this unpleasantness have been



to send the newborn, Samuel, south to the Carolinas—in haste, no doubt—with his uncle Adam to henceforth be known as Adam’s son? There are no extant documents, such as wills or land transactions, tying Adam together with Samuel as father and son, only circumstantial evidence, that is, both being in the same North Carolina locations at the same time. In a new state, far away from where an illicit birth might have taken place, a new identity could easily be established and a family secret kept.

To pry the lock open on this 267-year-old secret—if that’s what it was—autosomal DNA testing *may* someday hold the key, but the science isn’t there yet and it must be stressed that it would be a *remote* possibility at that. Family Tree DNA’s “Family Finder” test would be the key, however, the test results only guarantee a determination of autosomal relationships as far back as 5th cousins. Descendants of brothers Adam [102] and Zacharias [105] Stedham living today are in the 7th cousins range, not 5th.

As a DNA refresher: Fathers pass their Y-chromosome down to their sons from generation to generation. Daughters receive an X-chromosome from their fathers, but isn’t passed down. These are known as *allosomes* (sex chromosomes). Other than the allosome, we each have 22 other pairs (46 total), half derived from our mothers, the other half from our fathers. These are the autosomes which are expressed in the “Family Finder” test.

If only there *were* descendants of Adam and his brother Zacharias Stedham alive today who were 5th cousins, we might have been able to see—though faintly—if there *were* genetic connections among these participants’ autosomes. Unfortunately, that possibility remains out of reach.

Maybe someday science will make possible our quest to answer the question as to whether or not Suzanna *was* the biological mother of Samuel. It’s an intriguing question, which has a reasonable answer, although for now, unprovable through science.

**The Susquehanna River as seen from the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania side looking north. Susanna Stedham and her family would have lived on the western side (left) in York County.**

Richard L. Steadham, editor of this newsletter, is also the Group Administrator of the Stidham/Steadham DNA Project at Family Tree DNA. If you think FTDNA’s Family Finder test might help solve some of your other genealogy puzzles, contact him to find out how to join. Email: [RStidhem@gmail.com](mailto:RStidhem@gmail.com)