

THE ADAM EPTING – MARY VARDAMAN PUZZLE

by

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We have long been puzzled by a DAR record in which a **Mary Vardaman** is reported to be the wife of a Revolutionary War patriot named **Adam Epting** of Newberry County, South Carolina. We have been at a complete loss to identify who this Mary Vardaman could be. The only Vardaman family known to be in this area (or in all of South Carolina) during the Revolutionary War period is that of "Old" William (William¹) Vardaman and his youngest son James. As a result, we had, in the past, conjectured, without conviction, that she may have been a daughter of William¹, possibly with his second (or third) wife, Bridgit Tinkler, who was the mother of his son James. However, we have never found even the remotest clue or hint to support such a possibility and, in fact, based on Epting family records, it cannot be the answer.

There was, indeed, an **Adam F(rederick?) Epting** (1752 - ca 1780), son of a John Epting (1715 - 1767) and Christina Barbara Oslander. This Epting family migrated from Wuerttemberg, Germany, to South Carolina, ca 1749 settling in the "Dutch Fork" area of what later became Newberry County. The Epting family is extensively documented in the history of that area. Adam F. Epting married **Anna Christina Setzler**, who survived him and was the mother of his children. This effectively eliminates any possibility of his marriage to a Vardaman.

Note: Some records refer to him as Adam "Fenwyck" Epting rather than Adam Frederick Epting, but, despite the different middle names, based on dates, the names of his parents, etc., they are the same person. The preponderance of records that include a middle name or initial refer to him only as Adam F. Epting. Actually, I could find no documented record for any middle name at all but have tentatively accepted the middle name of Frederick, which appears in a preponderance of those family tree records which include a middle name, as the more likely to be correct. However, since middle names for men had not yet become common at the time of his birth, it would not surprise me to learn that he had no middle name at all.

All of the Epting family records that I have been able to locate, provide, unequivocally, that the Adam Epting from Newberry County, SC, who participated as a patriot in the Revolutionary War, was never married to a Vardaman. In fact, I was unable to locate any record whatsoever of a marriage of a Vardaman female to an Epting male of any given name.

As a result, we have subsequently concluded that, as in so many other records of this type, this DAR record is in error in naming a Mary Vardaman as the wife of Revolutionary War patriot Adam Epting and that no such person as she ever existed.

Now, at long last, I have, identified a clear and understandable explanation as to how this error most likely originated, as follows:

(1) We know that **James Vardaman** (ca 1750 - 1797), a Revolutionary War veteran himself, is confirmed as having been married to **Jane (Jean) Johnson** (ca 1765 - 1825), who was his second wife. She was the daughter of **Daniel** and **Ann (Anderson) Johnson**, and was the mother of several of James' daughters.

(2) Adam Frederick Epting was the Revolutionary War soldier who was the qualifying patriot for the person who was seeking membership in the DAR

(3) I now have confirmed information that Jane (Johnson) Vardaman's sister, **Nancy Johnson** (1766-1825) was married to **David Cannon** (1759-1826) and that David and Nancy Cannon's oldest child, daughter **Mary Cannon** (1781-1848), was married to **Jacob Epting** (1775-1816), son of Revolutionary War patriot, **Adam Frederick Epting** and **Anna Christina Setzler**.

(4) Notwithstanding the above confirmed record of the marriage of Mary Cannon to **Jacob Epting**, son of Revolutionary War veteran, **Adam Frederick Epting**, the following statement appears on page 17 of the book "*Genealogy of a Branch of the Johnson Family and Connections*", revised and continued by *Penelope Johnson Allen*, privately published by Helen Betts Miller in 1967:

"Uncle and Aunt had 10 children: Mary, Ann, Sarah, Martha, William, Mahala. Samuel, George, David, and Thomas. Mary married Adam Epton (sic) and lived down the creek from Uncle's."

The statement quoted above is contained in *Part One* of the above cited book. "*Part One*" is a recounting of the information related to the early history of this branch of the Johnson family found in the manuscripts of **Col. Ephraim M. Johnson** (1803-1884), grandson of Daniel and Ann (Anderson) Johnson and nephew of **Jane Johnson** who married **James Vardaman**. It is included in a section where Col. Johnson is outlining the families of his various Johnson family aunts and uncles and is a list of the children of his **Aunt Nancy (Johnson) Cannon** and her husband **David Cannon**.

The name "Epton" in the above cited reference is incorrect and should be "Epting". There are numerous records of this branch of the Johnson family and, except for the above record, Nancy Cannon always appears in these records married to **Jacob Epting** and that he was the son of Adam Frederick Epting who was, in turn, a son of John Epting, the original Epting family emigrant to America.

Note: The above is just one of many errors contained in Col. Johnson's notes, as cited in the above referenced book, including several of which pertain to the James and Jane (Johnson) Vardaman family but which I will not elaborate on in this document.

(5) Nancy and David Cannon were sister and brother-in-law to Jane (Johnson) Vardaman and her husband James Vardaman . Nancy and David Cannon's, daughter, Mary (Cannon) Epting, was a niece to Jane (Johnson) Vardaman, as well as the daughter-in-law of Adam Frederick Epting.

(6) While the above might not appear to readily morph into a clear cause for erroneously connecting Adam Epting to a non existent wife named Mary Vardaman, it does provide a familial connection between the two families and could have very easily have led someone to mistakenly identify Mary Cannon (a niece of James and Jane Vardaman and Adam Epting's daughter-in-law) as a daughter of James and Jane (Johnson) Vardaman.

The above would be especially true for anyone familiar with the Johnson Family History book cited above and aware of the statement that Mary (*Cannon*) was married to an "Adam Epton (*Epting*)". See item no. 7 (the next paragraph below) which further supports this type of error

(7) If you happen to be familiar with the above referenced book, you will have noted that Col. Johnson does not identify the "*Uncle and Aunt*" in the above passage by their actual names but only as "**Uncle and Aunt**". This compels the reader to search back in the narrative to determine their proper identity. As previously stated, the above cited statement from the book is from a section where Col. E. M. Johnson is very briefly outlining the families of his Johnson family aunts and uncles. The section devoted to his Aunt Nancy (Johnson) Cannon, wife of David Cannon, follows immediately after the information for his Aunt Jane (Johnson) Vardaman, wife of James Vardaman,

Although the two sections are properly identified in separate paragraphs, due to the way that the material is presented, it is not at all difficult to realize that a casual reader might look back to see just which aunt and uncle Col. Johnson is referring to in this passage and very easily – and mistakenly – identify them as Jane (Johnson) and James Vardaman instead of Nancy (Johnson) and David Cannon. In this case the daughter "***Mary who married Adam Epton***" would be incorrectly identified as **Mary "Vardaman"**, daughter of James and Jane (Johnson) Vardaman, instead of **Mary Cannon**, daughter of David and Nancy (Johnson) Cannon.

The above, together with Col. Johnson's initial error in identifying Mary (*Cannon*) Epting's husband as "Adam Epton" instead of his son, Jacob Epting, would clearly explain how this erroneous information probably came into existence.

(8) It should be noted that *Parts One* and *Two* of the above referenced Johnson family book – which now contains four parts – were originally published under the same title in **1893**. As a result, all of the information contained in *Parts One* and *Two* of this book

has been available to researchers in a published version for well over a hundred years and could have easily become included in a myriad of other publications and documents.

Conclusion

I believe that the information included herein is important to any Vardaman (however spelled) family researcher in that it provides a very reasonable and logical explanation to support a conclusion that the related DAR record is erroneous in stating that Adam Epting was married to a **non-existent** Mary Vardaman.

THE END