

# The Progenitor Myth

Adam Meek of Lincolnshire, England

by Christopher A. Meek

---

When I was young, long before I really became interested in genealogy, I found a two-page genealogy written by an uncle concerning my mother's family. Mother told me that she thought that her brother had obtained the information from the State Library. My first exploration into genealogical research was successful. I found the book that my uncle had taken the information from. It was an old book with the look of authority. Who could doubt it? In fact it did not occurred to me that it might not be true.

Unfortunately, on my second trip to the library I found a well-researched article in a magazine, which cast doubt on much that was contained in the book I had read on my previous trip. It appeared that I was not a descendant of William the Conqueror after all. My interest in genealogy waned but I never forgot that experience.

Ten years later I renewed my interest in genealogy and in due course found an old book in a library which told of the origins of my Meek family. Now, 30 years after my first genealogical experience, I am writing an article which cast doubt on some of the conclusions in the old book about my Meek family.

In 1902 H. B. Meek published a book in which he described the descendants of Adam Meek of Lincolnshire, England who was born in 1640. Specifically, he reported on the descendants of Adam's son Jacob Meek. The author stated that Jacob was born in 1698 and that he migrated to Virginia at the age of 21. He further stated that Jacob went to North Carolina and then to Hagerstown, Maryland. Finally, the author details 16 children of Jacob along with some of their descendants.

These supposed children of Jacob Meek constitute a significant number of the Meek families that generally migrated along a Northern route across the United States. Eight of the 13 sons moved to Southwest Pennsylvania before migrating to Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. Researchers have been able to find some documentation to support the existence of many of the supposed sons and some researcher have been able to compile impressive genealogies that trace back to this group of men.

However, over the last one hundred years researchers have failed to find any documentation to support the connection between Jacob Meek and the children listed in the book<sup>1</sup>. Many books, unpublished papers and now material on the Internet have reported that their genealogy goes back to Jacob Meek and subsequently, Adam Meek. However, not one genealogist has been able to provide any documentation to support that contention. In fact all that they can do is to repeat the information provided by H. B. Meek in 1902 or that of the numerous people who used him as source.

The major focus of this article is to explore the reliability of the information contained in the book by H. B. Meek concerning the connection between Jacob Meek and the 16

---

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to prove a negative and no one can say for sure that evidence has not been found and then lost to history. This author (and a few others) has been looking for over 35 years.

## The Progenitor Myth

children. No opinion is offered concerning reliability of information about more recent generations of the various families.

H. B. Meek's influence has endured and has been so pervasive that it can be seen in not only in subsequent genealogies but also in many secondary sources typically used by genealogist such old county history books, obituaries of notably people named Meek and even family stories. Organizations like the DAR and LDS church collected information that came from these sources.

The original of this article was published in 2001. It was not the first time that a genealogist had suggested that there were problems with the connections between Jacob Meek and his 16 children. This article remains the only comprehensive discussion of the subject. The reason that this subject is important is that when people add Jacob Meek and Adam Meek to their genealogy they need to understand where that information came from.

In 2007 the Meek/Meeks DNA Project was organized. It took less than six months to determine that the supposed sons of Jacob Meek came from at least two totally unrelated Meek families. That might be considered the end of the subject and call into question further need for this article. However, because H. B. Meek's book covered so many Meek(s) families it is important to have a broader understanding of both his genealogy as well as the implications of DNA.

### **The First Book**

The first book about Adam Meek that can be found is [A Meek Genealogy, Containing Short Sketches of Adam Meek and his Descendants, with Portraits of some of the Elder Members of the different Branches, 1640-1902](#), by H. B. Meek. The book is available in some libraries. This author found a copy in the DAR library in Washington, DC. While many people have never seen or in some cases even heard of this book, it is the original source for most if not all genealogies that claim a connection to Jacob and Adam Meek.

It is generally acknowledged that the book by H. B. Meek was based on anecdotal information and was not based on actual research of official records<sup>2</sup>. This is particularly true concerning the earliest generations. One does not find statements in the book such as "... according to bible records" or even "... according to Uncle Basil".

The author is said to have obtained information from his uncle Basil Devalle Meek. However it is not known what that information was. Basil Devalle Meek was a grandson of Basil Meek, born in 1763, who was one of the supposed sons of Jacob Meek. Thus it is assumed that H. B. Meek had some reliable data concerning the descendants of Basil Meek, born 1763.

---

<sup>2</sup> H. B. Meek said on page 9 "It is not positive that the children of Jacob Meek were born in North Carolina, as he also went from Virginia to North Carolina, and later to Maryland, yet it is not known how long he remained in each state."

## The Progenitor Myth

One has to assume that he also obtained information from one or more other sources for the remaining branches of the family, which may not have been familiar to the members of his own family. Since there is little evidence that the information in his book is based on actual records, it is assumed that the information on other branches of the family was also anecdotal and maybe somewhat less reliable than that concerning his own branch. However it is not the purpose of this article to suggest that all or even most of the information on the descendants of the supposed children is incorrect. In fact the book contains much valuable information.

It is not know, and it is assumed that it will never be known, where the author obtained the information regarding who Jacob's children were. It is not known if he had information connecting the children to Jacob from a single source for the entire group of children or if he obtained information on one or more children in small groups at a time. Finally, it is not know if he had independent information concerning Jacob's father, Adam, or if that information about Adam, Jacob and Jacob's children all came from one source.

These may not be important questions in the effort to evaluate the reliability of the book as a source. However, there is some indication that H. B. Meek developed the big picture of Jacob Meek's family in small pieces rather than depending on a single source. There does not appear to be any published genealogy available prior to 1902 as far as this author can determine. Even if there had been some earlier genealogy utilized by the author the same questions about its validity would remain.

### **The Second Book**

Following 1902 a number of genealogists published books and manuscripts, which were based largely on the information contained in the 1902 book. The most significant book on this subject that has been published since 1902 was a book by Carleton Meek first published in 1952 with the most well known version being Meek Genealogy by Carleton Lee Meek, 1962. In many ways it was a more important publication because it has been more widely available. Carleton Meek used the book by H. B. Meek as a foundation and expanded on it.

Carleton Meek copied H. B. Meek's Introduction verbatim. The information on Adam Meek and Jacob Meek is essentially the same. He did add "*Jordan's History West. Penn. States Jacob's 1<sup>st</sup>. wife was a member of the Lee family.*" This statement will be discussed later. What is significant about Carleton Meek's book is that he added identifying information for many of the children of Jacob Meek. He also corrected some errors and conflicting information.

But the question remains as to where he obtained his information. He claimed to have verified facts with two sources "when possible". But this can hardly be true. He may well have done some original research using official records concerning **some** of the supposed children of Jacob Meek. However it is known through contemporaries of Carleton Meek that his book was also based on a large amount of anecdotal information. He basically

## The Progenitor Myth

talked to living descendants and collected information they had. He clearly did not have any valid sources for the children Jacob Meek because the list he presented is not true.

Since H. B. Meek provided so little identifying information on Jacob's children one cannot be sure that Carleton Meek correctly identified all of them. He seems to have focused on eight supposed sons who settled in S. W. Pennsylvania and these men can be identified in official records.

---

All of the books and manuscripts, between 1902 and 1962, known to this author, contain some useful information, which has helped many people including this author. It is also apparent that these books contained many errors concerning the earliest generations of the family.

Since 1962 the information about Jacob Meek has continued to be replicated through libraries, exchanges between genealogists and now the Internet. The number of genealogist attempting to connect to Jacob Meek has grown considerably. In addition, the information in these genealogies frequently does not contain documentation, has usually been modified and seldom cites the original source. Inevitably, with each new genealogy that is published the newer authors have used those older genealogies as sources with each one being changed and a slightly new version put forth.

The end result is that today books and/or genealogies are being used as sources that are different from the original source and in many cases with little or no knowledge of the original source. And, as will be discussed later, in no case has anyone provided any documentation to support the claims being made concerning the children of Jacob Meek.

It is this author's contention that almost everything that is written about Adam Meek, Jacob Meek and Jacob's connection to his children originated in the 1902 book by H. B. Meek.

Unfortunately, the story is so widely distributed at this point that many people accept it as factual despite the lack of documentation. The danger of this is that many genealogists have stopped looking for the facts about Jacob's children and simply accept the conventional theory that certain ancestors were the sons of Jacob Meek, son of Adam Meek. It is the purpose of this paper to show that the traditional information about Jacob's children is not true.

### **What is really known about Adam and Jacob Meek**

Abstracts of parish records provide the following information<sup>3</sup>:

Adam Meeke married Mary Johnson 1 July 1660  
At. Bourne, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

Jacob Meek Chris. 1699 son of Adam Meek  
At. Bourne, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

It is not known what information H. B. Meek had available to him to support the genealogy that he published. He did not know the first name of Mary Johnson so it is assumed that he did not have these parish records. A couple of researchers in the 1970's and 1980's hire professional researchers in England who could not find any trace of Adam Meek<sup>4</sup>. So, there is still a question about the parish records, as the source for the abstracts has not been found. Even though the validity of the abstracts cannot be verified they will be accepted at face value for the purpose of this article.

H. B. Meek reported that Adam Meek was born in 1640, married Miss Johnson and had three sons named Matthew, John and Jacob. If Adam was born in 1640 a marriage in 1660 seems reasonable. However, an actual record of Adam's birth is not available. The records do not provide any information about Adam's other sons.

H. B. Meek provided the following information about Jacob Meek. He was born in 1698 in Lincolnshire and died in 1790. His first wife was a woman of Welsh descent. His second wife was French woman named Nancy DeValle. He came to America in 1719 settling on the James River, Virginia. Jacob moved to North Carolina and then Hagerstown, MD. (This is a most improbable migration pattern.)

It is not known what source the author used for Jacob's date of birth. However, if he were christened in 1699, that fact may be the source. While it did not appear that the author had the parish records, one of his informants may have known about them. Assuming the date of birth of 1698 to be true, Adam would have been 58 years old when Jacob was born and he would have been married for 38 years. The reader can contemplate the likelihood of a couple living in rural England in 1690's having children while in their late 50's.

It should be pointed out that the abstracts of the parish records are incomplete and do not prove that Jacob Meek christened in 1699 was the son of the Adam Meek who married Mary Johnson. However, that point will not be debated in this article.

The author reported that Jacob's youngest son was born in 1763 in Hagerstown, MD and he only provided dates of birth for the three youngest sons. It is assumed that he had a

---

<sup>3</sup> See addendum for complete abstract.

<sup>4</sup> "Meek/Meeks Newsletter, Vol. III, #1" by Danny Fluhart, 1983

## The Progenitor Myth

reliable source of information about Basil's date of birth because he was a direct descendant of Basil. If Jacob were born in 1698 he would have been 65 years old when his youngest son, Basil, was born. While not impossible, it does seem unlikely given the time and place.

This section has presented all of the factual information that is known about the Adam Meek and Jacob Meek. In addition, all of the information provided by H. B. Meek, minus the list of Jacob's children, has been presented. Not only is there very little factual evidence about Adam and Jacob, H. B. Meek provided very few detail regarding them.

### **Jacob Meek son of Guy Meek**

Any experience researchers knows that it is important to eliminate alternative possibilities, which always seems to complicate any genealogical connection. It does not appear that the author did this and it will be shown that there was a clear alternative to Jacob son of Adam as the progenitor for at least some of the supposed children.

What may not have been known to H. B. Meek but was known to subsequent researchers is that there was a large extended Meek family that had been living in Western Maryland for three generations at the time that Jacob Meek of Lincolnshire was supposedly a resident of that state. Guy Meek was known through official records to have been in Maryland as early as 1662. Guy Meek, his son John and his grandsons John and Guy Meek are documented in deeds, probate and parish records. Joseph L. Meek documented much of the information on this family in the 1960's.

Guy Meek who was born about 1686 had several documented sons<sup>5</sup>. One of these sons was Jacob Meek, born 29 May 1717 according to parish records from Anne Arundel Co., MD. Deed records support the contention that this Jacob moved from Anne Arundel County to Frederick County. Hagerstown is in modern day Washington County. Washington County was taken from Frederick County

In addition, this Jacob Meek had 12 male cousins who lived in Maryland and Virginia and who might have accounted for the vast majority of Meek people who lived in those states during the first and middle parts of the 1700's. Also there were other Meek families that are documented to have lived in other parts of Maryland during this time.

No one has ever provided any evidence that Jacob Meek of Lincolnshire ever came to America.

It seems incredible that no one has ever found any record in Maryland or Virginia of a Jacob Meek born about 1698 in England and died in 1790. Yet there are many records available to identify many of the people who lived in Maryland during this period of time including Jacob Meek born in 1717.

---

<sup>5</sup> Joseph L. Meek unpublished manuscript, July 1967

## The Progenitor Myth

There were a few genealogists after the middle of the century that actually researched the available records in Maryland and provided us with a valuable account of some of the people named Meek who lived there. It does not appear that many of the genealogists researching Jacob Meek during the first half of 1900's engaged in such activity. They simply relied on the account of H. B. Meek. That is unfortunate because they may have found official records not available to researchers today.

For some inexplicable reason associates of Joseph Meek gave Jacob Meek born 1717 the same set of children that H. B. Meek gave Jacob Meek born 1698. It is known that there was a rather heated debate about Jacob's ancestry between one group lead by Carleton Meek and another group lead by Joseph Meek. That does not explain why some people who conducted real research of official records would so readily accept H. B. Meek's undocumented account of Jacob's children. However, that appears to be what happened. There is no documentation known to this author regarding the identity of the children of Jacob Meek born 1717.

Were there two men named Jacob Meek in Maryland, specifically Hagerstown? It certainly cannot be proven by what H. B. Meek wrote and available records do not support that proposition. Joseph L. Meek complicated an already confusing situation by using H. B. Meek as a source for Jacob's children. The totality of provable information suggests that Jacob Meek born 1717 was the only person named Jacob Meek in the Hagerstown area.

Unfortunately, many genealogists researching Jacob born 1698 have mixed information from H. B. Meek with information about Jacob born in 1717. It is not uncommon to see information which states that Jacob son of Adam was born in 1717 England. The same group of children can be found attached to each man in different genealogies. And each man is, in different genealogies, given the same set of wives.

### **Jacob's wives**

While it is known through deed records that Jacob Meek born in 1717 had a wife named Mary, there are no records to reveal who his sons were.

H. B. Meek stated that Jacob born 1698 married a woman of Welsh descent and after her death he married a French girl named Nancy De Valle. Carleton Meek repeated that information and added that Jordan's History of West Pennsylvania stated that Jacob's first wife was a member of the Lee family.

Actually, Jordan never mentioned Jacob Meek. He wrote that Joshua Meek's mother was a member of the Lee family<sup>6</sup>. A genealogist before Carleton Meek had incorrectly made the deduction that because H. B. Meek said that Jacob had a son named Joshua Meek then Jacob's wife must have had the surname name of Lee. That genealogist then confused the information about Jacob born 1698 and Jacob born in 1717 and incorrectly drew the conclusion that Jacob born 1698 had a wife named Mary Lee. This piece of

---

<sup>6</sup> "The Genealogy and Personal History of Western Pennsylvania" by Jordan, Volume II, 1915

## The Progenitor Myth

information, which does not appear in either of the two main sources on Jacob Meek, is frequently repeated on the Internet today.

The whole exercise in logical deduction was based on the factual error that Jacob born 1698 had a wife named Mary, an unproven fact that Jacob had a son named Joshua and a logical error that because someone is a member of a family they must have that family surname name. Even if Jacob had a son named Joshua and Joshua's mother was a member of the Lee family, these points do not mean that Jacob's wife had the surname Lee. This is a classical example of how unproven information is expanded and exaggerated. However, since it has been repeated over and over, people who do not understand how the statement was developed simply accept it as factual. How many other times did this type of thing happen as the early researcher wrote about Jacob Meek?

No one has ever provided any evidence that a person named Jacob Meek married women named Mary Lee or Nancy DeValle.

In contemplating the mixing of Jacob born 1698 and Jacob born in 1717 it is noted that the later was married to a woman named Mary before 1752 up to 1765 according to deed records.

### **Jacob's Children**

H. B. Meek provided a migration pattern for Jacob Meek after he came to America starting in Virginia. Jacob moves to North Carolina and then to Hagerstown, Maryland. This is a most improbable route for a person to follow in the early 1700's and the source(s) for this information is not revealed. Never-the-less Mr. Meek seems to have established the place of birth of Jacob's children based on what he believed was the migration pattern of the father. At the same time Mr. Meek states that the places of birth of Jacob's children were not certain. Which is understandable since he did not even have dates of birth for most of the children? In other words, he did not know when or where the children were born with one possible exception.

In fact Mr. Meek provided very little information on Jacob's children. In most cases there is insufficient information for anyone to connect the names in the book with known families which have been documented by genealogist since the book was written. This limited information did not stop other genealogists from claiming a connection to Jacob Meek.

However, Mr. Meek did provide sufficient information to make a connection to three of the named sons. Basil Meek born 1763 was Mr. Meek's ancestor and he appears to have had reliable information on him. It is known that Nathan Meek was a close associate of Basil Meek<sup>7</sup> and there is sufficient information in the book to make a connection to that ancestor. Also, John Meek is identified by the information in the book including his children.

---

<sup>7</sup> Gary Child research papers on Nathaniel Meek

## The Progenitor Myth

Unfortunately, Mr. Meek makes several major mistakes in describing the children of Jacob Meek. It is known that he misidentifies the son Jacob Meek because it is known that John Meek had a brother named Jacob<sup>8</sup> who is not the person described in the book. Mr. Meek described two sons named Lewis which resulted because it was thought that the first Lewis was killed in the war. However, Lewis number two was born before Lewis number one was thought to have been killed. Mr. Meek also seems to have misidentified James, the grandfather of Joe Meek the mountain man. Joe Meek was the grandson of Joseph Meek and the son James Meek. There are other minor errors in the limited information provided about the children.

However, because Mr. Meek did provide sufficient information on three of the named children they can be identified as ancestors found in official records. Based on subsequent research a group of men named Meek can be identified as living in S. W. Pennsylvania who had the same names as eight of sons of Jacob Meek as identified by H. B. Meek.

There were several men named Meek in early SW Pennsylvania that lived in close proximity to each other<sup>9</sup>. While there is no evidence that Basil Meek born 1763 was in SW Pennsylvania it is known that Nathan Meek was there<sup>10</sup>. Basil and Nathan were closely associated with each other throughout their lives. It has been established that John Meek had a brother named Jacob who is documented as being in SW Pennsylvania. There are numerous records that associate John, Jacob and Joshua Meek of Allegheny Co., PA.

Also recorded in SW Pennsylvania were Jeremiah, Samuel and Isaac. There is no evidence to prove a connection between any of these men other than what has been described. However, H. B. Meek claims that men with these names moved to Pennsylvania. There is information to support that contention.

Carleton Meek based that portion of his book on the connection of the sons of Jacob Meek to that Jacob Meek born 1698 who was the son of Adam entirely on the book by H. B. Meek. While he provided some additional details on the children in most cases he did not provide any documentation or explanation why he concluded that a particular person was a son of Jacob Meek.

Carleton Meek did correct some of the major flaws of H. B. Meek such as correctly identifying Jacob Meek, brother of John. In fact this may be the only case where there is actually limited proof that two of the supposed sons of Jacob Meek were actually brothers. He also continued the guess work concerning the identity of some sons.

---

<sup>8</sup> The Meek/Meeks Families of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Indiana, by Christopher A. Meek, 4 Jul 2007

<sup>9</sup> Early Settlers of SW PA, by Christopher A. Meek, 17 Jul 2004

<sup>10</sup> 1783 tax list of Washington Co., PA

## The Progenitor Myth

Of the remaining sons of Jacob Meek in S. W. Pennsylvania, Samuel, Jeremiah and Isaac, Carleton Meek provided information. He identifies Samuel Meek as a known man who lived in close proximity to the other supposed sons. His children are well documented. Carleton Meek also loosely identified Isaac Meek who is another man in SW Pennsylvania living near the other supposed sons. However, there is some uncertainty about this person in published genealogies. There is evidence that there were two men named Isaac Meek who were born about the same time living in the same area.

The information given by Carleton Meek about Jeremiah Meek is conflicting. In addition the Carleton Meek's book has a printing error that assigns the children of Nathan to Jeremiah. Carleton Meek said he died 22 Oct 1788 and he migrated to Tennessee. There was a Jeremiah Meek who died in Westmoreland Co., PA in 1788<sup>11</sup> and this author believes he is likely the person referred to by H. B. Meek. However, he could hardly have moved to Tennessee having lived and died in Westmoreland County. However, there were also two other men named Jeremiah in the area.

No one has provided any evidence to prove who Jacob Meek's children were.

Children which remained in the east and who are largely unidentified are Joseph, James, Seth, Lewis I, Lewis II, Polly and Sarah Jane. Nancy is thought to be the wife of Paul Hulse. However, there is no proof that Eleanor, wife of Paul Hulse, is Nancy. Joseph Meek was identified by Carleton Meek but it is unclear why this particular Joseph was chosen to be included as a son of Jacob. He does not seem to have lived near nor associated with the other known families that were listed as sons of Jacob. James Meek is a common name in early America and no record of a Seth Meek has been found.

### Summary

In 1902 H. B. Meek published a book in which he described Adam Meek, his son Jacob born in 1698 in Lincolnshire, England and Jacob's children and descendants. It is generally acknowledged that the book was based on anecdotal information. H.B. Meek was a direct descendant of Basil Meek, born in 1763. However, it is not clear why he thought Basil's father was named Jacob Meek let alone Jacob Meek born 1698.

Carleton Meek published his book in 1962. He copied the information on Adam and Jacob Meek from H. B. Meek. His contribution was to give details on some of Jacob's children so they could be identified with actual people in official records. He had more hard data from official records at his disposal. However, he still accepted H. B. Meek's list of children without proof. In some cases one cannot be certain that Carleton Meek identified the same person that H. B. Meek intended.

The only documentation about Adam Meek or Jacob Meek known to date is the abstract of parish records, which did not seem to be available to the H. B. Meek. It is not known where the author obtained information about Adam Meek, Jacob Meek and Jacob's 16

---

<sup>11</sup> Westmoreland Co., PA probate records

## The Progenitor Myth

children although it is assumed that he received information from different people about different branches of the family. Some of that information is clearly incorrect.

There was a clear alternative to Jacob Meek born 1698 in the form of a 4<sup>th</sup> generation American named Jacob Meek born 1717 the son of Guy Meek II. H. B. Meek may not have known this but Carleton Meek certainly did. Joseph L. Meek of Washington D. C. documented the descendants of Guy Meek including Jacob Meek born 1717. However, there is no documentation about the children of this Jacob Meek. Some of Joseph Meek's associates assigned the same set of children to Jacob Meek born 1717 that H. B. Meek assigned to Jacob Meek born 1698.

It appears that Joseph Meek believed that H. B. Meek and Carleton Meek had incorrectly identified Jacob Meek. In fact the two competing theories were the subject of an ongoing discussion between Meek researchers for many years. The existence of the large Guy Meek family and specifically Jacob Meek born 1717 raised legitimate issues that should have been considered by any genealogist researching Meek families from Maryland. It changed the discussion from was H. B. Meek correct about Jacob's children to was he correct about Jacob.

If H. B. Meek misidentified Jacob Meek who lived in Hagerstown it has serious implications for the early generations of his genealogy. He either did not know about Guy Meek and Jacob Meek born 1717 or he knew about them and rejected them as progenitors for his ancestor Basil Meek born 1763. The later seems improbable. His failure to make a statement on this matter set in motion a complex situation for modern genealogists. It is difficult to evaluate the 1902 book by H. B. Meek without understanding what is known today. That knowledge has been greatly influenced by Carleton Meek and Joseph L. Meek.

There is little information in the 1902 book to identify the wives of Jacob Meek. Subsequent research into Mary Lee and Nancy De Valle has failed to find any information about any marriage for Jacob Meek. To the extent that H. B. Meek or other early authors mixed information about Jacob Meek born in 1717 with information about Jacob Meek born 1698 he may also have mixed information about the wives. Jacob born in 1717 was married to Mary at a minimum during the years 1752 and 1765. If he were the father of the younger sons then Nancy De Valle could not have been the mother.

Jacob's migration pattern is highly improbable and the author clearly admitted that he assumed the places of birth for Jacob's children based on that migration pattern. He knew very few of the dates of birth for the children. In fact he did not know when or where most of them were born.

H. B. Meek provided very little information on any of Jacob's children. In most cases there is insufficient information for anyone to connect the names in the book with known families which have been documented by genealogist since the book was written.

## The Progenitor Myth

H. B. Meek misidentified at least two of the sons and provided conflicting information about the two sons named Lewis. Some of the children remain unidentified today.

Most people obtain H. B. Meek's information through a subsequent genealogy or secondary source. In the vast majority of cases the original source is not mentioned. Consequently most people have never heard of H. B. Meek whose given name by the way was Henry Basil. If one looked at his book they would find a compelling narrative about Lincolnshire, England that has nothing to do with the genealogy. The actual data about Adam Meek, Jacob Meek and Jacob's children is singularly unimpressive and looks very similar to something produced by an inexperienced amateur. Its durability as a source is due largely to other amateurs perpetuating the myth.

### **DNA Information**

In November of 2004 The Meek/Meeks Family Y-DNA Project was started to explore how DNA could be used to assist in research of people named Meek. Y-DNA can identify male descendants of a common ancestor with the same surname. Combined with an adequate paper trail it is possible to determine if any two ancestors were related. The project is ongoing but to date includes numerous groups and individual Revolutionary era Meek(s) ancestors have been identified in official records. No ancestor (or descendant) in one group can be related to an ancestor in another group.

The results show that the list of Jacob Meek's sons as presented by H. B. Meek and Carleton Meek belonged to at least three unrelated progenitors or common ancestors. The results are indisputable and not subject to interpretation. The sons Jeremiah, Joshua, John and Jacob are in one group and the sons Samuel, Isaac, Nathan and Basil born 1763 are in another unrelated group. The son Joseph is in a third unrelated group. Descendants of the other sons are not available for testing. A descendant of Guy Meek has not yet been found.

### **Detail on each child**

The earlier versions of this article did not discuss the children of Jacob Meek. In case someone is still compelled to believe these early authors the following information on each child is provided. The person discussed is identified as the person who is today generally believed to be the child of Jacob Meek born 1698. They are listed by DNA group.

### **DNA Group A**

Jeremiah Meek: He is identified as Jeremiah Meek who died 1783 in Westmoreland Co., PA. Both authors said he went to Tennessee which is not true. However, there was an unidentified man named Jeremiah Meek in the 1783 tax list of Washington Co., PA.

## The Progenitor Myth

John Meek: He is identified as John Meek born 1754 who died in 1803 Henry Co., KY. He was identified by his residencies and children. He resided in Allegheny Co., PA. He was the ancestor of Carleton Meek.

Jacob Meek: He is identified as Jacob Meek born 1755 in Elkridge, MD by Carleton Meek. He lived in Allegheny Co., PA. H. B. Meek misidentified him by saying he went to Alabama and was a Methodist minister.

### **DNA Group B**

Samuel Meek: He is identified as Samuel Meek born 1750 who lived in Washington Co., PA. He and his descendants are well documented. A birth date of 1732 is more realistic and widely accepted today.

Isaac Meek: He is identified as Isaac Meek born 1746 in Anne Arundel Co., MD. He married Rebecca Thomas and moved to Washington Co., PA and Ohio. He and his descendants are well documented. This person was identified by Carleton Meek. It is not clear who H. B. Meek thought he was. There appears to be independent genealogies on this person that pre-date H. B. Meek. Some of these claim without proof that he was a son of Isaac Meek born 1710 the son of Guy Meek. It appears that Carleton Meek had the two men confused because Isaac born 1746 did not marry Rebecca Thomas. That is generally thought to be Isaac born 1710. His actual place of birth is not known.

Nathan Meek: He was clearly identified by H. B. Meek as the person who lived in Washington Cp. PA and Pulaski Co., KY as well as by his children.

Basil Meek: He was born in 1763. As the ancestor of H. B. Meek his identity is not in dispute. He was closely associated with Nathan Meek.

### **DNA Group E**

Joseph Meek: He is identified as Joseph Meek born 1744 by Carleton Meek. Not well identified by H. B. Meek. Carleton Meek said he lived in Washington Co., PA but that was an error. He lived in Washington Co., VA.

### **No DNA Available**

James Meek: He is not clearly identified by either author. H. B. Meek said he lived in Greenbrier Co., VA and was the grandfather of Joseph L. Meek, the fur trapper in "Rivers of the West". However, that person's father was James Meek and his grandfather was Joseph Meek born 1744 in Group E above. Joseph Meek born 1744 did not live in Greenbrier Co., VA. James Meek was a very common name in early Virginia.

Lewis Meek #1: H. B. Meek said he was killed in the battle of Ft. Du Quesne in 1775. Carleton Meek said the date was 1757. Ft. Du Quesne fell to the British in 1758. It is not at all clear that this person ever existed.

## The Progenitor Myth

Seth Meek: Carleton Meek said he was born in 1742. However, it is not clear that this person ever existed.

Joshua Meek: He is identified as Joshua Meek born 1731 by Carleton Meek. He lived next to John and Jacob Meek in Allegheny Co., PA. He is likely related to Group A.

Lewis Meek #2: He is identified as Lewis Meek born 1757. H. B. Meek said he went to Pennsylvania and Ohio. However, he is probably the person who lived in Morgan Co., WV.

Polly Meek: This person is not identified.

Nancy Meek: She was said to have married Paul Hulse. Paul Hulse was connected to the Group B families. However, there is no evidence that she married Paul Hulse as his wife was named Eleanor.

Sarah Jane Meek: This person is not identified.

It is unlikely that any descendants of this group will be found for DNA testing with the possible exception of Joshua Meek. No one could prove descent from the other men listed. Again, the reader is reminded that a person in one DNA group cannot be related to anyone in another DNA Group.

If one believes that either Jacob Meek had two wives then it is noted that sons of both wives have descendants that fall into two DNA groups and thus sons of both wives came from two or more unrelated families.

### **Conclusion**

Many new or inexperienced genealogical researchers assume that the information that is found in books, and in other written forms, must be accurate. Whether it is a nicely bound book in a library, a yellowed old manuscript of a family member or a well-worded E-mail on the Internet, people are compelled to believe what they read and pass it on to others as factual.

The book by H. B. Meek resembles the genealogies put together by many amateurs. However, he actually put it into book form and sent it to libraries around the country. Over the years other genealogist with varying degrees of experience copied and expanded the story of Adam, Jacob and Jacob's children. Until recently it has been accepted as fact that certain early ancestors were the sons of Jacob Meek.

H. B. Meek did not just make a couple of understandable mistakes that any genealogist might make. He may have simply copied someone else's bad genealogy. It will never be known what he thought or why he believed these men were related let alone had the same father. But with little or no research he published a seriously flawed genealogy that is still

## The Progenitor Myth

being used as a source over 100 years later. (Editor's comment: This writer received and E-mail on April 3, 2011 where a person who had been doing genealogy for 12 years cited H. B. Meek as the source for her connection to Jacob Meek born 1698 son of Adam Meek.)

There are no official documents available to modern researcher that was not available to H. B. Meek had he looked. Some information is arguably easier to find today but that is irrelevant since it appears he did not look for it. Subsequent genealogists using his book should have been suspicious of the lack of details and documentation.

In 1962 Carleton Meek wrote the last major book about Adam Meek and his descendants, which was based on the book by H. B. Meek. Carleton Meek did some level of research or collected valid data from other people. However, in the end he accepted H. B. Meek's list of children. Joseph L. Meek did research in Maryland and established an alternative to Jacob Meek born 1698. However, his associates also accepted H. B. Meek's undocumented list of children while they criticized his identification of Jacob Meek. Since that time information about Jacob Meek has continued to be replicated through libraries, exchanges between genealogists and the Internet. It is this author's contention that almost everything that is written about Adam Meek, Jacob Meek and Jacob's children originated in the 1902 book by H. B. Meek.

There is certainly ample reason to question the author's conclusions regarding the connection between the supposed children and Jacob Meek. H. B. Meek was likely given information from several people. Either that information was erroneous or he made incorrect assumption about what he was given. His book is arguably one of the poorest examples of genealogical research that can be found in a library. More importantly, in the last one hundred years no one else has been able to find any evidence to support the author's claims that Jacob was the father of the supposed children listed in the book.

There is no evidence that Jacob Meek of Lincolnshire ever came to America or lived in any particular place. There is no evidence that Jacob Meek married any particular woman or that he had any particular children.

Now that scientific evidence is available to show that H. B. Meek was wrong about the sons of Jacob Meek there is no valid source to connect any ancestor to Jacob Meek of Lincolnshire, England.

At the same time there is no evidence regarding the sons of Jacob Meek born 1717. This alternative to Jacob Meek born 1698 is compelling. While the extended Guy Meek family is a legitimate target of inquiry there is no more reason to believe that that H. B. Meek's 16 children were fathered by Jacob Meek born 1717 than there is to believe they were fathered by Jacob Meek born 1698. In fact DNA evidence confirms that they could not all have been the children of the same father or even related.

## The Progenitor Myth

It is my hope that everyone who believes that they are descendants of one of the supposed sons of Jacob Meek will review their work and refocus their effort on finding the evidence to support their connections and hopefully find their ultimate Meek progenitor. The book by H. B. Meek helped many people find their ancestor. But it should now be recognize that the story about Adam and Jacob Meek is just a very poor genealogy.

© August 25, 2001 by Christopher A. Meek

Revised May 1, 2005, Revised May 13, 2010, Revised April 5, 2011

### References:

"A Meek Genealogy" by H. B. Meek, 1902

"The Genealogy and Personal History of Western Pennsylvania" by Jordan Volumn II, page 258-260, 1915.

"Abel and Polly Manning Cooper Fielding and Sarah Hunt Meek and Their Ancestors and Descendants" by May Cooper Burnham, 1960

"Meek Genealogy" by Carleton Lee Meek, 1962

"On Meek Families" by Joseph L. Meek, 1967 unpublished

"The Meeks in America" by Eleanor & Dwight Freeburn, 1981

"Meek/Meeks Newsletter, Vol. III, #1" by Danny Fluhart, 1983

John Rider, various unpublished papers

Melton Meek, various unpublished papers

"Men Named Jacob and Jeremiah Meek", by Christopher A. Meek, 11 Nov 2003

"Early Meek Settlers of S. W. Pennsylvania", by Christopher A. Meek, Jul 17, 2004

"Nathaniel Meek" unpublished research by Gary Childs

## Addendum

### **Jacob Meek son of Guy Meek**

**Guy Meek I** was first documented in Maryland records in 1667. His will was probated 28 Mar 1682. His son **John Meek was born about 1649** in Anne Arundel Co., MD. He inherited Weston from his father about 1682 in Anne Arundel Co., MD. He signed a will on 20 Dec 1711 in Anne Arundel Co., MD. His will was probated on 26 May 1712. His wife, Mary, and children are mentioned. John's son **Guy Meek II was born about 1686** in Anne Arundel Co., MD.

Guy Meek born 1686 had five brothers and six uncles and an unknown number of great uncles. This was a very large extended family that occupied western Maryland and nearby parts of Virginia. Guy Meek born about 1686 had a son named **Jacob Meek who was born 29 May 1717** in Anne Arundel Co., MD. Jacob had at least two known brothers. He owned Inspection on 16 Dec 1745 in Prince George Co., MD, according to abstracts. He owned Kent Beginning on 7 Feb 1748 in Frederick Co., MD. He owned Meek Delight on 4 May 1748 in Frederick Co., MD. These properties are in modern day Fredrick County which adjoins Washington County.

It may never be known why H. B. Meek picked Jacob Meek son of Adam Meek as the father of his ancestor Basil Meek born 1763. Given how careless he was in naming the son of Jacob it is certainly a possible that he misidentified Jacob Meek. There is no evidence that Jacob Meek born 1698 in England ever came to the United States let alone Maryland. H. B. Meek believed that Basil Meek born 1763 was born in Hagerstown. This may or may not be true. What is known is that Jacob Meek born 1717, son of Guy Meek, lived in the vicinity of Hagerstown. It is also known that Hagerstown and neighboring parts of Virginia figured prominently in the migration of people to S. W. Pennsylvania.

One scenario to explain why H. B. Meek fixed on Jacob Meek son of Adam is because he did not know about Jacob Meek son of Guy. That is believable given his apparent lack of any meaningful research. It seems inconceivable today that someone looking for a Jacob Meek anywhere in Maryland would not look at the Guy Meek family. The question that remains is did he have a valid reason to believe that the father of Basil Meek born 1763 was named Jacob. That is not known.

There are no records concerning the children of Jacob Meek son of Guy Meek. However, he was married and very likely had children. The father of Basil Meek born 1763 would have been born before 1745 and probably much earlier. In this authors experience the only man named Jacob Meek documented to have been in the United States before 1745 was Jacob Meek born 1717 the son of Guy Meek. Of course the records are incomplete and there may well have been other men named Jacob Meek. It is academic anyway because there is no proof that the father of Basil Meek born 1763 was named Jacob.

The larger Guy Meek family remains a possible source for the progenitor of one of the three major groups of Meeks identified by the DNA project. Hopefully an identifiable

## The Progenitor Myth

descendant of first Guy Meek will eventually be found and it will be known if any of the people thus far tested descends from that family.

Matthew Meek Descendants  
According to  
H. B. Meek and Carleton Meek

Clearly not his primary focus, H. B. Meek added information about descendants of Matthew Meek, son of Adam Meek.<sup>12</sup>

*“The following are the descendants of James Meek, who is **supposed** to be a grandson of Matthew Meek (son of Adam Meek). It is very **probable** that James Meek was a brother or cousin of John Meek, who emigrated to the colonies about two years after he did. They both came from County Antrim, Ireland, to South Carolina:”*

The author appear to have genealogies that pre-date 1900 concerning Matthew Meek. Conceivably they were the source for Adam’s son Jacob. Whatever the source, it did not survive into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as far as can be determined. Today people are copying some version of what H. B. Meek wrote.

*“James Meek was born in County Antrim, Ireland, about 1740. He emigrated to the colonies about 1776, bringing with him his family, consisting of several daughters and sons. Two of his sons were John and James, the latter being only 2 years old at the time he came to the colonies. He resided in South Carolina until his death.”*

Thus, H. B. Meek lays out the following genealogy although not in the following format.<sup>13</sup>

1. Adam Meek b: 1640 Lincolnshire, England
  11. Matthew Meek b: 1662, moved to Ireland
    101. Son of Mathew
      - 201. James Meek b: 1740 County Antrim, Ire.** Immigrated 1776 with several daughters and sons.
        301. John Meek b: 1765 Antrim, d: Todd Co., KY unmarried
        302. James Meek b: 1774 Antrim, moved to Caldwell Co., KY.
          401. James Meek b: 1796 SC, Died young.
          402. David Meek b: 1798 SC, Died young.
          403. Stafford Meek b: 1800 KY, moved to Illinois and died young.
          404. William Meek b: 1802 in Crittenden Co., KY. m: Mary Ann Borders. Moved to Randolph Co., IL. Children.
          405. Samuel Joseph Brown Meek b: 1804 KY, Children
          406. Sarah Meek
          407. Mary Meek
        303. Jean Meek b: 1778, married \_\_\_\_\_ McQuiston
        304. Daughter Meek b: 1780, married \_\_\_\_\_ Chestnut
      - 202. John Meek b: 1745 County Antrim, Ireland,** emigrated in 1774 and settled in Laurens District, SC. He married Elenor Mills.

---

<sup>12</sup> Both men believed they were descendants of Jacob Meek son of Adam Meek. In fact H. B. Meek was a descendant of Basil Meek born 1763 and Carleton was a descendant of John Meek born 1754 both supposed sons of Jacob Meek. In fact the two men were totally unrelated according to DNA from descendants.

<sup>13</sup> A Meek Genealogy by H. B. Meek, 1902

## The Progenitor Myth

- 311. William Meek b: 24 Feb 1777 SC
- 312. Elizabeth Meek b: 21 Mar 1779 SC
- 313. Agnes (Nancy) Meek b: Aug 1781 SC
- 314. Jane Meek b: Jan 1783 SC
- 315. Samuel Mills Meek 20 Aug 1786 SC
- 316. John Meek b: 16 Apr 1791 SC
- 317. James Meek b: 10 Feb 1794 SC

It is known that Carleton Meek copies H. B. Meek for Matthew's descendants as he did for those of Jacob Meek. His 1962 book is much better known and can be recognized in many genealogies today. He also provides no sources as he also failed to do for Jacob's descendants. However he added significantly in identifying Mathew's sons and additional grandchildren. He also provides no sources as he also failed to do for Jacob's descendants. One needs to question where he obtained information to add so many names to the early generations more than 50 years after H. B. Meek.<sup>14</sup>

(Note: green fonts=new people)

- 1. Adam Meek b: 1640 Lincolnshire, England
  - 11. Matthew Meek b: 1662, moved to Ireland
    - 101. John Meek b: 1686 [AKA **John Alexander Meek**], m: Elizabeth Mitchell.
    - 201. Samuel Meek b: 1748
    - 202. Robert Meek b: 1732 [DNA Group E]
    - 203. John Meek 1745, m: Eleanor Mills [Same as 202 above.]
      - 311. William Meek b: 24 Feb 1777
      - 312. Elizabeth Meek b: 21 Mar 1779
      - 313. Agnes (Nancy) Meek b: Aug 1781
      - 314. Jane Meek b: Jan 1783
      - 315. Samuel Mills Meek 20 Aug 1786
      - 316. John Alexander Meek b: 16 Apr 1791 [DNA Group E]
      - 317. James Meek b: 10 Feb 1794
    - 204. James Meek b: 1740 [Same as 201 above.]
      - 301. James Meek b: 1774 [Same as 302 above.]
        - 401. James Meek b: 1796 SC
        - 402. David Meek b: 1798 SC
        - 403. Stafford Meek b: 1800 KY
        - 404. William Meek b: 1802 KY
        - 405. Samuel Joseph Brown Meek b: 1804 KY
        - 406. Sarah Meek
        - 407. Mary Meek
      - 302. John Meek b: 1765
      - 303. Jean Meek
      - 304. Thomas Meek
    - 205. William Meek b: 1750
    - 206. Nancy Meek
  - 102. James Meek d: 1778
    - 211. Adam Meek b: 1741 [AKA Adam Meek b: 1746] m: Martha Wallace [DNA Group E]
    - 212. Sarah Meek

As was seen in the previous section on descendants of Jacob Meek both authors combined unrelated Meek families to come up with their descendant charts. One might be

---

<sup>14</sup> Meek Genealogy by Carleton Lee Meek, 1962

## The Progenitor Myth

suspicious when they see Carleton Meek adding names and even a new branch to the Matthew Meek descendant chart without explanation.

Most amateurs start their genealogy with their parents and work back in time. As it become more difficult to identify the next generation they begin to guess at who that person might have been. The information available to them is incomplete and they suffer from a self centered view of the world of people named Meek. They lack knowledge of the “big picture” or how to evaluate the data that is available. In the end they make assumptions and illogical deductions that cannot be supported by the facts.

Another group of amateurs expanded their search and become “big picture” genealogist to one degree or another. They look at multiple families and try to account for the descendants of all branches of a particular ancestor. This is a very small group who are able to publish or circulate their genealogies. Because they **appear to know so much** they are considered experts and their genealogies become primary sources for other amateurs. In reality all they have done is to collect the various genealogies prepared by other amateurs. They assume what they read is true and they suffer from a belief that all (or most) Meek families in a given area must be related. Thus they engage in the torturous exercise of trying to fit all of the selected families into one large tree. They also suffer from a lack of information. And they struggle with conflicting information. They frequently message or ignore data that does not fit with their preconceived idea of how the tree should look. It is inexperience not arrogance that allows them to come to conclusions not supported by incomplete data.

H. B. Meek and Carleton Meek are in the latter category of amateurs. It is known now how grossly incorrect their genealogies were regarding the sons of Jacob Meek, son of Adam Meek. For reasons that will never be known both authors included children for Jacob Meek that came from **at least** three totally unrelated families. The descendants of Matthew Meek were not the primary focus for either author and they failed to provide even the smallest clue as to what information they had to support their conclusions. In what is probably no more than luck one name that Carleton Meek did add to H. B. Meek’s list does have the same DNA profile as John Alexander Meek. But this only proves that they were related not that they descend from Matthew Meek.

DNA tests suggests that John Alexander Meek born 1686 was not related to either of the two main unrelated groups of men identified by H. B. Meek as sons of Jacob Meek son of Adam Meek. By extension one might conclude that Jacob Meek and Matthew Meek could not have been related. In reality the DNA that is available for descendants of Matthew Meek is limited and one should use caution in drawing conclusions about Matthew Meek. The facts are that there is absolutely no evidence regarding who the sons of Adam Meek were, who the sons of Jacob Meek were or who the sons of Matthew Meek were. So, it cannot correctly be said that DNA proves anything about the sons of Adam Meek named Jacob and Matthew.

There also is no information concerning who the children of John Alexander Meek born 1686 were let alone if this John Meek even existed. Just because someone put down in

## The Progenitor Myth

writing who those children were is no reason to believe it without supporting documentation. If that is a difficult concept to grasp just look at what the two authors did, in the same books, regarding the children of Jacob Meek who was their primary focus.

DNA does provide us with some information about John Meek born 1745 a supposed son of John Alexander Meek and Adam Meek born 1746 (added by Carleton Meek). They shared a common ancestor. They were related to several other early Meek ancestor that are not even mentioned by the two authors. These include Adam Meek in Cecil Co., MD, Joseph Meek born 1744 from Virginia, Adam Meek born 1729 and Moses Meek born 1755 who lived in Mecklenburg, NC. Joseph Meek was listed as a son of Jacob Meek son of Adam Meek so the two authors really missed the boat on him. DNA shows that these men all shared a common ancestor. It does not help determine the relationship between the men. Some of them could have been quite distantly related. Since the two authors were clearly lumping unrelated families together one wonders why actual relatives were excluded.

As indicated both authors included children for Jacob Meek that came from at least three totally unrelated families. The credibility of the two authors is seriously compromised. Carleton's excuse was probably more typical of most amateurs. He likely just copied H. B. assuming that he must be correct or he would not have written it down. But he then goes on to expand and correct the work of the first author making his own book much more believable. Carleton started with bad information and he ended up with bad information. The result was several generations of genealogists being misled and more importantly failing to look for the correct solution. The tragedy is that information that might have been available to H. B. Meek is not always available today. It may never be known who the progenitors were for several significant early American ancestors.

© April 30, 2010 by Christopher A. Meek

## The Progenitor Myth

### **Adam Meek Records**

The following was provided by Inez Ray who obtained it from J. H. Meek. These notes, apparently abstracts from parish records, were accompanied by a short type written letter from William H. Compton dated Oct. 16, 1985.

Mr. Meek's handwritten note to Inez indicates that Mary Johnson was 15 years old at the time of her marriage. However, this is not supported by the abstracts.

**Adam Meeke** married Mary Johnson 1 July 1660  
At. Bourne, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

Andrew Meek Chris. 12 April 1794 son of Andrew Meek & Elizabeth  
At. Broughton By Brigg, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

Francis Meek married Theodisa Ingram 12 Dec 1746  
At. Lincoln St. Margaret, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

George Meeke Chris. 11 July 1795 son of Andrew Meeke  
At. Broughton By Brigg, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

**Jacob Meek** Chris. 1699 son of Adam Meek  
At. Bourne, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

John Meeke married Elizabeth Barker 7 Aug 1590  
At. Bourne, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

John Meeke married Grace Garland 15 April 1733  
At. Boultham, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

Robertus Meeke married Joanna Paternoster 154 Sept 1589  
At. Gedny Hill, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

William Meeke married Anne Holmes 27 April 1654  
At. New Sleaford, Co. Lincolnshire, Eng.

Editors note:

These records span a period from 1589 to 1795 and appear to be incomplete. They do however establish the existence of the progenitor Adam Meek as described by H. B. Meek, and later Carleton Meek. The records, if accurate, also establish a Jacob Meek who had a father named Adam. However, since the Adam in the records was married some 39 years before Jacob was christened, there is some doubt that the two people in the records are father and son.

Chris Meek

