

Who Was Lydia, the Wife of David Wattles?

David Wattles was baptized at the Goshen Congregational Church in Lebanon, Connecticut, on 17 October 1756. His birth does not appear in the civil records of the Town of Lebanon. In regard to his Revolutionary War veteran's pension he deposed on 14 May 1823 that he was "aged sixty seven years & six months." This would put his birth in November 1755. According to his gravestone in the Upper Village Cemetery in Cincinnatus, New York, David Wattles died on 7 October 1742, aged 87.

David Wattles was a son of Samuel Wattles and his wife Sarah Sluman. David was the oldest of five children, but he was the only child to live to adulthood.

Samuel Wattles had been born in Lebanon on 22 March 1729. He is last documented on a tax list for the King's District in Albany County, New York, on 27 December 1779. The name of the King's District was changed to the Town of Canaan in 1788, and the northern half of the town was set off as the Town of New Lebanon in 1818. Samuel Wattles probably died in the King's District / Canaan sometime in the 1780s, before the 1790 federal census, on which he does not appear.

Sarah Sluman had been born in Norwich, Connecticut, on 5 February 1734/5. A record of her marriage with Samuel Wattles has not been found, but they were probably married in 1753 or 1754. After the death of her husband, Sarah seems to have lived with her son David. According to her gravestone in the Upper Village Cemetery in Cincinnatus, "Mrs. Sarah Wife of Samuel Wattles" died on 19 January 1831, aged 100. (She was not actually 100.)

David Wattles' wife was a woman named Lydia. To the best of our current knowledge, the date and place of their marriage, and Lydia's maiden surname, are not documented. In a deposition regarding his Revolutionary War veteran's pension, on 14 May 1823, David Wattles described "My wife Lydia aged sixty eight years this month very infirm affected with a scrofulous humour and at all times unable to attend to house-hold duties..." This would put Lydia's birth in May 1755. David Wattles had previously deposed on 12 September 1820: "My wife is sixty four years of age – she is very infirm – is unable to do but little..." Assuming a May birthday, this would place her birth in May 1756. And David Wattles once again deposed on 13 December 1827: "...my wife Lydia aged upwards of seventy two years is also entirely unable to labor..." Assuming a May birthday, this would again place her birth in May 1755.

According to her gravestone in the Upper Village Cemetery in Cincinnatus, "Mrs. Lydia Wife of David Wattles" died on 23 January 1832, aged 76 years and 9 months. This would calculate to a birth in April 1755.

David and Lydia Wattles had six children:

- 1) Sally, who died on 17 May 1861 at the stated age of 78, which would put her birth in 1782 or 1783. In 1802 in Otsego, New York – where the David Wattles family was then living – Sally married Silas Root, a native of West Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He died

on 21 February 1861 at the stated age of 84, which would put his birth in 1776 or 1777. According to the 1855 New York state census for Otsego, both Silas and Sally had been born in Massachusetts; but according to the 1860 federal census for Cooperstown, New York, Silas had been born in Massachusetts and Sally had been born in New York. Sally and Silas are buried in Cooperstown.

2) Polly, who died on 19 April 1830 at the stated age of 44 years and 7 months, according to her gravestone in the Upper Village Cemetery in Cincinnatus. This would put her birth in September 1785. Polly married Daniel Williams.

3) A son, name unknown, born about 1787 and presumably died before 1800. A male under 16 was in the David Wattles household in the 1790 federal census for Canaan, but no male other than the head of the family was in the David Wattles household in the 1800 federal census for Otsego.

4) Lydia, who died on 12 November 1867 at the stated age of 76 years, 6 months, and 3 days, according to her gravestone in the Solon Baptist Cemetery in Solon, New York. This would put her date of birth on 9 May 1791. The 1850 federal census for Solon and the 1855 New York state census for Solon both indicate that Lydia was born in Connecticut and that her husband Samuel Totman was born in Massachusetts. And Samuel was indeed born in Massachusetts. But the 1860 federal census for Solon indicates that Lydia (now a widow) was born in New York. Lydia was Samuel Totman's second wife. His first wife Dorothy (Workman) Totman died on 4 March 1816, and Samuel and Lydia's oldest child – James Ford Totman – was born on 12 May 1817. Samuel and Lydia's marriage must therefore have taken place only a few months after Dorothy's death, in mid 1816. Samuel had been born on 9 June 1777 and died on 29 February 1856. He, too, is buried in the Solon Baptist Cemetery.

5) Nancy, who died in Cortlandville, New York, on 1 June 1866 at the stated age of 71 years. This would put her birth in 1794 or 1795. The 1855 New York state census for Freetown, New York, and the 1865 New York state census for Cortlandville, both indicate that she was born in Otsego County, New York. The 1860 federal census for Cortlandville states that she was born in New York. On 17 (or 15) July 1826 in Cincinnatus, Nancy married Artemas Dodge, who had been born in Tyringham, Massachusetts, on 9 July 1796, and who survived her.

6) Charlotte, who died on 19 April 1823 at the stated age of 24 years and 5 months, according to her gravestone in the Upper Village Cemetery in Cincinnatus. This would put her birth in November 1798. She was unmarried. Her father deposed on 14 May 1823 that "Charlotte my youngest daughter has lain for upwards [of] two years on a bed of sickness, ...of which sickness she died on the 18th [of] April last..."

During the War for American Independence David Wattles served in the 3rd Regiment of the Connecticut Line, in the 20th Continental Regiment of Connecticut, and in a Connecticut artillery company. He deposed on 1 May 1818 that his final discharge from this full-time military

service took place at Chatham, New Jersey, in February 1777 – not long after the Battle of Trenton on 26 December 1776, in which Wattles participated as an artilleryman.

David's father Samuel Wattles also served during the war in a company of minutemen from Lebanon, in the 3rd Regiment of the Connecticut Line (with his son David), and as a member of the crew (as a Corporal) of the Connecticut naval ship the "Oliver Cromwell." In the later years of the war Samuel appears (as a Sergeant) on the roster of the 8th Regiment of Albany County Militia, in New York, which was comprised of men from the Town of Claverack. Claverack is about twenty miles southwest of the King's District. And Samuel Wattles appears (as a Corporal and as a Sergeant) on the roster of the 17th Regiment of Albany County Militia, which was comprised of men from the King's District.

We know that David also moved to the King's District after his discharge from full-time military service, but before the war was over, since his name likewise appears on the roster of the 17th Regiment of Albany County Militia. Since David's name does not appear on the 1779 King's District tax list, we can assume that David was living with his father and was likely still single. On the 1790 federal census for what had now become the Town of Canaan, David appears as the head of a household with one male 16 and over, one male under 16, and four females. One of those females would have been David's mother Sarah, and one of them would have been his wife Lydia.

David seems to have arrived in the King's District as a single man, but by 1790 had gotten married and already had three children. According to the 1860 census, the first child, Sally, was born in New York. The statement in the 1855 census that both Sally and her husband Silas Root were born in Massachusetts is best construed as a careless mistake of the census-taker, who wrote that both husband and wife had been born in Massachusetts even though it was only the husband who actually had been.

So, it would appear that David's wife Lydia was someone he met and married in New York, perhaps in 1781 or 1782, with their first child Sally being born in New York in 1782 or 1783. The statements in the 1850 and 1855 censuses that their later daughter Lydia was born in Connecticut are puzzling. Perhaps the information was given to the census-taker by Lydia's husband, who had heard that his wife's family had originated in Connecticut and who may mistakenly have thought that she personally had originated there as well. The statement in the 1860 census that Lydia was born in New York makes more sense and is almost definitely her true birthplace.

By the time David and Lydia's daughter Nancy was born in 1794 or 1795, the Wattles family was living in Otsego. David Wattles was in Otsego on the 1800 federal census, and his name appears on extent tax rolls for Otsego in 1799, 1800, 1802, and 1803. David and Lydia Wattles moved to Cincinnatus sometime between 1803 and 1814, when David's name appears on a Cincinnatus tax list. His daughter and son-in-law Sally and Silas Root also moved to Cincinnatus, sometime between 1805 (when their son Elmore was born in Sherburne, New York) and 1807 (when their son Chandler was born in Cincinnatus.)

An important clue to the identity of David's wife Lydia is the fact that we know her month of birth: May. The disparity between David's sworn statement made during the month of May in

1823 that his wife was having a birthday that very month, and the calculation from Lydia's gravestone that takes us one month too far back, to April, should not concern us greatly. Gravestone inscriptions, which were commonly made several years after the death of the person they memorialize, are often seen to have mistakes when they are compared to data about that person in contemporaneous primary source documents. On gravestones names are often misspelled, and dates and ages are often wrong. What we likely have in the case of Lydia's inscription is a simple math mistake.

But if we are willing to trust David's memory regarding the month in which his wife observed her birthday each year, we do need to acknowledge that his memory of the year in which Lydia was born was not quite as clear. In fact, David Wattles did not always remember accurately his own age. On 12 September 1820 he deposed that he was "aged sixty three years," but he was actually 64 at the time; and on 13 December 1827 he deposed that he was "aged seventy Years," but he was actually 72 at the time. David's three depositions regarding the age of his wife at various times do, however, leave us with a narrower range of options. Lydia was born either in May 1755 or in May 1756.

Another clue to the identity of David's wife Lydia can be found in the common custom that one sees in the wider Wattles-Totman family, of giving surnames from the family tree to sons as given names. Several examples can be cited. The oldest brother of David Wattles' son-in-law Samuel Totman was named Stoddard Totman. "Stoddard" was the maiden name of their great-grandmother Dorothy Stoddard, wife of Stephen Totman. David Wattles' father Samuel Wattles had a brother John Wattles (Jr.) who married Betty Sluman, a sister of Samuel Wattles' wife Sarah Sluman. John and Betty had a son (David's double first cousin) who was named Sluman Wattles. David Wattles' father Samuel Wattles also had a brother named Mason Wattles. "Mason" was the maiden name of their maternal grandmother Sarah Mason, wife of their maternal grandfather Joseph Fitch. This Mason Wattles with his first wife Irene Chandler had a son Mason Wattles (Jr.), and a son Chandler Wattles (who died in infancy). By his second wife Hannah Sluman – yet another sister of David Wattles' mother Sarah Sluman – Mason Wattles had a second son named Chandler Wattles and a son named Fitch Wattles. (These, too, were David Wattles' double first cousins.) "Fitch" was the maiden surname of Judith (Fitch) Wattles, the wife of John Wattles (Sr.) and the mother of Samuel, John, and Mason Wattles.

David Wattles' daughter Sally, with her husband Silas Root, had a son named Silas Wattles Root. David Wattles' daughter Lydia and her husband Samuel Totman named their second son Daniel Ward Totman. "Ward" was the maiden name of Samuel Totman's mother Elizabeth Ward, wife of Joshua Totman. Samuel and his first wife Dorothy Workman had named their first son Daniel Workman Totman. (Samuel's two sons named Daniel W. Totman – with the same first name and the same middle initial but with different middle names – both survived to adulthood, which makes one wonder how much confusion this created.)

As we have already noted, Samuel and Lydia (Wattles) Totman gave the name James Ford Totman to the first child (and first son) they had together. Where did the name "Ford" come from? We know that the maiden surname of Samuel's mother, "Ward," was given to his and Lydia's second son Daniel Ward Totman as his middle name. Might the middle name of their first son James Ford Totman have been the maiden surname of Lydia's mother Lydia, wife of David

Wattles? Was there a woman named Lydia Ford, born in May 1755 or May 1756, who had a family connection to the King's District at the time when David Wattles was likely getting married there to his wife Lydia? Yes, there was.

Lydia Ford, daughter of Amos Ford and his wife Sarah Bisbee, was born in Cornwall, Connecticut, on 17 May 1756. Her name is entered as "Liddey" in the town birth record. Lydia's father Amos had been born in Marshfield, Massachusetts, on 1 August 1709, as the son of Joseph and Lois (Stetson) Ford. Her mother Sarah had been born in Pembroke, Massachusetts, on 26 October 1722, as the daughter of Aaron and Abigail Bisbee. Amos Ford and Sarah Bisbee were married in Pembroke on 2 August 1745. Sarah was Amos Ford's second wife. Amos Ford's first wife was Rebecca Churchill, whom he had married in Plympton, Massachusetts, on 25 November 1731, and with whom he had five children: Noah, Ruth, Hezekiah, William, and Rebecca. Amos Ford and his second wife Sarah Bisbee had ten children: Anne, Amos, Thaddeus, Paul, Oliver, Sarah, Lydia, Abigail, Tabitha, and Submit. The family moved from Pembroke to Cornwall around 1750, and Amos Ford died in Cornwall on 5 December 1762, when Lydia was six years old. Her youngest sister, Submit, was born three days after their father's passing.

Sarah, the widow of Amos Ford, is reported in many secondary sources to have died in Cornwall on 18 December 1781. Documentation for this date of death has not been found. But if the date is accurate, and if Lydia Ford was still living with her mother unmarried at the time of her mother's passing, this would have been a very disruptive turn of event for her. One place where she might have gone after the death of her mother was the King's District in New York, where two of her first cousins were living at the time. Jonathan Ford and Abel Ford, whose father Jesse Ford was a brother of Amos Ford, both appear on the 1779 King's District tax list. They both also appear on the 1790 federal census for Canaan. They were, in effect, neighbors of David Wattles. If their parentless and unmarried cousin Lydia Ford came to live with one of them, or if they arranged for her to be placed in a King's District household as a domestic servant, this would have brought her into close proximity to David Wattles.

A few additional data to keep in mind are these: Lydia Ford's brother Oliver Ford ended up living in Homer, New York, where he died on 7 October 1822. Homer is only 20 miles from Cincinnatus, in the same county (Cortland County). Also, David and Lydia Wattles' first daughter Sally – which is a diminutive form of Sarah – could have been named after both of her grandmothers: David's mother Sarah (Sluman) Wattles and Lydia's possible mother Sarah (Bisbee) Ford. But this is admittedly weak evidence even as onomastics go, since David's mother being named Sarah could by itself explain why his first daughter was given that name. Another onomastic datum is that Lydia Ford had a sister named Anne, and Nancy – which is the name that David and Lydia Wattles gave to one of their daughters – is a diminutive form of Anne. So, Nancy Wattles might have been named after her aunt Anne Bisbee. But the names Anne and Nancy are too common for this datum to have much weight.

It must also be said that Samuel and Lydia (Wattles) Totman gave what seem to be surnames to other sons as middle names, in addition to the surnames that they gave to their first two sons as middle names. But we have not yet been able to find these other seeming surnames in the family trees of either Samuel or Lydia. Those younger sons who bore such names were William Riley Totman, Mordica Law Totman, and Henry Doe Totman. So it is possible that the middle name

of their first son James Ford Totman was not actually a family surname. Still, we do know that the middle name of their second son Daniel Ward Totman definitely was a surname from the father's family tree. So it is more likely than not that their first son's middle name, "Ford," was also a family surname, probably from the mother's family tree.

It must be emphasized that this suggestion regarding the possible identification of David Wattles' wife Lydia is indeed only a suggestion of a possibility. There is no known documentation of the presence of Lydia Ford in the King's District, with her cousins or with anyone else. In fact, there is no known documentation of Lydia Ford's continued existence as a living person after the record of her birth in 1756. It can be noted, however, that the vital records of Cornwall, where she was born, do not include an entry for her death or for her marriage. It can also be noted that no other death record or marriage record for someone named Lydia Ford, who might have been this Lydia, has been found elsewhere, either.

It is possible that the birth of David Wattles' wife Lydia was never documented in any church or civil records. It is therefore possible that we have been searching for something that will never be found, in our poring over extent birth and baptism records looking for a woman named Lydia who was born at the time when David's wife Lydia was born. Yet most of the people who lived in the King's District when David Wattles was living there did have New England origins, and a record of most people who were born in New England in the mid eighteenth century can usually be found somewhere.

Besides Lydia Ford of Cornwall, several other persons named Lydia, born in New England in May of 1755 or in May of 1756, can be identified. But all of them except for one can be ruled out as a possible wife of David Wattles, through records of their deaths or of their marriages to other men also existing. The one remaining alternate possibility is Lydia Bedunah, born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, on 29 May 1755, as the daughter of Ebenezer Bedunah (who died in Roxbury on 27 September 1764) and his wife Elizabeth Quiner (whose date and place of death are unknown). But there are no known family associations of Lydia Bedunah with people in the King's District at the time when the Lydia for whom we are looking was likely getting married there to David Wattles. And David and Lydia Wattles' daughter Lydia named her first son James Ford Totman, not James Bedunah Totman. So we are still looking at Lydia Ford, born in Cornwall on 17 May 1756, as the most likely candidate for the wife of David Wattles.

The search continues for further evidence, either to confirm or to refute this theory. Others with a genealogical interest in this family are invited to join in the search. But until firmer evidence is found in support of this tentative identification, we should not put the name "Lydia Ford" in our pedigree charts as the wife of David Wattles!

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