

The Phelps– Fulps – Volp Connection Explained

TAP 7/12/14

(Revised: 12/12/16)

Shown below is an explanation of how the connection between the Phelps, Fulps & Volp's families was determined. It is the result of many hours, weeks, months and yes, years of laborious but enjoyable research and is supported with family tradition, public documents and y-DNA. As with any ancestry search, some conclusions are based on the preponderance of evidence.

Summary

Jurg (George) Volp was born in Sindringen, Germany in 1718. Sindringen is a Borough of Forchtenberg in the Region of Baden-Wuerttemberg. He married Maria Magdalena Guldig and they had their first child in 1743. The evidence shows that this was Valentine Volp. Georg immigrated to America with his family on September 25, 1751. He is the only one of the family shown on the ship's passenger list because they did not include wives and children names on the lists at this time. Georg is thought to have settled originally in Lancaster, PA where his second son, Michael Volp was born in 1755. He later moved to Windsor Township which is about half way between York and Lancaster, PA. This is where his third son, Georg Peter Volp was born on May 12, 1757. His baptism record is shown in the book, "Pennsylvania and New Jersey Church and Town Records, 1708-1985".

George moved with his family to Surry County, NC about 1765 and changed the family name to the Moravian translation Fulp. Valentine moved with them and he is found in a 1786 tax document as Valentine Folp and is paying taxes for a horse. He moved from Surry County, North Carolina to Claiborne County, Tennessee about 1790, married and had six children. All his children's names are found written as Felps and later as Phelps. It is thought that he moved with some of his family to St Clair County, IL and died there. His son George died there in 1849 and an 1855 lawsuit over his estate provides the name of all the Valentine children (George, Valentine, Michael, Peter, Elizabeth & Catherine). Michael married Ruth Lunceford and they had nine children. He died in 1871 and is buried in St Clair County, Illinois. Valentine's son Henry is next found in the 1830 Claiborne County, TN census. He is married to Rhoda Lebow and they subsequently moved to Blount County, Tennessee. They had eleven children. Both died about 1860 and are thought to be buried in the Middlesettlements Methodist Church Cemetery in Louisville, Tennessee. Our progression of name changes was from Volp to Fulps to Felps and to Phelps. With the exception of the Volp to Fulps, these changes were the result of census takers and others just spelling it the way it sounded at the time. There were other variations such as Folps, Phulps, Fultz and Philips.

Discussion

Today, Y-DNA is successfully used to confirm genealogical connections in a family's lineage. This is possible because y-DNA is passed from father to son, generation after generation. In other words, matching y-DNA between two males means that they have a common ancestor. Our Phelps family is a perfect example of how y-DNA can be used to break through a proverbial ancestry "wall". When our ancestry search for the Phelps name faltered, we submitted y-DNA tests. The tests showed conclusively that we were related to a large family with the surname Fulps (and other

variations in spelling). The y-DNA connection is shown in the “yDNA Connection Chart” that is located in the Album section of the website in the folder “Histories and Stories – Phelps Family” folder.

Before going forward, you might want to read “The Volp/Fulp/Story” located in the “Histories and Stories – Phelps Family” folder in the Album section of the website. Also a printout of the “yDNA Connection Chart” will make it easier to follow this explanation.

Looking at the chart, George Crafft Volp/Fulp (1718-1786) is shown on the left side with his five children shown connected below his on the chart. Valentine Fulp/Phelps is shown near the center. The chart shows just some of his descendants, the ones we will use to show the y-DNA connection. The orange boxes in this chart shows that the y-DNA of Dennis P Phelps, Thomas A Phelps and Arland E Phelps not only match but they also match the y-DNA of William V Fulp, Benjie L Fulp and William Y Fulp. We know that the common Haplogroup for these six men is totally different from all other known Phelps y-DNA lines. This tells us that our Phelps line is not related to the other known Phelps lines in the world but instead has a tie to the Fulps line somewhere in the Fulps lineage. This confirms our family tradition that suggests we are of German descent even though the traditional Phelps name is of English descent.

An 1855 lawsuit in St Clair County, Illinois, identifies six siblings as George, Michael, Peter, Henry, Catherine and Elizabeth Felps. They are shown on the chart in gold boxes. The lineage of Thomas A Phelps and Arland E Phelps can be proven with family knowledge and public records back to their 2nd Great Grandfather, Valentine Fulps/Phelps shown in blue. Likewise, the lineage of Dennis Paul Phelps can be proven with family knowledge and public records back to his 3th Great Grandfather, Michael Felps/Phelps shown in gold. Dennis Paul Phelps has the lawsuit records in his family archives and therefore knows that this Michael is his 3rd Great Grandfather. Since the y-DNA of Thomas and Arland matches Dennis’s y-DNA, we know that Michael and Henry were brothers. This also suggests that the six siblings shown in gold are the children of Valentine Fulps/Phelps.

After extensive research, it was determine that there were only five Fulps men that were the right age to have fathered Michael and Henry who was born in Tennessee in 1797 and 1799 respectively. They are shown on the chart in the blue boxes. With the exception of second generation Valentine, the other four were all eliminated because they did not have children by these names and they lived and died in other locations. We now know that Valentine was born about February 14, 1743 in Germany and came to America with his parents to Pennsylvania in 1751. He later moved with his father to Surry County, North Carolina. A 1786 tax record in Cpt. Krous District of Surry County, North Carolina, lists a Valentine Folp which is thought to be this Valentine Fulps. He would have been approximately 33 years old and eligible for the tax poll. He is not listed in later Surry County census nor tax records and is thought to have moved to Claiborne County, Tennessee, arriving before 1790. It is thought that he married and had started a family in the 1790’s. According to later census records his son, Michael was born in Tennessee in 1797. Also later census records show his son Henry was born in 1799 in Tennessee. Valentine and his family were likely in the earlier Claiborne County public records, however these records were destroyed by two Courthouse fires in 1863 and 1931. Records of Valentine during this period are not found in any of the surrounding states further suggesting that he was in Claiborne County. P.G. Fulkerson’s Papers, which was

written about 1870, identifies a Valentine “Felty” Fulps that “led” a group of family members from Surry County, North Carolina to Claiborne County, Tennessee, arriving about 1814. This was a third generation Valentine, son of Michael Fulp (1755-1836). Michael followed the tradition of naming his son after his older brother. It is thought that they may have moved to Claiborne County on the advice of his Uncle Valentine. In fact Uncle Valentine may have actually been the Valentine that “led” the group to Claiborne County where he was already established with his family. There is a lot of confusion with the two Valentine names since most of the early records were later destroyed by fires. Regardless, we know that the third generation Valentine was married twice, had twelve children and died in Claiborne County, Tennessee. During this period, surnames were spelled different, depending on how they sounded to a census taker or other public official. Common names that are found in the records are: Fulp, Fulps, Fultz, Felps, Philips, Phulps and Phelps.

Family records show that our family patriarch, Valentine Phelps, died in Illinois. It is thought that he moved his family from Claiborne County, Tennessee to St. Clair County, Illinois before the 1830 census. It is also thought that he owned land in St Clair County and died prior to the 1830 Census. His “family” continued to live on the farm and in 1849, his son George died, leaving two children in the care of his brother Michael. Family records tell that there was a lot of family disagreement about selling the estate and distributing the inheritance. Michael held off selling the estate for another three years but was then forced to sell in 1852. An 1855 lawsuit resulted from how the estate was sold but it was subsequently settled.

According to later Illinois Census records, Valentine’s son Michael was born in Tennessee in 1797, presumed to be in Claiborne County. It is thought that he moved with his father Valentine to St Clair County, Illinois where he is found in many public and family records. He married Ruth Lunceford and had seven children. He died in 1871. Many of Michael and Ruth’s family still resides in Illinois today with one son having moved to Missouri.

Also, later census records show that Valentine’s son Henry Valentine was born in 1799 in Tennessee, presumed to be Claiborne County. It is thought that he moved with his father to Illinois where he met and married Rhoda Lebow, daughter of John Lebow. Family records show that he left Illinois because of the family’s feud over Valentine’s estate. He moved back to Claiborne County and is seen in that County’s 1830 Census, living next door to his father-in-law, John Lebow who apparently moved from Illinois at the same time. Henry later moved to Blount County, Tennessee and is seen in the 1840 and subsequent census records. Henry and Rhoda had eleven children and lived in the Middlesettlements Community of Blount County, Tennessee. Henry Valentine Phelps died sometime before 1860. Family records show that during a smallpox epidemic in the community, he dug graves for the victims. He was believed to be one of the few able bodied men in the community, and he kept an empty grave dug in preparation for the next smallpox victim. When he became ill and died of the disease, he was buried in a grave that he had dug himself. Many descendants of Henry and Rhoda still live in East Tennessee but others have spread out to other places.

One of the strongest arguments that support the theory that second generation Valentine Fulps is our connection to the Fulps family is the names of the six siblings who we know are in fact part of our ancestral family. For several generations, the Fulps families commonly named their children after

their parents and siblings. For example, George's children were: Valentine, Michael, Peter, Catherine and Mary. Therefore, his son Michael had children named: George, Mary, Michael, Peter, and Valentine. Similarly, George's son Valentine had children named: George, Michael, Peter, Henry Valentine, Elizabeth and Catherine and who may have actually been Mary Catherine. The names clearly suggest that the six siblings are the grandchildren of first American, George Fulps and not the third generation Valentine. A chart shown in the website's "Album" section named "Fulp-Phelps Naming Patterns", clearly shows these similar names.

In conclusion, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the father of the six siblings and the connection between the Phelps and Fulps families is second generation Valentine Fulps b. Feb 14, 1743 in Sindringen, Germany.