



Nobody Actually Knows What George Bush Looked Like

- DNA attempts to tell us the story

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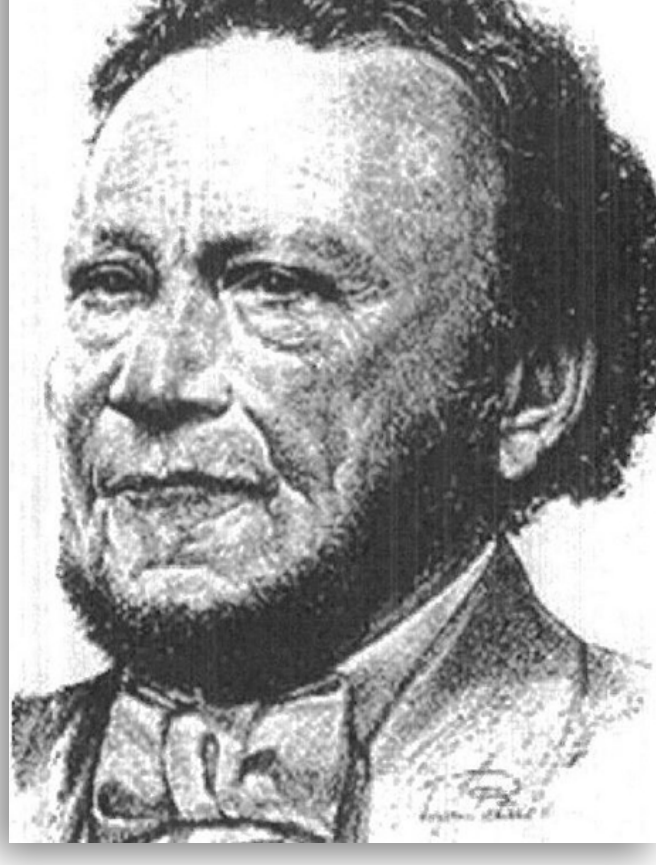
My interest in George Bush, pioneer of Washington Territorial fame, started when I undertook a family research project on the David Kindred family. The David Kindred family journeyed with George Bush on the pioneer trail from Missouri to Oregon Territory in 1844-45. Bush is most recognizable as one of the earliest men of color to own property in Thurston County—Bush Prairie in southern Thurston County is named for him. The interest reemerged when I visited the 2015 archaeological dig at the Bush Donation Land Claim by a class from The Evergreen State College.

Background: Early Writings about George Bush

The community at large and the Bush family have split ideas on the ethnicity of George Bush. There have been many stories written about New Market (now Tumwater) pioneer, George Bush. Some of them true, and some of them fictional. We know he was a man of color, as several historical records designated him as either black or mulatto. His family, mainly his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, claimed George was of West Indies descent.¹ There is not much commentary by his immediate sons about his ethnicity. Most interviews were done with later generations.

The writings of his acquaintances associated him heavily with the African-American community. Many post-1900 writers and historians have written different accounts of Bush's trek to the Oregon/Washington Territory. Many of these writings contain numerous inaccuracies which carry no documentation and have been replicated over and over again.

The first example of these inaccuracies is the combination of George Bush and George Washington as the same person. Both gentleman were of color and arrived in the



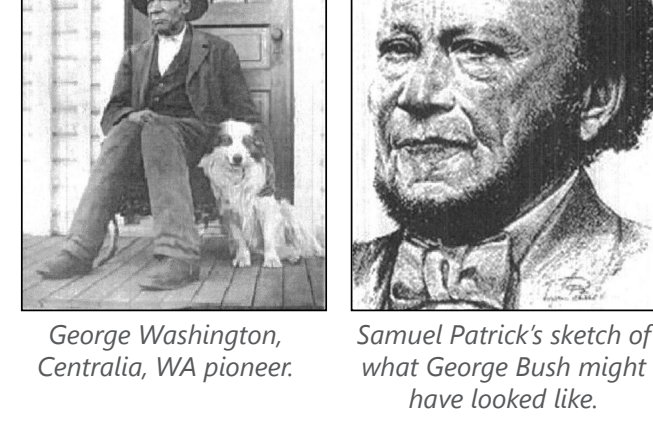
Washington Territory just a few years apart. The subsequent example of this is Samuel Patrick's depiction of what George Bush might have looked like. The sketch of George Bush was drawn by Patrick, who worked as a staff artist for the *Los Angeles Times* in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The newspaper ran a series of columns about black pioneers and George Bush was included. The likeness has been replicated so often now some people think it really is a likeness of George Bush. The text was written by George Reasons, and appeared under the booklet series title *They Had a Dream*.² The column about George Bush was published in 1973.³ No known likeness of George Bush has been found in the Bush Family memorabilia or with other pioneer families associated with him. These ideas and writings are part of what prompted the DNA project.

The Hypothesis

Because the two African-American pioneers were often mistaken for each other, it is my first hypothesis that the depiction of George Bush by Patrick is actually a depiction of George Washington, pioneer of Centralia.

When the DNA project started it was my notion that the DNA test of multiple Bush ancestors would answer the question of his ethnicity. Not only would it show the ethnicity, but it would unequivocally tell us the origin of the Bush clan.

Support of the Hypothesis



George Washington, Centralia, WA pioneer.

Samuel Patrick's sketch of what George Bush might have looked like.

The support for my first hypothesis comes from the comparison of Patrick's depiction of George Washington. If you look at them side-by-side they look like the same person. Furthermore, about 40 years after Bush's death, articles and stories began running with the name George Washington Bush, a fabricated combination of the two pioneers' names. There is no historical record showing George Bush had a middle name. I believe the confusion over the photo and the compound name became commonplace.

Earliest Bush Documentation

The earliest substantiated documentation of George Bush and Isabella James Bush starts in 1830 with the Clay County, Missouri Federal Census.⁴ Also found in Clay County, Missouri is the marriage of George Bush and Ibby James. They were married by John P. Smith, Justice of the Peace on July 4, 1830.⁵ It was

stated in the record that they were both of lawful age but did not indicate ethnicity. John P. Smith was one of four justices of Marshall Township which was located just south of Buchanan County. These boundaries were formed in 1838 by what was known as the Platte Purchase (Missouri).

The only outside documentation other than family lore for George Bush's birth date are the 1830, 1840, 1850 & 1860 censuses:

Census	Birth date	Birthplace
1830 Clay County, Missouri ⁶	1790 – 1800	n/a
1840 Jefferson Township, Buchanan Co., Missouri ⁷	1785 – 1805	n/a
1850 Lewis County, Oregon Territory ⁸	1794	Virginia
1860 Olympia, Thurston County, Washington Territory ⁹	1790	Pennsylvania

Analysis: DNA Testing & Results

In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis of George Bush's ethnicity, we had to trace descendants. Combing through public and private records, we were able to locate four direct living descendants to participate in our George Bush DNA project. We used

autosomal DNA tests from AncestryDNA to capture and compare the results. We also located and involved several people who took tests for exclusionary reasons, to assure there were no other ancestors from whom the participants could get African or India DNA.

The DNA analysis of the descendants are as follows:

ID	Relationship to George Bush	Percentage of African blood
KS	GGGG Grandson	1% Africa North
GL	GGG Granddaughter	2% Africa North
JC	GGG Granddaughter	4% (3% Benin/Togo, 1% Africa North)
GS	GGG Grandson	3% (1% Senegal, 1% Africa South, 1% Bantu)

The DNA drawn and tested from the participants has the percentages of African DNA you would expect from someone whose great-great-great grandfather was African American. They fall into the 2-4% which would

be about half of the 6.25% of the great-great grandfather or grandmother, as shown in the chart below. All signs indicate George Bush indeed was African American, but this is still not conclusive.

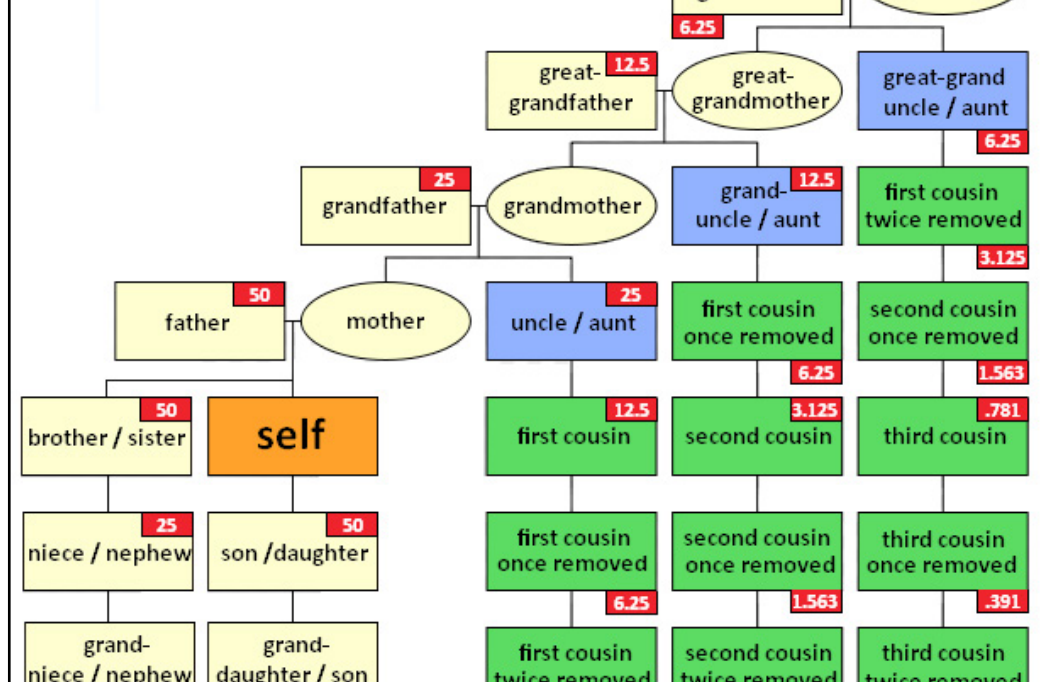


Chart from ISOGG website: http://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_statistics

We were lucky to have these participants available for our project. If the project had taken place years later we might've not had anyone available for testing. This is monumental as DNA results have a huge drop off between five and six generations

for autosomal DNA. The two items which worked against us for this project were having nobody to test for straight Y-DNA and the X-DNA, which in our case, could not be passed down through George Bush's mother to the present.

Conclusion

The first conclusion drawn from the supporting textual research is that many people lumped the two pioneers of color into one person. Thence George Bush and George Washington became George Washington Bush. It is still difficult to change and correct all the information already out there, in print and online.

The length of time they have been buried, and the embalming practices of their time, might not leave a viable sample to extract.

The second conclusion is we will never be able to know through DNA the exact ethnicity or origin of George Bush. The most concrete reason being: we do not have a lineal male descendant to take a Y-DNA test. The only way to get a Y-DNA sample would be to exhume William Owen Bush or John Shotwell Bush to extract a DNA sample. This in itself would be problematic because of the time

period William Owen and John Shotwell died. The length of time they have been buried, and the embalming practices of their time, might not leave a viable sample to extract.

The other issue is the sample cluster used by AncestryDNA and other DNA testing companies. It is common knowledge, none of the DNA testing labs have a large cluster sampling of Bush's potential West Indies origin remain unanswered. There may be additional matches which become available with the major cluster sampling in India. This could alter the results of the Bush DNA project.

References

- ¹Interviews of Bell Bush Twohy and Kathryn Bush Hackett by Paul Thomas in 1965 for Master's Thesis on George Bush, University of Washington Special Collections. Accessed April 2016.
- ²Newspaper Clipping Bush Collection, Washington State Archives, Booklets Volumes I, II, & III were available through the Arizona Daily Star, Los Angeles, CA for \$1 in 1973.
- ³Newspaper Clipping Bush Collection, Washington State Archives, Black Pioneer Helped Settle Oregon Territory, Los Angeles Time, 1973.
- ⁴1830 United States Federal Census, Clay County, Missouri page 269, secondary page 4, line 27, George Bush, one white male between 30-40 years of age, one white female between 20-30 years of age, page 269. Retrieved from Ancestry.com September 16, 2016.
- ⁵Marriage Record George Bush and Ibby James performed July 4, 1830 in Clay County, MO by John P. Smith Justice of the Peace, recorded August 2, 1830 on page 69, entry number two, scanned copy located on Ancestry.com. Scan is taken from Family History Library film 955303, marriage records of Clay County, Volume A 1822-1842, microfilmed in 1974. Retrieved from Ancestry.com
- ⁶1830 U.S. Federal Census, Clay County Missouri, page 269, secondary page 4, line 27, George Bush, male age 30-40. Retrieved from Ancestry.com September 16, 2016.
- ⁷1840 U.S. Federal Census, Jefferson Township, Buchanan County, Missouri, printed page 153, secondary page 4, line 17, free black male age 35 to 55. * Note his four sons are enumerated as free blacks under age 5 and there is an unidentified black male age 34-35. Retrieved from Ancestry.com September 16, 2016.
- ⁸1850 Schedule 1, U.S. Federal Census, Territory of Oregon, Lewis Co., page 55, line 6, dwelling 47, George Bush age 55, Male, Color Black, occupation Farmer, \$3000 real estate, born VA. Retrieved from Ancestry.com September 16, 2016.
- ⁹1860 Schedule 1, U.S. Federal Census, Washington Territory, page 212, line 18, dwelling 236, family 236, Geo. Bush age 70, Male, color Black, occupation farmer, real estate \$5500, personal estate \$2725, born Penn. Retrieved from Ancestry.com September 16, 2016.