

Elizabeth Hepler (1785–1859)

And her families with Henry Faus, Mr. Kricher/Krisher/Kreischer, and John Adam Snyder

By Michael L. Wilson (mwilson@swcp.com), fourth-great grandson

Introduction

I have been very interested in Elizabeth Hepler because there are some important outstanding questions about her and her families. I believe that Elizabeth Hepler had children with three different husbands, and there are descendants in Faus, Kanouse, Whitenight, Fought, and Snyder lines who are related through her—and most don't even know it. It's difficult because there are a lot of name variations (e.g., Kepler and Hefler), plus Elizabeth moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio to Michigan, so families and records are dispersed. I have been collecting family trees and looking for connections. I am pretty convinced about the story presented here, but have to admit that the evidence is not as strong as I would like, especially for Elizabeth's second marriage and her connection to Julia Kricher Fought.

I am very interested in the potential for using DNA evidence. Could DNA possibly settle some of the questions where documentary evidence is missing? I have been scouring my Ancestry DNA match data looking for connections. Elizabeth Hepler is six or seven generations back from most of us, so this is stretching the current capabilities of DNA matching because of very low levels of shared DNA. And because of the randomness of DNA inheritance, I am not even a match for many descendants of Elizabeth. There is a possibility of using a different type of DNA matching, using so-called mitochondrial DNA, to confirm the connection to daughter Julia. There is a short section about this near the end, but the bottom line is that it is promising but I currently do not know of any candidates for this testing.

In this write-up I present what I know about Elizabeth and the important questions. I would love to hear from anyone who has additional evidence on any of these questions, either confirming or contradicting my answers.

Marriage to Henry Faus

An important early Faus family genealogy was self-published by Sister Mary Euphrasia Faus (a descendant of Henry Faus, born Ruth Lavina Faus) in 1961. She produced a booklet called *Faus Genealogical Data Summarized: 1780 – 1961*, which I obtained in October 2019 from Marilyn Riehl (another descendant of Henry Faus). This booklet seems to have been quite influential, with many present-day Faus genealogies following it in important respects. In summary, she said this about the family of Henry Faus:

His wife was Elizabeth Kepler or Keppler, with no other information about her.

Their children were:

- Thomas Faus, born 14 Nov 1803 in Whitehall Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania; married Rachel Robbins in 1827, and after her death married Susan Bacon in 1864; died 5 Jul 1875 in Pine Township, Columbia County, Pennsylvania. The great majority of the book was information about descendants of Thomas, including the Sister herself.
- Pauline (Polly) Faus, married Peter Whitney, with no other information.

- Julia Faus, married Jacob Fought, no other information.
- Henry Faus II, born 1809, married Mary DeLong, died 1884. A relatively small portion of the book had information about descendants of Henry. I will also mention that Marilyn Riehl is a descendant of Henry II, or as I usually write it, Henry Jr.
- Elizabeth Faus, married Abraham Kraus, no other information.

At this point, you might be wondering why all this is included here, since this write-up is supposed to be about Elizabeth Hepler, not Elizabeth Kepler. Well, I don't know where Sister Mary Euphrasia got the spelling of Kepler—I have so far not found it in any original documents—but part of the purpose of this document is to lay out why I think Henry's wife was Elizabeth Hepler, daughter of George Hepler and Catharine Kreiling. To give credit where credit is due, Marilyn Riehl and Garry Heagy (a descendant of Thomas Faus) have done extensive research on the Faus and Hepler families and it is from them that I learned of the Hepler–Faus connection and Elizabeth Hepler's other marriages. Sister Mary Euphrasia's information about Thomas and his descendants was good and quite extensive, and she also had a lot of good information about Henry Jr. and his descendants, but her information was lacking when it came to Henry's wife and daughters. This is not really surprising. Since the women's names changed when they got married, it is much harder to track them.

An alternate starting point is a biography of Frank Faus (one of Henry Faus's grandsons, a son of Thomas Faus) in *Historical and Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties, Pennsylvania* (J. H. Beers & Co., 1915, Volume II p. 849), which I first learned about from Garry Heagy. The beginning of Frank's biography says:

Henry Faus was born in Lehigh county, Pa., where he lived and died, having been a farmer all his life. He married Elizabeth Hepler, who after his death came with her children to Columbia county, and still later moved to Michigan, where she died. For her second husband she married a Mr. Krisher, and after his death she took as her third husband Joseph Snyder. Henry Faus and his wife had the following children: Thomas; Henry; Polly, who married Peter Whitney; and Eliza, who married Abraham Krauss.

Comparing this passage to the information from Sister Mary Euphrasia, there are three things worth highlighting: it gives Henry's wife's family name as Hepler rather than Kepler, it says she had two other husbands after Henry, and it doesn't list daughter Julia. As I will discuss below, there are still problems with this account, but those three differences are all significant.

As far as I know, no one has been able to find a marriage record for Henry and Elizabeth, which certainly adds to the uncertainty about Henry's wife (and the same is true for Elizabeth's other two marriages, unfortunately). The best evidence so far is the probate records for Henry Faas in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, which I mostly obtained from Marilyn Riehl and which can be seen at <https://archive.org/details/henry-faus-probate-papers>. The last name is spelled Faas in the index of the county records, but there are several spellings in the records themselves, including Foas, Foass, Foase, Fahs, and Faus. The spelling of Faus is in the final accounting report, dated in 1814. It seems that various spellings were going around, and Henry's descendants decided on Faus at some point. The administrator of the estate was George Hepler, and it is explicitly stated in one document that he was the father of Henry's widow, Elizabeth. Because of the inconsistent spelling of Henry's last name, there is still some uncertainty, but I think it is very good evidence for the identity of Henry Faus's wife. It is

unfortunate that their children weren't listed; that could have removed all doubt. Another item of interest is that, according to Marilyn Riehl, there are deeds that mention H. Fouse and George Hepler as having neighboring land. I've been planning to get those deeds, but haven't gotten around to it yet.

A little bit of additional support for marriage of Elizabeth Hepler and Henry Faus is in some old church records available in *Christ Lutheran and Reformed Church, Shoenersville, Pa.: Evangelical Lutheran Congregation*, transcribed by Laura Shoener (1936; obtained from Ancestry.com, "Pennsylvania and New Jersey U.S. Church and Town Records 1669-2013"). I found out about these records from Marilyn Riehl. Elizabeth is mentioned in several places:

- p. 22: Birth record for Thomas Faas on 14 Nov 1803. Parents listed as Heinrich and Elisabeth Faas.
- p. 70: Confirmation and attendance at the Lord's Supper on Rogate Sunday (I believe this was 10 May 1801; Rogate Sunday is the fifth Sunday after Easter, and Easter was on April 5 in 1801). Listed as Elisabeth Hebler, age 17. Also listed is Salome Hebler, age 16, presumed to be her sister.
- p. 71: Attendance at the Lord's Supper on 24 Oct 1801. Elisabeth Hubler and Salome Hubler are listed.
- p. 73: Attendance at the Lord's Supper on Easter (10 Apr 1803). Elisabeth Fasz and Salme Hebler are listed—so Elizabeth's marriage to Henry was sometime before this.
- p. 74: Attendance at the Lord's Supper on 6 May 1804. Elisabeth Faus and Salome Hubler are listed.
- p. 75: Attendance at the Lord's Supper on 5 May 1805. Elisabeth Faas, Salome Hubler, and Maria Hebler (another sister?) are listed.
- p. 76: Attendance at the Lord's Supper on Easter (6 Apr 1806). Elisabeth Faas and Magd Hebler are listed.

I did not find Elisabeth listed after this, though it's always possible I missed something. It appears they moved, because daughter Elisabeth's birth is listed in records of a different church in May 1808. It is perhaps worth including this note from the front of the book:

Note: In translating these names it was found that considerable of the German was rather poorly written and that the spelling of the various names was often phonetic and quite indifferent. It is obvious that some of the names are spelled in more than one way; sometimes, indeed, in many different ways. Any attempt to correct them would lead to other difficulties, so that it was thought best to try and keep the original spelling throughout. C. W. Unger

Let me now continue by summarizing Elizabeth's life up through her time with Henry Faus. She was born on 23 May 1785 in Pennsylvania to George Hepler and Catharine Kreiling (there are many variant spellings of Hepler and Kreiling in various records). The birth date comes from a family bible that will be discussed later. The original spelling of her first name was likely Elisabeth. Her signature has that spelling in the Henry Faus probate papers, and her name is also spelled that way in the church records above and in the birth certificate for Josiah Snyder, which will be discussed later. Similarly, Henry's first name was probably Heinrich originally.

Elizabeth married Henry Faus in 1803 or before (see above). She was probably about 17 when they married. Elizabeth and Henry had four children that I know of:

Thomas Faus was born on 14 Nov 1803 in Whitehall Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania. He had two wives, Rachel Robbins and Susan Bacon. Family trees list a total of 20 (or possibly 21) children

between the two wives.(!) Unlike most of his siblings, Thomas stayed in Pennsylvania and died on 5 Jul 1875 in Pine Township, Columbia County.

Elizabeth (Eliza) Faus was born on 4 May 1808 in Northampton County, Pennsylvania. A lot of family trees say she was born on May 2, but May 4 comes from *Church Record of Zion Reformed Church, Allentown, Lehigh County: Volume I, 1765-1820*, copied by William J. Hinke, 1938, p. 61 (obtained from FamilySearch.org, microfilm 20345, image group 7596967, item 5), which I learned about thanks to a pointer from Marilyn Riehl. She is listed as Elizabeth, daughter of Henry and Elizabeth Faas. Elizabeth married Abraham Kanouse and had 12 children that I know of. Elizabeth and her family moved to Michigan in 1855. (The year comes from obituaries of two of their children. They were still back in Montour County, Pennsylvania, in the 1850 census. Montour County was split off from Columbia County in 1850, so where they were living had been Columbia County until then.) She died on 7 Jan 1871 in Bethel Township, Branch County. Sister Mary Euphrasia said that Eliza married Abraham Kraus and the Frank Faus biography said Abraham Krauss. It seems to be fairly well accepted that his name was really Abraham Knaus or Knauss, and that branch of the family changed the spelling to Kanouse. Death certificates for children John, Phoebe, Josiah, and Aaron (available from Ancestry.com) all list their parents as Abraham Kanouse and Elizabeth Fauss. In addition, I am definitely a descendant of Abraham Kanouse and I have many DNA matches with descendants of Thomas Faus and Henry Faus Jr. There is more discussion of DNA matches later.

Henry Faus Jr. was born on 11 Oct 1809 in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. He married Mary DeLong and had 11 children that I know of. Henry was in Ohio by 1860, and died on 6 Feb 1883 in Ashland, Ohio (some family trees say February 5).

Mary (Polly) Faus was born on 13 Aug 1812 in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. She married Peter Whitenight and had nine children that I know of. Sometime after the death of her husband in 1862 she moved to Michigan, and died on 17 Nov 1886 in Bethel Township, Branch County (some sources say November 16). Sister Mary Euphrasia and the Frank Faus biography both said that Polly Faus married Peter Whitney. I have seen in several places that his name was really Peter Whitenight. This seems to suggest that Whitenight might have been pronounced like Whitney. The other oddity is that Sister Mary Euphrasia gave her name as Pauline (Polly), but Polly was usually a nickname for Mary. The death certificate for daughter Lydia Miller (available from Ancestry.com) lists her parents as Peter Whitenight and Mary Fauss. The death certificate for son Amzie (available on Ancestry.com) lists his parents as Peter Whitenight and Sarah Faus. The Sarah is rather mysterious, as cemetery records (e.g., Find A Grave) show that Peter Whitenight's wife was named Mary, but it does show the surname as Faus. And once again, I also have evidence in the form of DNA matches with a few descendants of Peter and Mary Whitenight.

And now a few notes about places. The biography of Frank Faus stated that Henry Faus Sr. was born, lived, and died in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. However, Lehigh County was not even formed until 1812, so I take this to mean that he and his family lived in the part of Northampton County that became Lehigh County (which includes Whitehall Township). I do not currently know the evidence that Thomas was born in Whitehall Township; I need to investigate that. Some family trees also have Elizabeth born in Whitehall Township, but the fact that the birth and baptism records for Thomas and Elizabeth are in different churches makes me think they moved, whether within Whitehall or to a different township I don't know. Also, despite what the biography said, Henry's probate records show that he died in

Northumberland County, so he did not just stay in the same county his whole life. The probate records indicate that he was living in Bloom Township, Northumberland County, at the time of his death.

Consistent with this, some family trees indicate that Henry Faus Jr. was born in Columbia County. Columbia County actually wasn't formed from Northumberland County until 1813, but I take this to mean that Henry Sr. and his family moved in 1808 or 1809 from Northampton County to the part of Northumberland County that later became Columbia County (which includes Bloom Township). It might be that Henry Jr. and Polly were born in Bloom Township, but that is not certain. It seems likely that Polly was born there since she was born not long after Henry Sr. died there, but it's also possible that there were other moves so that Henry Jr. was born in some other part of Northumberland County.

Henry Faus Sr. died sometime before 18 Apr 1812 (the earliest date in the probate papers). Elizabeth was probably 26 years old when Henry died. One last note about Henry: The prevalence of spellings of Faas and Fahs in the earliest records makes it seem likely that the pronunciation was with an "ah" sound rather than an "ow" sound.

Marriage to Mr. Kricher/Krisher/Kreischer

There is very little information about Elizabeth Hepler's second marriage, not even the first name of the husband. I know of only three bits of information about it:

First is the excerpt from the Frank Faus biography presented earlier, which says that Elizabeth's second marriage was to a Mr. Krisher.

Second is the fact that Sister Mary Euphrasia and others listed a third daughter of Henry and Elizabeth, Julia, who married Jacob Fought. However, the probate records for Henry Faus show that he died sometime before 18 Apr 1812. Family trees and Find A Grave show that Julia Fought was born on 4 Sep 1814, so she could not have been Henry's daughter. The fact that people associated her with Henry and Elizabeth surely shows that there was a connection, though. This brings us back to several family trees that show her maiden name to have been Kricher, and the Frank Faus biography that shows Elizabeth Hepler's second husband to have been a Mr. Krisher. A death certificate for Hannah Eckman (available on Ancestry.com) lists her parents as Jacob Fought and Julia Krasher, and a biography of Samuel Eckman (in *History of Columbia and Montour Counties, Pennsylvania*, A. Warner & Co., Chicago, 1887, pp. 527–28) says that he married "Hannah Fought, daughter of Jacob and Julia (Kricher) Fought." Lydia is the only other of Julia's children with a death within the death-certificate era, but unfortunately her death certificate does not give her mother's name. Marilyn Riehl thinks that the name should be Kreischer. I like Kreischer because it looks more like a German name, but family trees that I have seen of Julia's descendants, as well as the biography of Samuel Eckman, seem to be unanimous in spelling it Kricher. Because of that I have decided to go with the majority and use Kricher for now.

The third bit of evidence is that I have several descendants of Jacob and Julia Fought among my Ancestry DNA matches. I also know that Marilyn Riehl (a Henry Faus Jr. descendant) is a match to at least one of the Fought descendants. They are weak matches because we are such distant relatives, but I think they are still meaningful.

The evidence here is definitely not as strong as I would like, but taking it as given let us continue with the life of Elizabeth Hepler. She married her second husband, Mr. Kricher, by 1814 (daughter Julia was

born in September 1814). Elizabeth was probably about 27 or 28 when they married. Elizabeth and Mr. Kricher had just one child that I know of:

Julia Ann Kricher was born on 4 Sep 1814. Some family trees say she was born in Northampton County, but it seems more likely that she was born in Columbia County. She married Jacob D. Fought and had six children that I know of. She remained in Pennsylvania and died on 29 Feb 1892 in Lycoming County.

Mr. Kricher presumably died sometime within a year or two of their marriage.

Marriage to John Adam Snyder

As with the first two, there is no known marriage record for this marriage. However, there is a birth certificate, a copy of which I obtained from George Snyder, for Josia Schneider, born on 3 Feb 1817 in Blum Taunschip, Columbia Caunty, in the Staat of Pennsylvanien, Nord-Amerika (it's written in German). The parents are listed as Johann Adam Schneider and Elisabeth Hepler. Clearly, there was a strong German community in that part of Pennsylvania (the "Pennsylvania Dutch"). The names in their Americanized form are Josiah Snyder, John Adam Snyder, and Elizabeth Hepler. The birth certificate can be seen at <https://archive.org/details/JosiahSnyderBirth>. The only question is whether this could have been some other Elizabeth Hepler and not the same one who married Henry Faus. I have two bits of evidence that it's the same Elizabeth. The first is the Frank Faus biography, which says that Elizabeth Hepler married a third time to a Joseph Snyder. The husband's first name doesn't match, but that could just be because the Snyders moved away from Pennsylvania a long time before that biography was written, and memories were faulty. The second bit of evidence is once again DNA matches. Unfortunately, my DNA matches do not help here because I am a descendant of William Kanouse, a grandson of Henry Faus, who married Elizabeth Snyder, a granddaughter of John A. Snyder. This intermarriage could explain my DNA matches with Fauses and Snyders even if there were two Elizabeth Heplers. However, I do have information about two descendants of Thomas Faus who are DNA matches with two descendants of Josiah Snyder; I would very much like to hear of other matches like that. Because the connection is so far back, most of these DNA matches will be quite weak.

William Kanouse and Elizabeth Snyder, just mentioned, are also important to this story because I have copies of pages from their family bible, obtained from my uncle, Glen Gathright. One page has these entries:

John A. Snyder	Elizabeth Snyder nee Hepler
was born in Pa May	was born in Pa, May
the 17, 1795	the 23, 1785
Died May 13, 1859	Died Sept 1, 1859

This is the best source I know of for their birth and death dates. There is no explanation there of how they are related to William and Elizabeth, and many people have assumed that these entries mean that they were Elizabeth Snyder's parents. This will be discussed more later, but I believe them to be her grandparents (and Elizabeth Hepler was also William's grandmother). The bible record can be seen at <https://archive.org/details/WilliamKanouseBible>.

Going back to Elizabeth Hepler's story, she married her third husband, John Adam Snyder (Johann Adam Schneider) sometime before 1817 (son Josiah was born in February 1817). She was probably about 30

or 31 when they married. In censuses and other records, he is usually listed as Adam. Elizabeth and Adam had just one child that I know of:

Josiah Snyder was born on 3 Feb 1817 in Bloom Township, Columbia County, Pennsylvania. He married Elizabeth Smith and had 13 children that I know of. Josiah and his family were in Ohio by 1838 and then moved to Michigan in 1859. Josiah died on 9 Jun 1900 in Gilead Township, Branch County.

Adam and Elizabeth are listed in the 1850 census in Adams Township, Seneca County, Ohio (Elizabeth 64 years old, Adam 54 years old). The family consisted of Adam and Elizabeth Snyder and another Elizabeth Snyder, 10 years old. The family of son Josiah Snyder was living nearby. This will be discussed more later, but I believe that the young Elizabeth was Josiah's daughter, already introduced as the wife of William Kanouse. I don't know when Adam and Elizabeth moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio. The bible pages mentioned above indicate that the younger Elizabeth Snyder was born in Adams Township in 1841, and censuses indicate that Josiah's oldest daughter, Rachel, was born in Ohio in 1838, but it is not known whether Adam and the older Elizabeth were also there at that time. They may well have gone to Ohio together with Josiah and his wife, but I don't know. There is a listing for Adam Snyder in Bloom Township, Seneca County, Ohio, in the 1840 census, which could be them, but that family includes a boy aged 5–10 years old and I don't know who that would have been. There is a listing for Josiah Snider in Washington Township, Hancock County, Ohio, that fits very well with the family of Josiah & Elizabeth (one male 20–29, one female 20–29, one male under 5, one female under 5). Note that Hancock County is right next to Seneca County and those townships are about 20 to 30 miles apart. There is too much uncertainty in 1830 to be able to tell where they were, though there is a listing for Adam Snyder in Franklin Township, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania that seems promising. None of the Adam Snyders in Ohio in 1830 match very well.

Adam Snyder died on 13 May 1859 in Seneca County, Ohio. According to the 1860 census mortality schedule, he was sick for two years and died of cancer. He is listed in the census mortality schedule for Branch County, Michigan, but I don't think that necessarily means he died there. It might just be that that's where his family was at the time of the census.

Elizabeth Hepler Faus Kricher Snyder died just a few months later on 1 Sep 1859 in Branch County, Michigan. According to the 1860 census mortality schedule, she was sick for two years and died of dropsy. It appears that she moved from Ohio to Michigan after her husband Adam died, probably with son Josiah Snyder and his family (an obituary for their son Henry indicates that they moved to Michigan when he was five, and he turned five in 1859). Josiah Snyder's family and Elizabeth Faus Kanouse's family were both in Branch County for the 1860 census.

Elizabeth Snyder is buried in Card Cemetery, Branch County, Michigan, and so are her daughter Elizabeth Kanouse and son-in-law Abraham Kanouse. It should be noted that Elizabeth's gravestone has 1784 – 1859 on it, though I prefer to go by the bible record, which says she was born in 1785. However, I will note that her confirmation record at age 17 in 1801, mentioned above, would be more consistent with birth in 1784 unless age 17 meant in her 17th year, which would be age 16 as we reckon it.

There was a short death notice for Adam and Elizabeth in the *Evangelical Messenger*, a weekly publication of the Evangelical Association, on 12 Jan 1860, p. 8 (obtained from the Allen County Public Library; there is an index of *Evangelical Messenger* obituaries at http://www.genealogycenter.info/search_evanmessenger.php):

SNYDER. Adam Snyder died May 17th, 1859, in Seneca co., Ohio, aged 63 years. He was a faithful servant of God, having been a member of the Evangelical Association a for [sic] number of years. Funeral discourse by the Rev. Williams. [The date given here is different from the date in the bible record, which is May 13.]

Also, Elizabeth, consort of the above Adam Snyder, died in Branch co., Michigan, Sept. 1, 1859, aged 74 years. She lived and died a Christian. Funeral discourse by Rev. Martin.

H. LONGBRAER [sp.?].

Note that the dates from the bible record give an age of 74 years for Elizabeth, which agrees with this death notice. The Evangelical Association, according to Wikipedia, was founded in 1800 and was a “body of American Christians chiefly of German descent”. It has undergone various splits and mergers since then, with the United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Church of North America being the main present-day descendants. In connection with the Evangelical Association, it is interesting to note that *History of Branch County, Michigan* (Everts & Abbot, Philadelphia, 1879) says the following on pp. 261–62:

ZION CHURCH OF THE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION

is located at East Gilead. The society was organized in the winter of 1859–60, by Rev. Frederick Geisel, a missionary on the De Kalb Mission, Indiana Conference. There was then a membership of about 15 persons. The first meeting was held in the school-house in District No. 4. Chandler S. Brown was appointed class-leader.

...

The meetings were held in the school-house at Arnold’s Corners—which was purchased soon after the organization was effected—until the church was built, in 1867. This building, the dimensions of which are 33 by 46 feet, cost about \$1800, and was built under the supervision of Jacob Doer, William Kanouse, and Thomas Davis, building committee. It was dedicated in February, 1868, and on that occasion Rev. M. J. Miller, presiding elder, preached the sermon. The incorporation of the society was not effected until about eight years ago, when Jacob Doer, William Kanouse, Thomas Davis, Josiah Snyder, and one other person, whose name we have not been able to ascertain, were elected trustees.

This is all after the deaths of Adam and Elizabeth Snyder, but it shows that their family remained active in the Evangelical Association. The connection to Arnold’s Corner is also of interest, because one of Josiah Snyder’s daughters, Sarah Jane, married John Wesley Arnold. The same *History* also says, on p. 291:

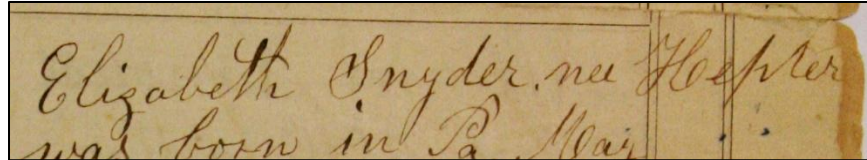
A class of the denomination known as the

EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION

was organized at Bethel a year or two ago, and held regular fortnightly meetings at the school-house there. Their pastor is Rev. Mr. White, who resides at Fremont, Ind. Their class-leader is Josiah Snyder, and John Kanouse is the steward.

The Kanouse–Snyder Connection

William Kanouse (son of Elizabeth Faus and Abraham Kanouse) married Elizabeth Snyder in 1861 and I have copies of pages from their bible, as mentioned earlier. (I'm pretty sure this is the same William Kanouse just mentioned as a trustee of the Zion Church, by the way.) The fact that there are entries for John A. Snyder and Elizabeth Hepler in the bible, plus that the younger Elizabeth was listed with them in the 1850 census, has led many people to believe that they were Elizabeth Snyder's parents. Many of these family trees spell Elizabeth's last name Hefler, by the way, likely reading it that way from the bible record. To me, it clearly looks like Hepler, though. See for yourself:



Like those people, I also started out thinking that John and Elizabeth were Elizabeth Snyder's parents, but I have come to believe that she was a daughter of Josiah Snyder, so that they were her grandparents. This would mean that she and William Kanouse were half-first cousins.

A big reason for thinking that Adam Snyder and Elizabeth Hepler were not Elizabeth Snyder's parents is that Elizabeth Hepler would have been 55 years old at the time of Elizabeth Snyder's birth (56 if born in 1784), which is probably too old to be having a child. It also seems unlikely that Elizabeth Hepler Snyder would have named a daughter Elizabeth, since she already had a daughter named Elizabeth with Henry Faus. There are other family trees (for example, the Snyder/Soules family tree on Ancestry World Tree, which is no longer online unfortunately) that have Elizabeth Snyder as a daughter of Josiah Snyder and his wife Elizabeth Smith. This seems more plausible, and note that one of Elizabeth Snyder Kanouse's children was named Josiah Snyder Kanouse. As to why those entries in the Kanouse/Snyder bible—Elizabeth and William would both have thought of them as grandparents, and they had died just a couple of years before William and Elizabeth married. It is worth noting that, at the time of Josiah's birth, Thomas Faus was 13 years old, Elizabeth was eight, Henry Jr. was seven, Polly was four, and Julia was two. They would have been probably a year or so younger than that when John Adam Snyder became their new father, so he would have been their father for much or most of their growing up. Thomas was probably the only one who had much memory of the first two fathers. It's too bad William and Elizabeth didn't name their parents in their bible. (Or maybe they did, and I'm missing some pages?)

Another tantalizing bit of information is that, in an interview transcript from 1977 at <http://www.snydersinfo.com/LeonaSnyder.pdf>, Leona D. Snyder, then 88 years old, talked about her aunts and uncles, the children of Josiah and Elizabeth Snyder. She said there were seven girls in the family, and she named six of them: Rachel, Catherine, Hanna, Angaline (Angeline), Jane (Sarah Jane), and Becky (Rebecca). She couldn't remember the name of the other one: "it was the one that was in the South, I can't remember." Was this Elizabeth? I don't know for sure, but Elizabeth, with her husband William Kanouse, did move south. In the 1880 census, they were in Adams County, Iowa, and later they moved to Kansas and then Oklahoma. Additional support for this is that John B. Arnold recently sent me a family genealogy (*A Connecticut Arnold Memorial*) written by his father, John Wesley Arnold, who was a grandson of Sarah Jane Snyder and John Wesley Arnold. In it, there are a few pages of information

about the Snyder family that it says came from Leona Snyder in 1967. It does, indeed, include Elizabeth as the second-oldest daughter of Josiah Snyder—plus including an eighth daughter, Julia Ann, who died way back in 1863 and didn't have any children (as far as I know). The children listed for Josiah are the same ones that George Snyder listed in the Snyder/Soules family tree on Ancestry World Tree. Some of George's information probably originated with his great-aunt Leona. This shows that Leona Snyder, who was born in 1889, knew Elizabeth as one of her aunts, and knew that she married William Kanouse and had sons named John and Jay (other information that was in the *Arnold Memorial*). To me, this makes it seem nearly certain that Elizabeth Snyder was a daughter of Josiah Snyder and Elizabeth Smith.

Another small piece of evidence is that a short obituary for Elizabeth Smith Snyder in the *Evangelical Messenger* (11 Dec 1894, p. 795) says that she had 13 children, six of whom survived her, which would fit with Elizabeth Snyder Kanouse being one of her children.

Ancestry DNA Matches

Following is a summary of the DNA matches that I have been able to identify on Ancestry. I have also done testing with Family Tree DNA and 23 and Me, but Ancestry is by far the best for this. My Heritage is another popular company, but I have not tested with them.

Thomas Faus. I have so far found 47 descendants of Thomas among my and my sister's matches on Ancestry DNA, with an average match strength of 19.4 cM. (cM, for centimorgans, is the measure of how much DNA is shared between two people.) One of the matches descends from both Thomas and Elizabeth Faus because of an intermarriage. It probably doesn't make much sense to simply average the match strengths like that since they are not all the same relationship to us, but I don't know what else to use as a simple summary. The relationships to me and my sister vary from third cousin twice removed to fifth cousin once removed—all rather distant, which is why the match strengths are so low.

Elizabeth Faus. This is my line, through her son William, so I have many close relatives who are descendants of Elizabeth. The closer relatives will be discussed later, but I have found 25 Ancestry DNA matches who descend from her children other than William, with an average match strength of 19.9 cM. (One of them descends from both Elizabeth and Thomas Faus.) The relationships to me and my sister vary from third cousin once removed to fourth cousin once removed. It's a little mysterious that the average match strength for Elizabeth is almost the same as for Thomas (and Henry and Polly) even though the relationships are closer for Elizabeth's descendants. Maybe it's some sort of selection effect—that's the level at which I can identify matching relatives?

Henry Faus Jr. I have so far found Ancestry DNA matches with 11 descendants of Henry, with an average match strength of 19.7 cM. The relationships vary from fourth cousin once removed to fifth cousin once removed.

Mary (Polly) Faus. I have so far found Ancestry DNA matches with 10 descendants of Polly, with an average match strength of 17.7 cM. The relationships vary from fourth cousin once removed to fifth cousin twice removed.

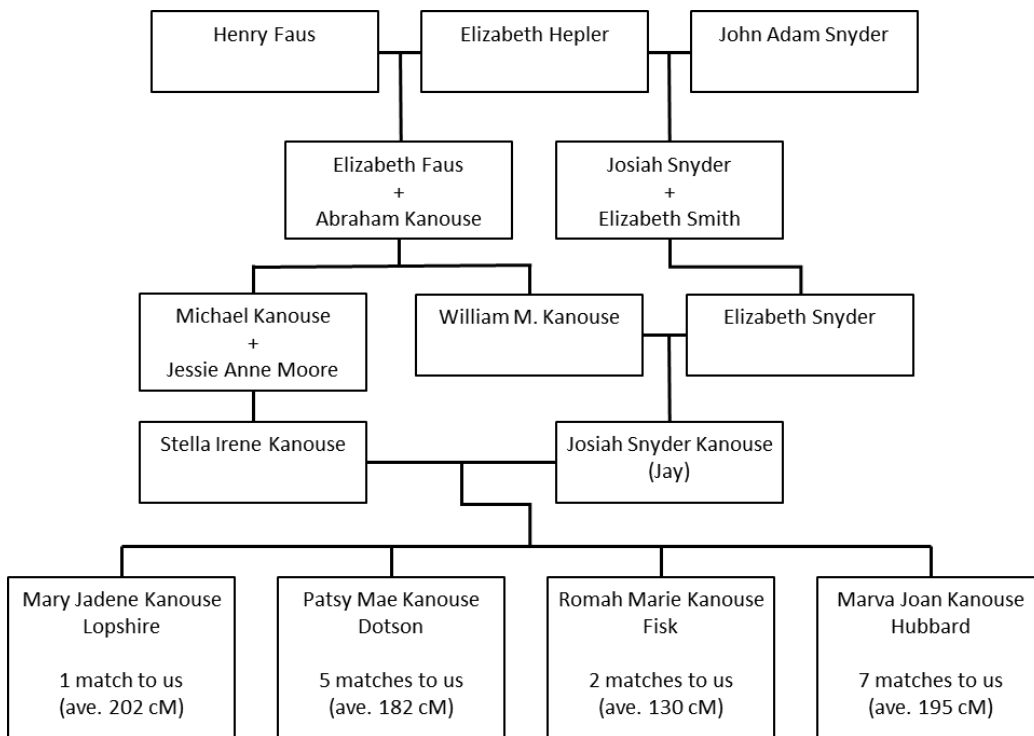
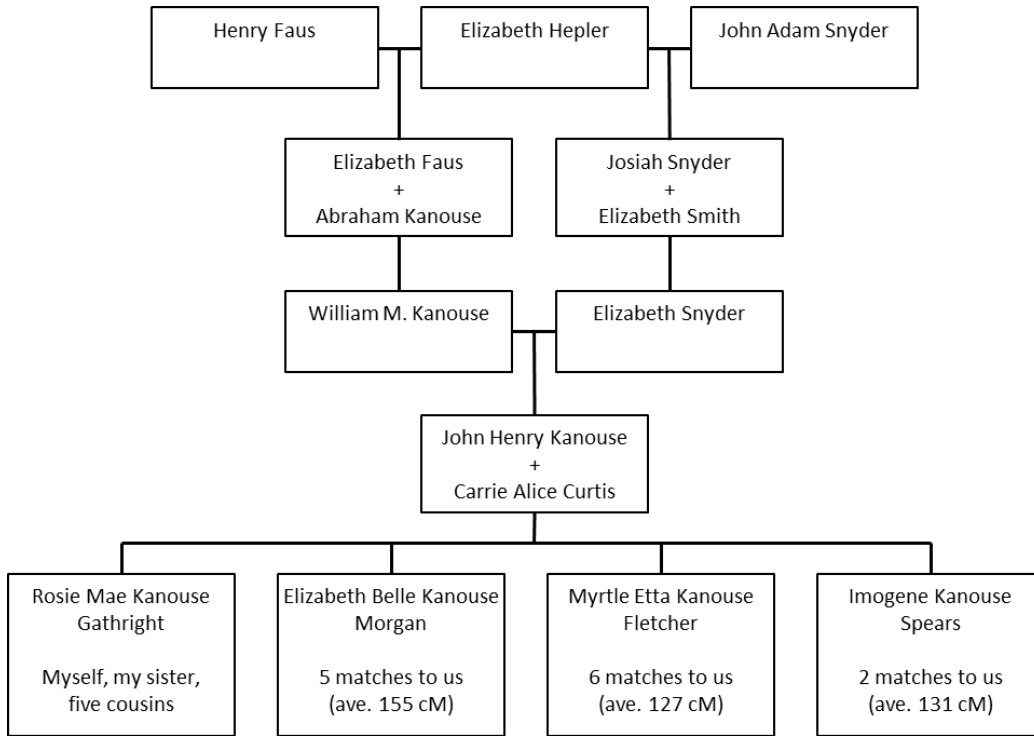
Julia Ann Kricher. I have so far found Ancestry DNA matches with 15 descendants of Julia, with an average match strength of 12.4 cM. The relationships vary from half-fourth cousin once removed to half-fifth cousin once removed.

Josiah Snyder. I have found 22 Ancestry DNA matches who descend from children other than Elizabeth, with an average match strength of 21.5 cM. The relationships to me and my sister vary from third cousin once removed to fourth cousin twice removed. As with Elizabeth, it seems like the match strengths should be higher for Josiah. A little mysterious, as I said.

Note that these matches are all far down on my list of DNA matches because they are such distant relationships. Ancestry's ThruLines is a powerful tool for finding distant matches like this. I should warn, though, that you have to be careful when using ThruLines. It is based on people's entered family trees, which are sometimes wrong. You have to be especially careful in a situation like this where there are so many variations of Elizabeth Hepler/Hefler/Kepler, and different versions of the parentage of Elizabeth Snyder. Another useful tool is Ancestry's recent release of their Pro Tools. If you sign up for the Pro Tools (which costs extra, of course), you can see the amount of shared DNA that your DNA matches have with each other. With that, if one of your matches doesn't have a tree posted, but is a close relative of another match who does have a posted tree, then you don't know exactly where in your tree the first match fits, but at least you know approximately. For me, the main reason for looking for distant relatives is the hope that some of them might have additional information about our ancestors. This makes matches who don't have posted trees less useful, but there is still the hope that they might lead to others who do. Since I started using the Pro Tools—only rather recently—I have found a lot of new matches for whom I know only approximately where in the family tree they fit. At this point, about a third of my "Hepler" matches fit in this category, but the numbers of matches in the discussions above and below do not include them. They are included in the cluster diagrams in the next section, though.

There are undoubtedly other matches that I haven't found yet, and other descendants who are not matches to me because of the randomness of DNA inheritance (for example, Garry Heagy and Marilyn Riehl both are not DNA matches to me or my sister). I think the fact that I have matches from all three of Elizabeth's husbands and all six of her children is important evidence that the husbands and families described above are correct. The evidence could be even stronger if other Faus, Kricher, and Snyder descendants would let me know if they have matches in the other groups.

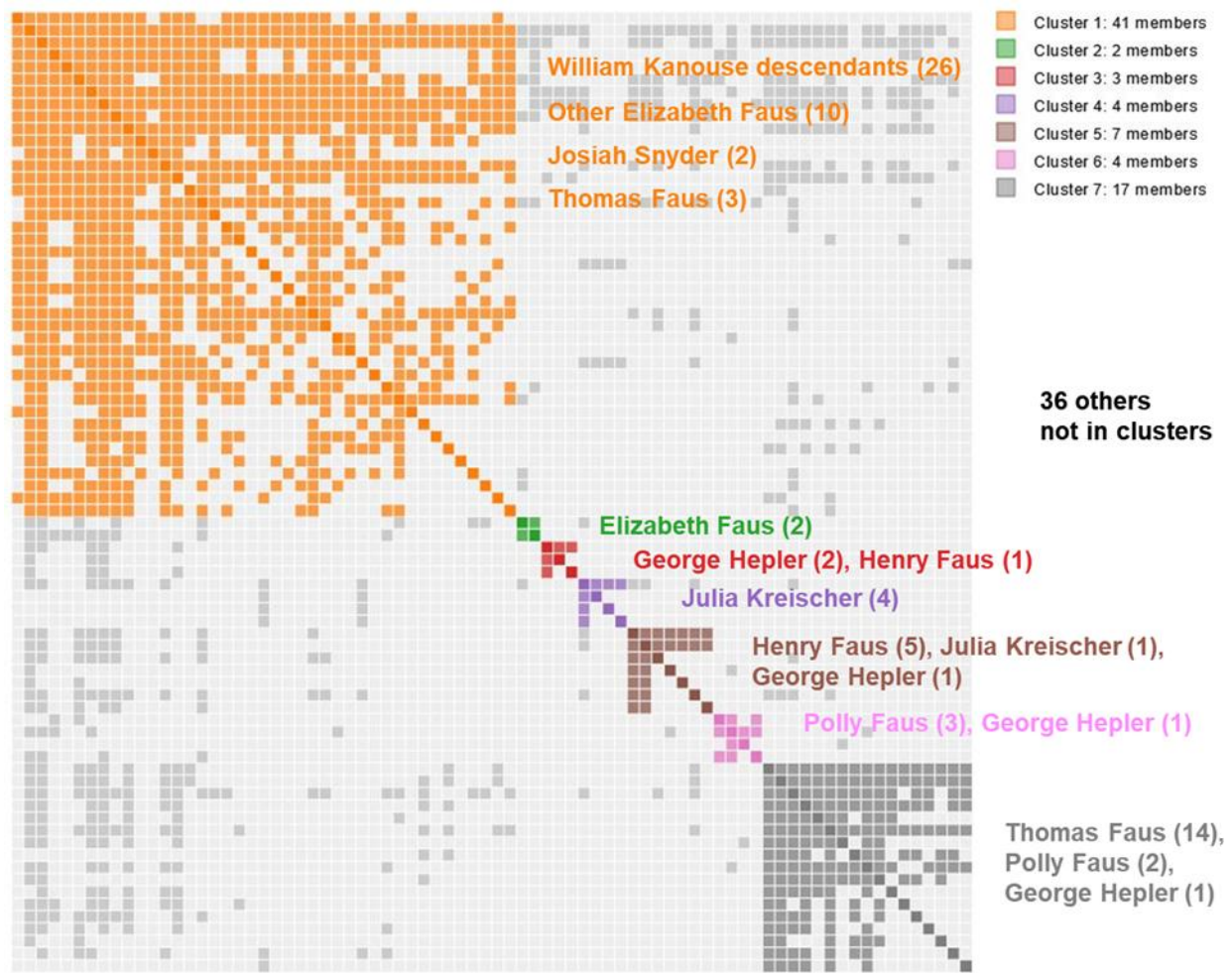
Now I will summarize my closer DNA matches. The following two charts show information about Ancestry DNA matches who are descendants of William Kanouse and Elizabeth Snyder. The charts assume that Elizabeth Snyder was a daughter of Josiah Snyder, as discussed above.



The shared DNA here is particularly high because of the multiple connections.

Cluster Analysis of DNA Matches

A useful approach to organizing autosomal DNA matches is cluster analysis. This is more typically used for looking at relatively close matches, where matches can be clustered to show those descended from each grandparent, for example, or great-grandparent. The Leeds Method (developed by Dana Leeds) is an approach to doing a top-level clustering analysis manually, but computer programs have been developed to do autoclustering—that is, to take a large number of DNA matches and automatically group them into related clusters. I have found the AutoCluster tool from Genetic Affairs (<http://geneticaffairs.com/>) to be very interesting. When I first started using it, you could create clusters automatically from any group you had defined for your Ancestry DNA matches. I had already defined a “Hepler” group with all of my matches that I knew to be descendants of Elizabeth Hepler, plus some that seemed to be, but who didn’t have online trees so it wasn’t possible to tell for sure. It was really a George Hepler group because it also included some descendants of his other children besides Elizabeth, but I didn’t have very many of those. AutoCluster creates a diagram by means of an algorithm that looks at all the shared matches between me and each of my matches, and groups together ones that have shares in common. It produced a very interesting diagram, which showed clear clusters related to descendants of Elizabeth’s various children. This is the diagram from March 2020:



number of DNA Matches: 114

Min threshold: 6 cM

Max threshold: 900 cM

Min cluster size: 2 members

The results were interesting enough that I wanted to continue updating them as I discovered additional “Hepler” matches. Unfortunately, Genetic Affairs lost its ability to work directly with Ancestry DNA as of June 2020. I wish we could get that capability back, but it is still possible to perform an analysis with Ancestry DNA matches by entering the information on matches and shared matches into CSV files by hand. That is a very time-consuming process, especially compared to the previous process, which was very easy, but I thought the results were interesting enough to make it worth doing every so often.



Number of DNA Matches: 182 Min threshold: 6 cM Max threshold: 3800 cM Min cluster size: 2 members

This process may have reached the end of its usefulness, though (this diagram is from September 2024). As I have added more matches, and especially with the recent additions using the Pro Tools, the diagram has just gotten more complicated without providing much additional illumination. As you can see above, it is devolving into more and more clusters, representing groups of relatively close family members who have gotten Ancestry DNA tests. There is still the big Cluster 1, with mostly close relatives of mine descended from William Kanouse and Elizabeth Snyder, plus a bunch of descendants of Elizabeth Faus Kanouse’s other children (besides William) and a few others. Clusters 2 and 10 have some more descendants of Elizabeth Faus Kanouse’s other children. Clusters 3, 5, and 14 are mostly descendants of Elizabeth Hepler’s siblings. Clusters 6, 11, and 13 are mostly descendants of Thomas

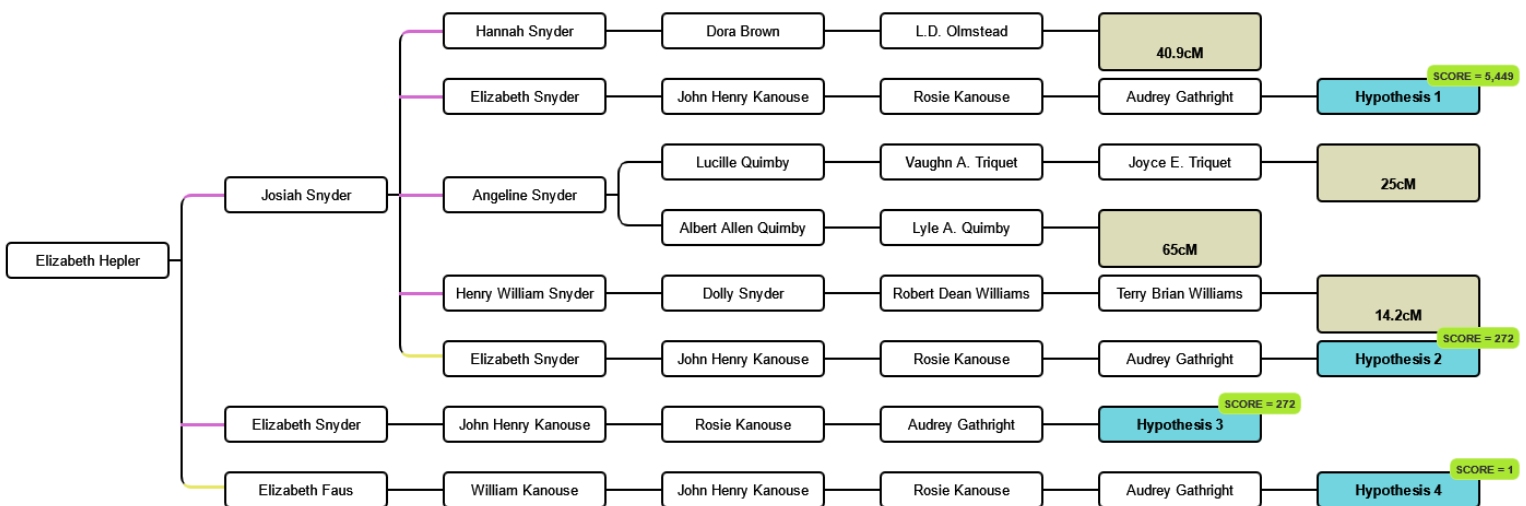
Faus, with a few others mixed in. Clusters 7 and 8 are descendants of other children of Josiah Snyder (besides Elizabeth). Cluster 15 is mostly descendants of Henry Faus Jr., Cluster 16 is descendants of Julia Kricher Fought, Clusters 17 and 18 are descendants of Polly Faus Whitenight. The other clusters (4, 9, and 12) are a strange mixture.

At least some of the odd mixtures in some of the clusters probably are statistical artifacts resulting from the weakness of many of the matches in the analysis. It might also be possible for mistakes to result from errors in matches' family trees.

I would be interested to see cluster diagrams generated with other people's DNA matches.

The WATO Tool for DNA Analysis

As discussed above, we have stories that Elizabeth Hepler was a mother or grandmother to Elizabeth Snyder. Is there any way to use DNA evidence to help resolve that? There is a tool at dnapainter.com called "What are the Odds?", or WATO, which can test competing hypotheses like this. The results of an analysis with WATO are shown in this figure:



The figure shows four hypotheses for my placement relative to the Snyder family tree. They recommend including all of the hypotheses you can think of. Hypothesis 1 is what I expect—that Elizabeth Snyder was a daughter of Josiah Snyder and Elizabeth Smith, and granddaughter of Elizabeth Hepler and John Adam Snyder. Hypothesis 2 is that Elizabeth was a daughter of Josiah Snyder but to a different mother, so that she was a half-sibling to his other children. I have no reason to suspect that, it is just another possibility to consider. Hypothesis 3 is that Elizabeth Snyder was a daughter of Elizabeth Hepler and John A. Snyder, and sister of Josiah Snyder. Hypothesis 4 is that Elizabeth Snyder was not related to the other Snyders, so that I am only related to the Snyders through Josiah being a half-brother to Elizabeth Faus Kanouse. To put it another way, this hypothesis is that Elizabeth Snyder was an orphan who was raised by the Snyders. I was actually wondering about that at one time because the average DNA match strength for descendants of Josiah Snyder was closer to that for descendants of Julia Ann Kricher than for descendants of the Faus children. Since then some additional stronger matches to descendants of Josiah have made that no longer the case, but the hypothesis is included here anyway.

There are other possibilities, such as that she was some sort of cousin to Josiah Snyder, which I will touch on later. A problem is that WATO cannot properly handle “pedigree collapse” caused by intermarriages like we have in some of these lines. In a previous version of this analysis, I included matches to descendants of the Faus siblings (Thomas, Elizabeth, Henry Jr., and Polly), but I have realized that it is not valid to include them because of the intermarriage between William Kanouse and Elizabeth Snyder, which was not properly being taken into account by WATO. Even without the other Faus matches, the results here might still be off because of the Kanouse–Snyder marriage.

With that said, the results favor Hypothesis 1: Elizabeth Snyder was a daughter of Josiah Snyder and Elizabeth Smith. The figure might be difficult to read, so I will repeat here that Hypothesis 1 has a score of 5,449, Hypotheses 2 and 3 have scores of 272, and Hypothesis 4 has a score of 1. This nominally means that Hypotheses 2 and 3 are 272 times more likely than Hypothesis 4, and Hypothesis 1 is about 20 times as likely as Hypotheses 2 and 3. However, these results have to be taken with a large helping of salt. To begin with, a score of 272 isn’t really that significant. The WATO results include a statement that says: “This is statistically possible, but it’s not significantly more likely than other hypothesis.” A score of 5,449, being 20 times higher, is good but still not really that great. Secondly, these results were generated with a beta version of WATO version 2, and the results for WATO version 1 were very different and favored Hypothesis 4! Version 2 is supposed to take better account of the probabilities for matches with shared DNA less than 40 cM, so it should be better for this situation, but how much better I don’t really know.

I ran the same analysis with my sister’s DNA matches and got even better results. For her, the scores are 152,177 for Hypothesis 1, 1,077 for Hypotheses 2 and 3, and 1 for Hypothesis 4. This is saying that Hypotheses 2 and 3 are a thousand times more likely than Hypothesis 4, and Hypothesis 1 is about 140 times more likely than Hypotheses 2 and 3. To give perspective, the results still say that a score of 1,077 is not significantly more likely than other hypotheses. A score of 152,177 certainly sounds impressive, but there is still the issue that this is for a beta version of WATO version 2, and the results are totally different for WATO version 1. Because of that it’s hard to know how meaningful these results are. Perhaps in the future additional match data or an advance in WATO capabilities will allow for more confidence in the conclusions. Additionally, however, remember that Hypothesis 3 is unlikely because Elizabeth Hepler was 55 years old when Elizabeth Snyder was born, and other evidence presented previously also favors Hypothesis 1.

I also tried another analysis with WATO 2, testing whether Elizabeth Snyder could have been a daughter of a first cousin of Josiah Snyder or could have herself been a first cousin of Josiah Snyder. Both of those hypotheses were indicated to be far less likely than Elizabeth being a daughter of Josiah (thousands of times less likely), but there is still the problem that the results using WATO version 1 are totally different, and give Hypothesis 1 the lowest likelihood.

Mitochondrial DNA

The type of DNA matching that I have been discussing so far uses what is called autosomal DNA, which is all of the DNA except the sex chromosomes (X and Y). The problem, as should be apparent from the above, is that the DNA of any given ancestor is continually diluted from generation to generation, and after you are six or seven generations down it is very dilute indeed. Two types of DNA are passed from

generation to generation without dilution: The Y chromosome is passed from father to son to son's son, etc. without change except for occasional mutations. This is very good for following surnames in a society such as ours, where surnames typically follow the male line. In my case, Y DNA is good for exploring my Wilson ancestors. However, Y DNA is no good for learning about Elizabeth Hepler since she did not have a Y chromosome. There is another type of DNA, called mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is passed from the mother to her children without change except for occasional mutations. Thus, mtDNA is passed down nearly unchanged from mother to daughter to daughter's daughter, etc. Elizabeth had daughters with her first two husbands, and if we could find an unbroken chain of daughters from Elizabeth down to the present through the Faus and Kricher families, it would be possible to confirm that they are, indeed connected through Elizabeth. It is not possible to do the same for Elizabeth's third marriage, since she only had a son with John Adam Snyder.

These are the longest daughter chains that I know of at present:

Elizabeth Hepler – Elizabeth Faus – Elizabeth Kanouse – Clara Ann Roat – Cora B. Ruckle, 1872–1946

Elizabeth Hepler – Elizabeth Faus – Elizabeth Kanouse – Emma Alice Roat
– Clara M. Persing (Kelly), 1885–1945

Elizabeth Hepler – Elizabeth Faus – Elizabeth Kanouse – Agnes Roat
– Maud C. Rounsley (Harris), 1888–1912

Elizabeth Hepler – Elizabeth Faus – Elizabeth Kanouse – Agnes Roat
– Mae Belle Rounsley (4 marriages), 1893–1979

Elizabeth Hepler – Elizabeth Faus – Elizabeth Kanouse – Agnes Roat
– Alma M. Rounsley (Grefe), 1901–1993

Elizabeth Hepler – Polly Faus – Rebecca Elizabeth Whitenight – Martha Jane Summers
– Esther S. Gross, 1890–1968

Elizabeth Hepler – Polly Faus – Rebecca Elizabeth Whitenight – Martha Jane Summers – Agnes Gross
– Janice Rebecca Everett (Carter), 1919–1996 – Judith Carter (Brown)

Elizabeth Hepler – Polly Faus – Rachel Emma Whitenight – Mary Adelle Bronson
– Rachel A. Weaver – Lucile M. Burnside, 1914–2005

Elizabeth Hepler – Polly Faus – Rachel Emma Whitenight – Mary Adelle Bronson
– Glema Alene Weaver (Mitchell), 1904–1978

Elizabeth Hepler – Julia Ann Kricher – Lydia Ann Fought – Julia Levina Stackhouse
– Cleo Stackhouse Johnson, 1892–1949

Elizabeth Hepler – Julia Ann Kricher – Lydia Ann Fought – Julia Levina Stackhouse
– Zula Stackhouse Johnson (Bush), 1896–1980

Elizabeth Hepler – Julia Ann Kricher – Lydia Ann Fought – Stacha Mae Stackhouse
– several daughters: Leona, Ruth, Helen, Gladys, Eleanor, Harriet

Unfortunately, I have little information on many of the descendant families, and these are just the chains *that I know about*. Perhaps with more research it will be possible to find some chains of daughters down to the present. The goal would be to find a chain of daughters from Elizabeth or Polly Faus and a chain of daughters from Julia Ann Kricher, and show that their mtDNA matches. That would be excellent evidence for them descending from a common female ancestor, Elizabeth Hepler. The other problem, however, is that, even if it is possible to identify these chains of daughters, it would be necessary to be able to make contact with the present-day descendants and convince them to take the mtDNA test at Family Tree DNA. Note, by the way, that the last link in the chain does not have to be a daughter, because the mother gives the same mtDNA to all of her children. Thus, for example, the mtDNA could be obtained from a son or daughter of Lucile M. Burnside or Clara Persing Kelly.

Additional Details

I have listed the first few generations of Elizabeth Hepler's descendants in a separate report:

http://wilsonfamilytree.org/EH_3gen.pdf

(assuming the husbands and families as discussed in this document). I have tried to make this listing as complete as I can. I would appreciate being notified of any errors or omissions. There are several very large families, so Elizabeth had a LOT of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.... It seems striking to me that a few distinctive names occur across the different branches of the family. For example: Julia Ann Kricher (b. 1814), Julia Ann Faus (b. 1840), Julia Ann Snyder (b. 1842), Julia Ann Fenstermacher (b. 1867), maybe Juliana Whitenight (b. abt. 1840). Also, all three of Elizabeth Hepler's daughters had daughters named Lydia, and there are quite a few other Lydias as well. Maybe these are just coincidences, but those names weren't all that common in the general population so it seems like it could be meaningful.