

Martha Belcher Hypothesis for Research #20781

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Objectives: Find genealogical proof of Martha Belcher's father and historical information about her family to add to the Free history.

What Is Known About Martha Belcher

Given Name: Martha is her given name; Patsy is the usual nickname for Martha. Though I have never seen it so used in early American records, I suspect Patsy could also be a nickname for Patricia or for Margaret, though their usual nicknames are Patty and Peggy respectively.

Surname: Belcher, Belsher, and any combination of vowels: Bilchar, Balchur, etc., or even Balker I suppose, though I have not seen it that way. There is a family surnamed Belcha or Belsha in St Clair Co, IL at the same time the Belshers were passing through, but they seem to be unrelated. However, it would be easy for clerks and census takers to confuse the two.

Martha's birth and death dates: Daniel Hanmer Wells Family Temple Record Book GSf 1036993: "Martha Belcher Free 4 Febr 1803 12 Aug 1821."

Other sources for her birth and death are: TIB b is specifically from Endowment House Baptisms and Sealings. b&d from Endowment House Index. Baptisms for the Dead.

Therefore, you can consider her birth and death dates proven.

Martha's birth place: an early family group sheet by Jennie McDonald gives her birth place as Burke County, North Carolina; however, the evidence is strong she was born in Caldwell County, Kentucky.

Martha's death place: an early family group sheet by Jennie McDonald gives her death place as St Clair County, IL. That Martha died in St Clair County is almost a certainty, so consider this proven, see records below.

Martha's marriage to Absalom Pennington Free: 1 May 1818 St Clair Co., IL. Illinois State Historical Society web site, Illinois Statewide Marriage Index 1763-1900, www.cyberdriveillinois.com/cgi-bin/archives/marriages. See also "photocopy of original, on same page as Elizabeth Free and Isaac Allen and Jacob Whoberry and Mary? Belsher. St Clair Co IL marriage records. In LaRae Free Kerr library #1104I apf." This is proof of the marriage.

1818 Census St Clair Co IL p 121 shows Absalom P Free 21+, all others 1, which fits the newlywed Absalom and Martha perfectly.

1820 Census St Clair Co IL p 253 shows Absalom P Free with male under 21, one male 21-45 and 1 female 18-45. This is Absalom, Martha and Andrew.

Martha's temple dates: bp 6 Feb 1846; end 6 Feb 1846. Of course, with these dates, it would have to be old Nauvoo Temple. Since there was so little time for temple work at this date in Nauvoo, it is clear the family loved Martha Belsher and insisted her work be done.

Historical Information on Martha Belcher

VanderBeek, Helen Free. "Martha Belcher." Absalom Pennington Free's Wives. 24 Jul 1977. A P Free and Children Source Book in LaRae Free Kerr library. #1104I Binder.

Martha Belcher.

"We know almost nothing of Absalom P. Free's first wife. The St Clair Co., Ill. Marriage license from the Perrin Collection gives us this information: '1818, 1 May issued a marriage license to Absalom Free and Patsy Belsher.' In Junius Free Wells' family records we find that her name was Martha Belcher which is perfectly plausible because Patsy is a nickname for Martha, and that she was born 14 Feb 1803 in Caldwell Co., Ky, and died 12 Aug 1821 in St. Clair Co., Ill. We also find that Betsy Strait Free acted as her proxy in the Endowment House in 1867 for her sealing to A. P. Free.

"We do not know her parents; we do not know the kind of person she was. We do have one little piece of information from the 1881 History of St Clair Co., Ill pp 367-8: 'It is related that Absalom P. Free stole a girl, Patsey Belsher, from a camp of emigrants on their way to Missouri, and married her. They were married May 1st, 1818. The second marriage in the vicinity.'

"If we put all this information together we find a fifteen year old girl pretty enough and courageous enough to abandon her family and their westward quest on very short notice to marry a young stranger twenty years old. When Patsy was sixteen she had a little son Andrew. And when she was almost nineteen she had another little son, John Belcher Free. And this is the only clue we have to her parentage. Could her father be John Belcher? But Patsy didn't get to raise her little ones. When she was only nineteen years old, and little Belcher was only seven months old Patsy died."

The Formula for Patsy's Family's Hypothesis

1. Patsy's father must meet these requirements:

Name: Almost certainly her father is John Belcher. This is why. The Frees followed the old Scotch-Irish naming pattern when they could; that is, the first son was named after the father's father. The second son was named after the mother's father. Clearly that pattern is in play here. The fact that the second son was named John Belcher Free and was called Belcher rather than John is also significant.

So look for a John Belcher first who meets the following requirements. If no one by that name can be found and sourced, look for someone else.

Birth: Since Patsy was born in 1803, and her father would likely be at least 20 years older than she was, his birth would have taken place BEFORE 1783, give or take a few years. It is more likely her father was born earlier than 1783. This is important because there are several John Belchers from Caldwell County, KY who were born AFTER 1783. It is unlikely that anyone significantly younger could be her father.

If the memory of the 1880 historian is correct, the Belchers were on their way to Missouri in 1818. Missouri was a territory in 1812, a state in 1821. The Belchers could have been on their way to the Missouri River or any of the points West. Or they could have been content to settle in or near St Clair County, IL.

Look for John Belcher born before 1783, lived at some point in Caldwell County, KY, passed through St Clair Co, IL in 1818.

2. Add the possibility of more children.

One of the reasons we have been unable to clearly identify Patsy's father is that she died so young there are no records to connect her with family members. But if we knew even one of her siblings, we might fare better, especially if that sibling were a male.

I have found two people who could possibly be Martha's siblings. I say this very cautiously and as a hypothesis to be proven or disproven only. Here they are:

Possible Sibling 1: Martha md A P Free 1 May 1818 in St Clair Co IL. The very next day a Miss Belcher md a Jacob Whoberry in the same place. The 1850 census of Shelby County, MO reveals both that this Miss Belcher was named Mary, and that she was born about 1798 in Kentucky [unless, of course, she represents a second marriage to Jacob Whoberry, but we have to start someplace.]

Possible Sibling 2: An Andrew Belcher born 13 Nov 1798 in Russell, Virginia also shows up in local IL records. [The birth year of Mary is an estimate from the 1850 census.] This hypothesis changes the formula for Patsy's father to this:

Look for John Belcher born before 1778, lived at some point in Russell County, Virginia, perhaps in Burke County, NC, then in Caldwell County, KY, then passed through St Clair Co, IL in 1818 and moved on to Missouri, perhaps Shelby County.

In addition, we can now also look for Jacob Whoberry born 1797 in Virginia and Andrew Belcher born 13 Nov 1798 in Russell County, Virginia. Either or both of these men may lead us to Martha's family.

That Jacob Whoberry/Hooberry/Whobury b 1797 md Mary Belsher and had the following children can be found on <http://genforum.genealogy.com/cgi-bin/print.cgi?whobrey::24.html> and two other sites though there are no sources given. Andrew, Matthew, and Elizabeth are also the children listed in the 1850 census. So the supposition that Martha's possible sister is Mary Belsher who md Jacob Whoberry may be correct. At least her name is indeed Mary.

An Andrew Belcher b 1798 can be found on this site and several others <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/7796507/person/12866234?ssrc=> . His father is John Belcher, but he does not have sisters named Martha nor Mary. He died in Van Buren, Carter, MO according to this unverified data. So the Russell County, VA Belchers are NOT the ones we are looking for.

There is one other Belcher in Missouri who could be a brother to Martha and Mary. A J Belcher b 1815 KY lives in Randolph Co MO in 1850. Randolph County is catty corner from Shelby County where Mary Belcher Whoberry lives. Since J Belcher's first son is named John, it is possible the J stands for John. His family includes the following: himself, J Belcher, b 1815 KY; wife Dilly b 1825 KY and the following children born in MO: John R 1841, Rebecca b 1844, James 1847 and Elizabeth 1838. This is, however, a long shot since he is at least 12 years younger than Martha and 17 years younger than Mary – possible but maybe not probable.

Therefore look for John Belcher born before 1778 [abt 20 years before Mary was born in 1798], who may have lived in Burke Co, NC; did NOT live in Russell County, VA; almost certainly lived in Caldwell County, KY; then passed through St Clair Co, IL in 1818 and moved on to Missouri, perhaps Shelby County and had at least these two children: Mary b 1798 KY md Jacob Whoberry and Martha b 1803 md A P Free. The girls nicknames are, of course, Polly and Patsy. There may have been many other children.

[Obviously, when each element of the hypothesis given in the preceding paragraph has been proven or disproven, we may find Martha's father was named Ishom [there is an Ishom Belcher] born in 1745 in Maine with 12 children scattered all over. Not likely, but I insert this paragraph to remind us the hypothesis is based on the truths we know plus a best case scenario, but it is still just a working hypothesis.]

Some records that might represent Martha's father in MO, if his name is John Belcher, and he follows the formula given above include:

1. 1830 a John Belcher in Perche, Boone, MO. ae 40-50 so b 1780-1790 plus 5 males o to 20 and females 1 40-50, 1 15-20 and 1 -5. So could they be old enough to have two daughters who married in 1818? Just barely.

This 1830 census entry in Perche, Boone, MO shows

John Belcher ae 40-50 so born 1780-1790
 Wife ae 40-50 so born 1780-1790
 5 males ages 0 to 17
 1 female ae 102-

If this John Belcher is the father of Mary and Martha, he would have been about 18 when Mary was born. This is possible but unlikely. This entry probably does NOT represent Martha's birth family.

2. A John Belcher is in MO in 1818 as shown in this ancestry.com entry:

Missouri Census, 1830-70 about John Belcher

Name:	John Belcher
State:	MO
County:	Missouri County
Township:	Petitioners
Year:	1818
Page:	018
Database:	MO Early Census Index

Jackson, Ron V., Accelerated Indexing Systems, comp.. *Missouri Census, 1830-70* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999.

Original data: Compiled and digitized by Mr. Jackson and AIS from microfilmed schedules of the U.S. Federal Decennial Census, territorial/state censuses, and/or census substitutes.

3. This entry from 1819, also from ancestry.com, could be the same John Belcher: **U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820** about John Belcher

Name:	John Belcher
Gender:	M (<i>Male</i>)
State:	Missouri
Locality:	Louisiana and Missouri Territory
County:	Howard County
Residence Year:	1820
Household Remarks:	Name on a petition, 14 Sep 1819, to the President from inhabitants of Howard Land District alleging that the Register of land has long been absent & left his son Henry Carroll as acting Register who w

4. This entry for the same record, but a slightly different name, may be significant.

U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820 about John M. Belcher

Name:	John M. Belcher
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Gender:	M (<i>Male</i>)
State:	Missouri
Locality:	Louisiana and Missouri Territory
County:	Howard County
Residence Year:	1820
Household Remarks:	Name on a petition, 14 Sep 1819, to the President from inhabitants of Howard Land District alleging that the Register of land has long been absent & left his son Henry Carroll as acting Register who w

A Belcher man with a high probability of being a sibling of Martha and Mary was not readily found. However these 1818 and 1820 records could represent their brother or father. As they say, more research is needed.

Some records that might represent Martha's father or perhaps brothers in KY, if the above formula for her father is correct, from Debbie Atchley.

"Caldwell County KY, County Court Order Book A May 1809 - October 1815" by Jerome:

4 Mar 1811

The following hands allowed to Jesse Jones, Surveyor of the road from end [of] Wm Mitchussons Lane to Dry Fork Road near John Jenkins; Wm McCarty, Isham Belsher, John Belsher, Saml Fowler and they to assist in opening & keeping road in repair. **These men may have been 21 or older; therefore, this John might have been born before 1790.**

Caldwell Co KY 1809 Tax List

John Belcher 1 white male > 21, 6 horses, no acreage numbers listed **born before 1788**

Isham Belcher 1 white male > 21, 2 horses; no acreage numbers listed

1810 Caldwell Co KY Census

Belcher, Isom 001 - 1001

1810 Smithland, Livingston Co KY Census

John Belcher 001-000 **16-25 so born 1785-1794**

Caldwell Co KY 1810 Tax List

John Belcher 1 white male > 21, 6 horses, 200 acres, Dry Fork **born before 1789**

Isham Belsher 1 white male > 21, 3 horses, no acreage listed

Caldwell Co KY 1811 Tax List

John Belsher 1 white male > 21, 6 horses, 200 acres, Dry Fk Eddy Cr **born before 1788**

Isham Belcher 1 white male > 21, 3 horses, no acreage numbers

Caldwell Co KY 1812 Tax List

Isham Belcher 1 white male > 21 horses, no acreage numbers

John Belcher 1 white male > 21 6 horses 200 acres Dry Fk Eddy **born before 1788**

Caldwell Co KY 1813 Tax List

Isham Belcher 1 white male > 21 5 horses 100 acres, Dry Fk Eddy Cr

John Belcher 1 white male . 21 7 horses 200 acres, Dry Fk Eddy Cr **born before 1792**

Caldwell Co KY 1814 Tax List

John Belcher 1 white male > 21, 9 horses, 200 acres Dry Fk Eddy Cr **born before 1793**

Isham Belcher 1 white male > 21, 4 horses, 100 acres, Dry Fk Eddy Cr

No Belcher/Belsher in the 1820 Caldwell Co KY Census **moved just when John Belcher was found in MO**

Caldwell Co was formed in 1809 from Livingston Co.

I found in the following: "Livingston County, KY Estate Records 1799-1842" by Jerome:

Jonathan Greer 4 Apr 1808: Mary Greer entered into bond with William Greer and William Holland, her securities, and was appointed administratrix of Jonathan Greer dec'd. John Durly, Jesse Greer, John Jenkins, John Holland & Chas. Jones, or any three of them to appraise the estate. [CoCt Order Book C] 2 Apr 1808; Return of sale of the property of Jonathan Greer dec'd Buyers..... 5 May 1808: James Greer, Isaac Greer and James Greer Jr appointed to transfer and convey a certain tract of land from Jonathan Greer dec'd to **John Belcher** agreeable to an instrument of writing produced in court by John Mercer.... **born before 1778**

[these were later Belchers, but it seems that when there was a Williamson being married, John Belcher was around somewhere...]

I found in: "Caldwell County, KY Marriage Records 1809-1900" by Smith:

Belcher, Walter, age 25, 1st m, he and m b Caldwell, f. b Hopkins Co m. Mary Holland, age 20, 1st mg, all b. Caldwell on 25 Mar 1878. Sec: W B Sutton. Consent bride's mother, Matildy Holland.

Guill, Jasper N, no age given, b. Wilson Co TN m. Emily Williamson, age 21, 1st mg, b Tenn on 08 Nov 1854 Married at Princeton. Sec: John S Belcher. Consent groom's father: John H Guill

So, look for John Belcher born before 1778 [abt 20 years before Mary was born in 1798], who may have lived in Burke Co, NC; did NOT live in Russell County, VA; almost certainly lived in Caldwell County, KY; was in St Clair Co, IL the first and second of May 1818 and moved on to Missouri BY 1820, in Howard or perhaps Shelby Counties and had at least these two children: Mary b 1798 KY md Jacob Whoberry and Martha b 1803 md A P Free. The girls nicknames are, of course, Polly and Patsy. There may have been many other children.

Please prove this hypothesis correct or incorrect, part by part. Thank you.

More Materials on the Belcher Family

_____ History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri. St Louis: National Historical Company, 1886. Reprint The Printery, Clinton, MO 1972.

Mentions Margaret Belcher p 1077

“Margaret Belcher was the maiden name of his mother, she also having been born in the Blue Grass State.” John W Butner is the son born 4 Apr 1831 in Madison Co KY to Wm. Butner, a Kentuckian by birth and Margaret Belcher of KY [the Blue Grass State]. “Her death occurred in Missouri but her husband died in his native State.”

This Margaret would have been born by 1815 in KY. Another sister? That would make Mary, Martha, Margaret or Polly, Patsy and Peggy with three known husband’s names: Jacob Whoberry, A P Free, William Butner. This relationship will have to be proven or unproven, of course. The reason this entry might be important is that it is another [male] name that might lead us to the family of Martha Belcher. However, this Margaret Belcher Butner moved to Missouri AFTER the birth of her son in 1831 if this biography of him is correct. This Margaret Belsha was b 1800-1805 in Madison Co, KY to Jesse Belsha and Francis. She md William Butner 16 Sep 1825 in Madison Co, KY. Her death is given as 1839 in Madison Co, KY which does not agree with the above entry. Her children lived in Madison Co KY according to <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/22129097/person/1189036760?ssrc=>. John W Butner b 1831 IS listed as her son. So Margaret is NOT a sister.

The Burke County Historical Society. The Heritage of Burke County, North Carolina. Winston-Salem, NC: Hunter Publishing Co. 1981

Mentions Beverly Belcher [a man] of South Carolina who md Frances Moseley b 24 Jul 1783 in VA. P 319. Nothing else about him.

_____ History of Washington County, Illinois. Philadelphia: Brink, McDonough & Co., 1879. Reprint Mt Vernon, IN: Windmill Publications, Inc. 1990.

“Lafayette Belcher, was licensed to practice law, in about the year 1858.” P 28. That is it.

[Most of the books and magazines I’ve looked at so far that have Belcher information have the information I submitted.]

St Clair County Genealogical Society Quarterly. Vol 6 No 2, 1983. P 59:

Book B – Letters of Guardianship, 1836-1849, St Clair County, IL

“127 8 Mar 1845 Belsha, George [deceased] Belsha, Josephine [minor] Samuel B Chandler [Guardian]

Branching Out from St Clair County Illinois. Vol IV, No 1, 1 Jan 1977 p 32

BELSHA CEMETERY

Section 8, New Athens Township, St Clair Co Ill. Copied by Melvin LISCHER and daughter Jennifer in August 1976.

BELSHA, Catherine b 21 Oct 1821; d 26 Dec 1903
Charles b 25 Nov 1861; d 25 May 1867
Jim b & d in 1844
John E b 30 Jan 1817 d 8 Jan 1872
Kate? E b 25 Mar 1817; d 20 Apr 1875

Olevia b 22 Jul 1861; d 22 Nov 1881

St Clair County Genealogical Society Quarterly. Vol 7 No 2, 1984. P 77
Graduates of the Belleville Public Schools, 1885-1916
Belcher, Geo. C. W. 1913

St Clair County Genealogical Society. Vol 5 No 3, 1982 p 132
1870 St Clair County, Illinois Agricultural Census
Belsha, John 300 500 40000

St Clair County Genealogical Society Quarterly. Vol 4 No 4, 1981 p 206
New Athens Township 2 South Range 7 West. This is a list of cemeteries in the county.
Belsha 8 That's it.

St Clair County Genealogical Society Quarterly. Vol 2 Fall/Winter 1979 p 98
St George's Cemetery. Section 9, Stookey Township off Rt 163, ½ mi from Rt 157, St Clair Co IL
Belcher, Jesse; 1884-1919

MISSOURI RECORDS

1840 CENSUS **1840 United States Federal Census** [about Jake Whoberry](#)

Name:	Jake Whoberry
Township:	Jackson
County:	Monroe
State:	Missouri
Free White Persons - Males - 10 thru 14:	2
Free White Persons - Males - 40 thru 49:	1
Free White Persons - Females - 5 thru 9:	1
Free White Persons - Females - 15 thru 19:	3
Free White Persons - Females - 20 thru 29:	1
Free White Persons - Females - 30 thru 39:	1
Total - All Persons (Free White. Free	9

Colored, Slaves):	
Persons Employed in Agriculture:	3
No. White Persons over 20 Who Cannot Read and Write:	2
Free White Persons - Under 20:	6
Free White Persons - 20 thru 49:	3
Total Free White Persons:	9
Total All Persons - Free White, Free Colored, Slaves:	9

As you can see, I've pretty well covered St Clair and Washington Counties in Illinois. My searches in KY and MO for the Belchers have been pretty light. So there is plenty to do.

In this quick survey, I have been able to rule out both Andrew and Margaret as siblings to Mary and Martha. But the J Belcher in Missouri may be a brother.