

Mary Ann French Bryan Atwood

Born about 1782 In St Mary's County Maryland

Died between 1835 and 1840 in Perry County, Missouri

Determining the maiden name and parents of a woman born in the late 1700's is one of the most difficult genealogical undertakings. Because women were not mentioned in many of the records of the era, few sources exist to prove their parentage. Combine that with record loss and the task becomes even more difficult. Descendants of Ignatius Bryan, born about 1775 in Maryland and died 1803 in Hardin County, Kentucky have long wondered about the origins of his wife Mary.

Who was Mary's father? No marriage record has yet been located for the couple and without a maiden name, it might seem impossible to prove a relationship between a woman and her parents.

Fortunately, enough records have survived that when carefully analyzed, they prove that Mary Ann, wife of Ignatius Bryan, is the daughter of James French and Susanna, of Hardin County, Kentucky. Table 1 below summarizes the records where Mary Ann is named.

Table 1 Records for Mary Ann French Bryan Atwood

Name	Location	Date	Record Details
Mary Brian	Hardin County, Kentucky	19 September 1803	Will administration of the estate of Ignatius Brian dec'd; security James French
Mary Brian	Hardin County, Kentucky	1804	Tax list, 85 acres on the Rolling Fork Water course, the same land description as that of Ignatius Brian on the 1802 tax list
Mary Bryan	Hardin County, Kentucky	20 August 1807	Widow's dower allotted to Mary Bryan
Mary Bryant	Hardin County, Kentucky	1810	United States Federal Census listing Mary and three young children
Mary Bryan	Hardin County, Kentucky	26 October 1813	Marriage to George Atwood
Mary French	Hardin County, Kentucky	10 July 1815	Named daughter of James French and Susanna in the

			will of James French
Mary Atwood	Hardin County, Kentucky	15 August 1826	Land deeded from heirs of Ignatius Bryan to James Crawford
Mary Ann French	Perry County, Kentucky	1835	Barrens Parish Census, Mary Ann sister of Monica, daughter of James

Marriage Records

Marriage records are some of the earliest vital records available and are generally recorded in the county of the marriage. A marriage record will list the bride’s maiden name if it’s her first marriage and can have her father’s name as well, so that would be the first place to search for Mary’s maiden name and possibly father.

Probate, tax, and census records summarized in Table 1 find Mary residing in Hardin County, Kentucky after the death of her husband, Ignatius in 1803. When did the couple move into Hardin County? A land record of 1800 shows “Ignatius Bryan of Nelson County” purchasing land in Hardin County so Mary and Ignatius possibly were married previous to their move to Hardin County. It is possible however, that the marriage took place in Hardin County so records would need to be searched in both counties for the marriage of Ignatius Bryan and Mary.

A thorough search of both locations in online collections and published marriage indexes were searched but no record was found for Mary and Ignatius in either county.¹ It would seem that the marriage took place in another location, or quite possibly the marriage record was lost. Tracing the couple beyond Kentucky, might result in a marriage record, if they were married before their migration to the newly formed state.

Land Records of Hardin County

Land records can provide important clues for an individual and even a family. Ignatius Bryan is first mentioned in the land records of Hardin County on 26 November 1800 when he purchased 85 acres of land near the Rolling Fork above the mouth of Clear Creek from James Murdough. As mentioned previously, Ignatius is noted as being “of Nelson County.”²

Ignatius and Mary must have moved onto the land by 1802 where he is listed on the tax records of Hardin County, being a male above 21 years of age and owning 3 horses.³ The land

¹ See the research log for searches performed in both counties and in online collections.
² Hardin County, Kentucky, Deed Book B, 1795-1804, p. 191, William Murdough to Ignatius Brien, 26 November 1800, FHL microfilm 388,591, item 2.
³ Hardin County, Kentucky, Tax Books 1799-1817, Ignatius Briant, 1802 entry, image 200 of 1380, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 25 March 2017); FHL microfilm 7,834,447.

description in the tax record appears to be the same land as in the 1800 deed, 85 acres on the Rolling Fork water course.

After Ignatius' untimely death in 1803, Mary Brian is listed on the 1804 tax records with the same land - 85 acres on the Rolling Fork water course.⁴ She appears to have continued living on this land with her three children by Ignatius and then with her second husband, George Atwood, until 1826.

On 15 August 1826, the heirs of Ignatius Bryant deeded the 85 acres of land on the Rolling Fork to James Crawford.⁵ An abstract of the deed gives valuable genealogical information for the family of Ignatius Bryan and Mary listing three children and their spouses.

Indenture made 15 August 1826

Hardin County, Kentucky [Bullet points inserted for clarity and children bolded]

- George Atwood & Mary his wife late Mary Bryan Widow of Ignatius Bryant deceased
- William Norris & Elizabeth his wife late **Elizabeth Bryant**
- John Atwood Medly and Elen his wife late **Elen Bryant**
- **Benjamin Bryant** and Treacy his wife

Heirs of Ignatius Bryan deceased of Hardin County, (except Norris & wife of Bullitt) and James Crawford of Hardin County for consideration of \$85 the tract of land situated on the waters of the Rolling Fork near the mouth of Clear Creek containing 85 acres. Being the same land conveyed by James Murdough to Ignatius Bryan, 6 November 1800, recorded in Deed Book B, page 191. The said Ignatius Bryan having departed this life intestate the same hath ascended to his heirs the parties of the first part to this indenture.

Also on 15 August 1826, Elizabeth, Ellen, and Tracy were examined separate from their respective husbands and declared that they freely relinquished their right of dower and their right title to the property. On 10 October 1826, Mary Atwood personally appeared and relinquished her right of dower.

What is the right of dower referred to in the above deed? Kentucky is a common law state and under the common law, a widow has claim for the duration of her life one third in value of all lands which her husband owned in fee simple at any time during their marriage.⁶

Probate of the Estate of Ignatius Bryan

⁴ Hardin County, Kentucky, Tax Books 1799-1817, Mary Brian, 1804 entry, image 290 of 1380, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 25 March 2017); FHL microfilm 7,834,447.

⁵ Hardin County, Kentucky, Deeds Book K, 1825-1828, p. 148, Heirs of Ignatius Bryan to James Crawford, 15 August 1826, FHL microfilm 388,595, item 2.

⁶ Val D. Greenwood, *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, (Baltimore, Maryland : Genealogical Publishing Company, 2000), 318.

The 1826 deed states that Ignatius Bryan died intestate, meaning that he left no will. In this circumstance, if there is property involved, the probate proceedings are set in motion. At a county court for Hardin County, Kentucky on Monday, the 19th of September 1803, Mary Brian & Barton Rheuby applied for and were granted the right of administration of the estate of Ignatius Brian, deceased.⁷ Together with James French and Isaac Irwin, they gave bond of £200 with securities for the faithful performance of administration.

Generally, those applying for administration of an intestate estate are the surviving spouse and next of kin, so what relationship to Mary Bryan are Barton Rheuby [Roby], James French, or Isaac Irwin?

Examining further probate records showed that Barton Roby acted as administrator for all further actions for the estate of Ignatius Bryan and also for the estate of James French. He received payment for his service and appears throughout the court records administering various estates. He seems to have been the family attorney.

Research proved that Isaac Irwin was born in 1774 and would have been about age 30 when he gave security for the estate bond, too young to be Mary's father.⁸ He was also named in another court order with Ignatius in 1802 as potential appraisers of an estate.⁹ Hence they were probably just friends. There is no indication that he is related to Mary Brian. James French therefore seems the most likely candidate for Mary's father.

Table 2 below highlights the various probate actions recorded in the order and will books of Hardin County, Kentucky for the estate of Ignatius Bryan, beginning at the initial motion to begin probate in 1803 to the final settlement of 1821.

Table 2. Probate Records for the Estate of Ignatius Bryan

Date	Action	Individual(s)
19 September 1803 ¹⁰	Motion granted for administration of estate of Ignatius Brian deceased, to Mary Brian and Barton Roby	James French and Isaac Irwin additional securities for the bond

⁷ Hardin County, Kentucky, Order Book A, Ignatius Brian estate administration, 19 September 1803, p. 416; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," images 234-5 of 296, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 5 April 2014); FHL microfilm 390,776.

⁸ "Isaac Irwin 1774-1858," FamilySearch ID LP97-3BB, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/tree/person/L9P7-3BB/details> : accessed 12 April 2017).

⁹ "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," database with images, image 204 of 296; *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 3 April 2017), Hardin County, Kentucky, Order books, Vol. A 1793-1804, p. 355.

¹⁰ Hardin County, Kentucky, Order Book A, Ignatius Brian estate administration, 19 September 1803, p. 416.

19 September 1803 ¹¹	Order to appraise the estate of Ignatius Briant	George Bell, Michael Rentch, Josiah Anderson and Jeremiah Pairpoint
21 September 1803 ¹²	Inventory valuing £456.12 presented at court	Michael Rentch, Jeremiah Parpoint, and Josiah Anderson, sworn before George Bell
22 November 1803 ¹³	Inventory and appraisal of the estate ordered to be recorded	Ben Helm CHC
22 June 1807 ¹⁴	By motion of Barton Roby - the allotment of dower to Mary Bryan to take place	Robert C. Slaughter, Jeremiah Pearpoint, Anthony Vernon & James Irwin or any of the three ordered
20 August 1807 ¹⁵	Allotment to Mary Bryan her widow's dower of 32 ½ acres of the 85 acres of Ignatius Bryan possessed	Signed: Robert C.Slaughter, Anthony Vernon, and Jeremiah Pearpoint
28 September 1807 ¹⁶	Widow's dower allotment recorded	Ben Helm, clerk
25 January 1808 ¹⁷	An account returned of the estate of Ignatius Brian	Barton Roby, administrator
8 January 1821 ¹⁸	Final settlement of the estate of Ignatius Bryant, listing of widows dower, schooling, etc.	G A Gaether and John H Geoghegan

¹¹ Hardin County, Kentucky, Order Book A, Ignatius Brian estate administration, 19 September 1803, p. 416.

¹² Hardin County, Kentucky, Will Book A, p. 175, Estate Inventory, Ignatius Bryan, 21 September 1803; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," images 106-7 of 625, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 5 April 2017); FHL microfilm 390,777 item 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Hardin County, Kentucky, 1805-09, Court Orders Book B, p165, order to allot dower of Mary Bryan, 22 June 1804; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," image 403 of 622, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 5 April 2017); FHL microfilm 390,776.

¹⁵ Hardin County, Kentucky, 1805-09, Will Book A, p. 288, Allotment of dower of Mary Bryan, 20 August 1804; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," image 168 of 625, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 5 April 2017); FHL microfilm 390,776.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Hardin County, Kentucky, 1805-09, Court Orders Book B, p. 204, Administration of Ignatius Brian estate, 25 January 1808; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," image 119, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 5 April 2017).

¹⁸ Hardin County, Kentucky, Will Book C, p. 414-416, Ignatius Bryan estate final settlement, 8 January 1821; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," images 607-608 of 625, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 5 April 2017); FHL microfilm 390,773, item 3.

County Histories and Church Records

Who was the James French mentioned in the probate of Ignatius Bryan? County histories became popular in the late 1800's and can be valuable sources of information about early settlers in an area. In the 1887 publication of *The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*, author Joseph Webb Benedict discusses early Catholic settlers in the area of Hardin County, Kentucky.¹⁹ "The first church station at this point was the house of one James French were mass was said by Father Badin as early as the years 1804-5."

Benedict goes on to name several of the "old Catholic settlers of the locality." Besides James French previously mentioned there is Raphael French and "William, known as "Bee," Bryan.

More insight into the state of the Catholic settlers in Kentucky comes from a life sketch written about Reverend Stephen Theodore Badin, a French cleric sent to the backwoods of Kentucky in 1793.²⁰ "When M. Badin first came to Kentucky, he estimated the number of Catholic families in the State at three hundred. These were much scattered; and the number was constantly on the increase."

It is highly probable that Ignatius and Mary Bryan were among the Catholic settlers living on the Rolling Fork congregation in Hardin County, Kentucky given that James and Raphael French as well as William "Bee" Bryan are all mentioned as settling in that area in the history.

1835 Parish Census

As noted previously, the Bryans and Frenches were among the early Catholic settlers of Kentucky. Catholic church records often give important genealogical information listing members. Following the 1826 sale of the 85 acres in Hardin County, Mary disappears from the records until 1835. She reappears in a census of the Barrens Parish of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin located in Perry County Missouri, listed in the household of her sister and brother-in-law.²¹

John Layton, Sr., son of John, 56 years

Monica French, wife, daughter of James, 50 years

Layton, Louis, son, 24 years

Augustine, son, 20 years

Mary, daughter, 18 years

Amatus Alexander, 13 years

¹⁹ Benedict Joseph Webb, *The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*, (----- : Charles Rodgers, 1884), reproduction (Evansville, Indiana : Unigraphics, 1977); Google Books.

²⁰ M.J. Spalding, and Stephen T. Badin, *Sketches of the Early Catholic Missions of Kentucky*, (Bardstown, Kentucky : Feast of Corpus Christi, 1844), 55.

²¹ 1835 Barrens Parish Census, Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary, John Layton, Sr household, Perry County, Historical Society, image of original; originally shared 15 November 2009 on Ancestry.com by mikeELBB.

Mary Ann French, sister of Monica, 52 years

If Mary Ann French is the sister of of Monica, her father would also be James French. Why are the women listed by their maiden names? It appears from the rest of the listings on the page that this was careful record keeping on the part of the parish. All women on the page are listed by their maiden name and their father is identified.

1799 Layton - French Marriage

To confirm the connection of James French of Hardin County to the sisters, Monica and Mary Ann French of the 1835 Barrens Parish census, marriage records were searched for Monica. A record in the order book of Washington County on 14 September 1799 shows the couple and parents.²²

John Layton [groom]	John Layton, Jane Layton [parents]
Monarca French [bride]	James French, Susanna [parents]

Washington County neighbors Hardin County, Kentucky so it is highly probable that this James French is the same James French as appears with Mary Bryan on the 1803 administration of Ignatius Bryan's estate in Hardin County. Another key record connecting James French of Hardin county to Mary Bryan Atwood is his will of 1815.

1815 Will of James French

The will of James French of Hardin County, Kentucky provides evidence that he had a daughter, Mary, a son Ignatius, and a wife, Susanna.²³ His will states:

- To Susanna French, my dearly beloved wife, the land that I now live on which is 167 acres and all my stock and household and kitchen furniture
- To my beloved daughter Mary French, one feather bed and furniture and one foot wheel
- Susanna French and Ignatius, son, named executrix and executor of the estate.

The will was produced in court and proven on the oath of the witnesses Barton Robey and Lewis Bright on 19 July 1815 at the courthouse of Elizabethtown in Hardin County, Kentucky. Barton Robey is probably the same individual who was the administrator of the will of Ignatius Bryan. The use of Mary's maiden name "French" in the will is similar to the use of maiden names for Mary and Monica French in the 1835 Barren Parish census. Perhaps with her second marriage to George Atwood in 1813, James wanted it clear that she was born Mary French.

²² Washington County, Kentucky Marriage Register Index, Minister Returns, Layton-French, 14 September 1799, p. 30; "Kentucky, County Marriages, 1797-1954," image 223 of 1218, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 10 April 2017); FHL microfilm 241,382 item 2.

²³ Hardin County, Kentucky, Will book B, Will of James French, 1815, p. 241; "Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990," images 132-33 of 183, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 10 April 2017); FHL microfilm 390,773.

The Mary French mentioned in the will of James French is almost certainly the same Mary who was the wife of Ignatius Bryan and George Atwood. Because the marriage record of Monica French lists parents as James and Susanna and the parish census of 1835 lists Mary Ann as Monica’s sister, with father James, it can be proven that James French was the father of Mary Ann.

Table 3. Evidence Connecting Mary with sister Monica and parents James and Susanna

RECORD	DATE	PLACE	DETAILS
Marriage of Monarca French and John Layton	1799	Hardin County, Kentucky	Names parents James French and Susanna
Probate of Ignatius Bryan	1803	Hardin County, Kentucky	James French provided security for bond with Mary Bryan, widow of Ignatius Bryan
Will of James French	1815	Hardin County, Kentucky	Names daughter, Mary French, and wife, Susanna
Barrens Parish Census	1835	Perry County, Kentucky	Names James French, father of Monica French and Mary Ann French, sister of Monica French (women listed by maiden name in household of John Layton)

DNA Evidence

DNA is increasingly being used as additional evidence in proving family relationships. Table 4 below shows an Ancestry DNA match between Charles William Elder and J.D. Both descend from Ignatius French.²⁴ J.D.’s lineage is through the daughter of Ignatius, Mary J. French. Charles William Elder descends through James French, son of Ignatius French.

Bolded is Mary, the subject of this report. The DNA linking these two descendants is further proof that Mary, wife of Ignatius Bryan and George Atwood, is the daughter of James French.

Table 4. DNA Evidence Proving Mary Bryan Atwood the daughter of James French

Ignatius French common ancestor	
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²⁴ “Ancestry DNA Member Matches,” database report, *AncestryDNA* (<https://www.ancestry.com/dna/tests> : accessed 10 April 2017), for Charles William Elder and J.D., predicted 5th -8th cousins, documented relationship 5th cousin, 1x removed.

James French		Mary J French
Mary French [Bryan Atwood]		George Basil Spalding
Eleanor Bryan [Medley]		Walter Spalding
Elizabeth Ann Medley		Marin Lewis Spalding
Daniel O'Connell Elder		John Walter Spalding
Charles Rudolph Elder		J.D.
Charles William Elder		

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The objective of this research project was to determine the parents of Mary, wife of Ignatius Bryan. Numerous original records were located that provided information on the couple. Although records listing females are not frequent in the early 1800's, Mary does appear in several of those records. Land, tax, probate, and a second marriage record established her as a resident of Hardin County, Kentucky.

- **Land and tax records** for both Ignatius and Mary Bryan show the purchase, taxation, and sale of 85 acres on the Rolling Fork water course of Hardin County, Kentucky
- **Probate records** for the estate of Ignatius Bryan detail key actions in the administration of the estate. Importantly, the initial motion lists James French with Mary as putting up bond for the administration of the estate.
- **Marriage records** for Hardin and Nelson Counties do not show a marriage for Ignatius Bryan and Mary, but the 1813 marriage of Mary Bryan and George Atwood in Hardin County was located.

Several important sources provided indirect evidence for Mary, daughter of James French of Hardin County, Kentucky.

- The **1815 will of James French** of Hardin County names his wife Susanna and daughter, Mary.
- The **1799 marriage record** of Mary's sister, Monica French in Hardin County names parents James and Susanna.
- The **1835 Barren Parish census** of Perry County, Missouri shows Mary Ann French, the sister of Monica French in the household of John Layton, Monica's husband. Monica's

father is listed as James French, and thus indirectly proves James French as the father of Mary.

DNA evidence further supports this proof statement showing a genetic connection between two descendants of Ignatius French. The records prove that Mary, wife of Ignatius Bryan of Hardin County, Kentucky, was the daughter of James and Susanna French, also of Hardin County.