



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2021

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH

Research & Genealogical Tips

© Michael John Neill, "Genealogy Tip of the Day,"

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Fractions Are Your Friend: If your relative is selling a fractional interest in a piece of real estate, ask yourself: "How did my relative obtain partial ownership in this property?" The usual answer is that there was some type of inheritance. While it is possible there are other reasons, in the majority of cases fractional ownership results from an inheritance. Property tax records and land records may help you determine who the previous owner was. They may also help you determine who the other fractional owners of the property are besides your ancestor.

How Those Search Options Work: When using a search option at an online database, do you know how that site implements wildcard searches (using the *, ?, _, or % in place of letters), Soundex searches, and other search options? Getting creative with search terms is often necessary, but if you don't know how they are really working, you are not being effective. Experiment and look at your results and see if you are getting what you think you should. A Soundex search for the last name Smut on a site with English language last names should result in a large number of hits. And if you don't know why, then review what Soundex really is. Most sites have a frequently asked questions page, search hints or suggestions, page, etc.

From The Creator's Perspective: Often when genealogists analyze records they look at information from the viewpoint of the person who provided it or from the viewpoint of someone trying to analyze that information for perceived reliability. But there is another perspective: that of the record creator or the clerk. Maybe they could not understand your ancestor. Maybe they did not care if the information was correct or not. Maybe they were trying to be as precise and particular as they could be. Maybe they were writing as neatly as they could. Maybe they had a stack of forms to complete, organize, etc. by the end of the day. Maybe they only got the job because of who they knew and not their ability. Or maybe your ancestor did not want to provide information. Maybe your ancestor was argumentative with the records clerk. Maybe the records clerk or census taker got tired of your ancestor's attitude and just put some words in some boxes. The skill level and ability of record clerks, census takers, etc. can run the gamut—from those who were conscientious and able to do their job well to those who were not and could not. Even those who were capable and able occasionally had to deal with members of the public who occasionally "could be a challenge." Sometimes those challenges included your ancestor.

The past is not dead. It isn't even past. --William Faulkner

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor

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DNA and Genealogy Basics by Sara Allen

Genealogy Gems: News from the Allen County Public Library at Fort Wayne,
No. 204, February 28, 2021

DNA testing for genealogical purposes has increased in popularity over the last few years. It is an exciting process to help persons learn about their ethnic background, find living genetic relatives, and the ancient origins of their ancestors. The test results will not tell you the names of your ancestors, but rather the names of test takers with whom you share significant amounts of DNA. From that information, you and the match must communicate or view each other's family trees to figure out the family connections. So, you can see that DNA testing does not take the place of traditional genealogical research, but is a wonderful additional tool in your genealogical toolbox to help learn more about family. There are five things you can learn from DNA testing:

Ethnicity Estimate: If you want to learn your broad ethnic background, you can take an autosomal DNA test offered by four major companies: AncestryDNA, FamilyTreeDNA, MyHeritage, and 23andme. Results include a chart with estimated percentages of each ethnicity found in your DNA. This test provides an interesting result, but is known to be imprecise due to various factors. Bottom-line: Don't be concerned about small variations from your known family ethnic background, but if your results include a significant percentage of a surprise ethnicity from a different continent than you expected, then seek the advice of an expert about how to interpret this result.

Genetic Cousins: If you want to find your genetic cousins, you can take an autosomal DNA test offered by four major companies: AncestryDNA, FamilyTreeDNA, MyHeritage, and 23andme. Results will include a list of genetic relatives (anyone from parents to around 5th-7th cousins) found in the test database. The matches may be related on either your father or mother's side and descended from a common ancestor of yours, as far back as about the 5th-7th great grandparents. You and your matches can compare family trees to find the connection and share information, such as photographs, documents, and family stories.

Paternal Ancestry of a Male: If you are male and wish to learn more about your father's direct paternal line, you can take the 37 marker or higher Y-chromosome DNA test from the FamilyTreeDNA testing company. Results include the ancient origins of the male's direct paternal line (father's, father's, father's line) showing where the paternal line originated thousands of years ago and how that tribe migrated over time to different regions of the world. Results also include a list of the names of matches found in the test database who share a common direct paternal ancestor with you - anytime from present day to approximately five hundred years ago. Bottom-line: If your results are unexpected, seek the advice of an expert.

Maternal Ancestry: If you wish to learn more about your mother's direct maternal line, you can take a full-spectrum mitochondrial DNA test from the FamilyTreeDNA testing company. Results include the ancient origins of the person's direct maternal line (mother's mother's mother's line) showing where the maternal line originated thousands of years ago and how her tribe migrated over time to different regions of the world. Results also include a list of the names of matches found in the test database who share a common direct maternal ancestor with you, anytime from present day to thousands of years ago. Bottom-

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line: If you seek recent relatives on your mother's line, take the autosomal DNA test instead.

Birth Family: If you wish to find your biological family, take the autosomal DNA test. After pursuing leads from the adoption records and genealogical records available to them, adoptees or those seeking paternity information should take an autosomal DNA test with at least one testing company with a large database of results. Bottom-line: If you have few or distant DNA matches only, you may need assistance from an expert in order to find the birth family via DNA testing. If you want to read more about it and seek an excellent guide, Baine Bettinger's "Genetic Genealogy in Practice" (GC 929 B466ge) offers an excellent overview.

DNA Problem Solving By Sara Allen Allen County Public Library

Research your brick wall in all existing genealogical records first. After no success, try DNA testing. Use the 2 types of research in concert with one another.

Research Plan for DNA Testing:

1. Identify your research problem
2. Summarize your genealogical research results
3. Choose most relevant DNA test/tests to order
4. Choose most relevant family member to test
5. Complete the rest of your family tree back to 4th great grandparents or farther, if possible

DNA test options

1. Autosomal DNA, inherited 50/50 from both father and mother, and from all ancestors going back to about 5-6 great grandparents (GGs)
2. Y Chromosome – inherited by males only, from their father; test of direct paternal line
3. Mitochondrial – inherited by males and females, only passed on by females, test of direct maternal line
4. X-DNA – included in autosomal test of both males and females; has a unique inheritance pattern

Sara's test recommendations:

1. Always start with an autosomal test unless mystery person is 5th-6th GG or farther back
 - a. Sara's recommended Autosomal testing path; evaluate after each step
 - i. Start with largest testing database first. Right now, this is Ancestry DNA
 - ii. Upload your raw data file to MyHeritage and FamilyTreeDNA – both accept uploads from other companies
 - iii. Order 23andme
2. Y chromosome test may be relevant for some cases, but must find male relative on the correct Y chromosome inheritance path from mystery man. Available from Family Tree DNA testing company. Order at least a 37 marker test.
3. Mitochondrial DNA test may be relevant in fewer cases, but must find relative on the correct mtDNA inheritance path from mystery woman. Also, be aware that matches could be related to a common maternal ancestor up to 1,000 years ago. Available from Family Tree DNA testing company. Order the full spectrum test.
4. X chromosome may be relevant in fewer cases. Will not be discussed in this program tonight

Who should you test?

1. For autosomal testing, test the closest living relative to the mystery person
2. Try to go back 1 or 2 generations further from yourself

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- a. For example:
 - i. Test your parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, great aunt/uncle, or first cousin of your parent
 - ii. This earlier generation will have more autosomal DNA than you do from the mystery ancestor
3. May need to test at all 4 autosomal testing companies

Autosomal test shortcomings:

1. Not useful after about 5th-6th great grandparents. Must use other tests for farther back mysteries.
2. Half-relationships, double relationships and endogamy make interpreting DNA results more difficult
3. Under-represented groups in testing databases include:
 - a. Recent immigrants to US
 - b. Non-Caucasian groups
 - c. Natives of non-Western countries

Analyzing autosomal test results:

- 1) Sort matches out by known family lines, surnames, common ancestor couple
 - a. Look at match list for known relatives, known surnames, pictures of matches that you recognize
 - b. View match's trees (linked and unlinked) looking for common ancestors or surnames, build trees for close matches without trees
 - c. View common ancestor hints
 - d. Use "shared matches" feature with known relatives to help you sort
- 2) At Ancestry DNA can create and sort matches into 24 color coded groups.
- 3) Search your matches' trees or surnames of interest for surnames in your tree
- 4) Utilize hints, ThruLines (Ancestry DNA), and Theory of Relativity (MyHeritage DNA) as hints or leads to follow up in genealogical records. Don't blindly accept as gospel truth.

At all points in search, DNA and more genealogical research may lead you in a new direction

1. Follow up on all leads
2. Revise theories as you go
3. Do more genealogical research!!!
4. Test hypothesis with Genealogical Proof Standard

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