



Arkansas Genealogical Society

AGS Ezine

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JOIN US!

If you are not a member,
this is your official
invitation to join AGS.

[AGS Membership Application](#)

If you are a member,
look at the back of your
Arkansas Family Historian.
Your membership expires
on the date printed under
your name.

It may be time to renew
your AGS membership dues!

Hear ye! Hear ye!

CHEERS to the Arkansas Genealogical Society for another successful Fall Seminar. A big "THANK YOU" to all those who were involved in the organizing and execution of the event. Also, a SPECIAL THANKS to D. Joshua Taylor and Dr. Daniel Littlefield for bringing their expertise and enthusiasm.

Inside this issue

Coming Events	3-5
Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries	6-12
Pedigree Collapse, Binary Progression, and DNA	13-18
Administrative Stuff	19

Tidbits –

Many times during our research, we have difficulty locating an individual’s death date and/or burial place. Below is a list of records that may help you locate the dates, some may require the minimum information, to give you an access point:

Scrapbooks	Probate Records
Diaries	Cemeteries or Cemetery Records
Family Bibles	Will Records
Vital Records	Mortality Schedules
Church Records	Lineage-based Organization Records
Newspapers	Fraternal Organization Records
Military Records	Family Histories and Biographies

To find out more about some of these records, please visit

<http://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/00000465.html>

Coming Events

November 3, 2017

The Independence County Library, *Batesville and the Benge Detachment of the Trail of Tears*, by Carolyn Kent, Researcher Coordinator for the Arkansas Chapter Trail of Tears Association, at 12:00 p.m. in the Loft of the Barnet Building, located at 267 East Main Street, Batesville, Arkansas.

November 27, 2017

Heritage Seekers, *Arkansas Civil War Topic: Civil War 101*, by Mark Christ, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, at Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

January 22, 2018

Heritage Seekers, *Preserving Family Hairlooms*, by Andy Zawacki, Historic Arkansas Museum, 6:30 p.m. at the Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

February 26, 2018

Heritage Seekers, *Faithful to Our Tasks: Arkansas' Women & the Great War*, by Elizabeth Hill, 6:30 p.m. at the Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

March 26, 2018

Heritage Seekers, *An Introduction to Genetic Genealogy*, by Mike Engles, Genetic Genealogist, 6:30 p.m. at the Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Coming Events *(continued)*

April 23, 2018

Heritage Seekers, *The Story Beneath the Stone*, by Jan Davenport, Oakland & Fraternal Cemeteries, 6:30 p.m. at the Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

May 2-5, 2018

The NGS 2018 Family History Conference will be in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The announcement was in the *NGS Monthly* from May 2016. Call for proposals opened January 3, 2017.

May 21, 2018

Heritage Seekers, *An Armchair Tour of Mount Holly Cemetery*, by Kay Tatum, Registrar Mt. Holly Cemetery, 6:30 p.m. at the Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

June 2–7, 2018

[The Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research](#) (IGHR) will be at the Georgia Center's UGA and Hotel Conference Center.

Coming Events *(continued)*

August 22-25, 2018

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

August 27, 2018

Heritage Seekers, *The Rise & Fall of Napoleon, Arkansas*, by Sheila Moore-Mithell, 6:30 p.m. at the Second Presbyterian Church, located at 600 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas.

October 19-20, 2018

The Arkansas Genealogical Society 2018 Fall Conference will be at the Benton Event and Convention Center in Benton, Arkansas. Cee Cee Moore is scheduled to present.

August 21-24, 2019

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Washington, D. C.

September 2-5, 2020

The [FGS](#) National Genealogy and Family History Conference will be held in Kansas City, Missouri.

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries

The following is republished from the Ancestry.com blog, <https://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2017/10/19/research-clues-for-those-elusive-brick-wall-mysteries/>. The article written by the Ancestry Team was published October 19, 2017 and provides some excellent advise on dealing with elusive relatives.

You’ve likely hit a brick wall or encountered a mystery in your research if you’ve spent any measure of time piecing together your family tree. It’s not easy. These challenges crop up in many ways. Sometimes your ancestors have a common last name like “Smith” or there is a lack of census data for a particular country or time. In other instances, your ancestors were enslaved people whose surname traces back to their owner, but to no one beyond that.

It can be a very frustrating experience without access to someone who can help. At Ancestry, we have a team of very smart and knowledgeable researchers who we asked to answer questions submitted by some of our Facebook followers last week.

Some of these cover common “brick wall” issues many people have faced, so hopefully there is useful information included that helps get you over the hump if you’re currently having trouble. If you’re facing a challenge not covered here, drop us a comment and we can follow up directly or perhaps write another post with more input from our research team.

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries(continued)

Monique Delatour If you are white, with the same last name as a black person, and the black person is not in Africa, does this mean that somewhere in history, the white side of your family name (or French, etc.) were once slave owners and the black persons family name was because they were forced to take on the slave owner’s name? So you are connected in that way by name? Would that be correct?

It is often true that the surnames of formerly enslaved Black Americans come from their former owner. However, sharing a surname does not necessarily mean that a white person by the same last name has ancestors who owned slaves. Only a percentage of white families owned slaves, so if the surname was a common name like Smith, it may not be *your* Smith, since not all Smiths are related. If your surname is unique and your family lived in the south during slavery, then there is definitely a strong chance that there is a connection, but it is not proof itself. Also, there were many enslaved men and women who changed their surnames years after emancipation to disassociate from their former owner which further complicates the matter.

Jessi Hall Wells I can’t find much on my great-grandpa’s side of the family in Russia. They were Jewish. Are there many records of Russian Jews from the 1700s and 1800s?

The majority of “Russian Jews” actually emigrated from areas formerly controlled by Russia, i.e., parts of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. Depending on when they immigrated and what constituted “Russia” at the time they entered the U.S. (since the boundaries changed repeatedly throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries), they may have identified as “Russian,” but have been from an entirely different present-

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries(continued)

day country. If your ancestors came to the U.S., you can often narrow things down and find their town or region of origin on passenger lists or domestic records such as draft registration cards, births/marriages/deaths. As for record availability, there's no one answer! Records vary greatly from country to country and even province to province and, unfortunately, many records were destroyed or disappeared during the Holocaust. However, many family, military, and tax lists or registers do survive as well as births, marriages, and burials. The best place to start is the [Jewish Family History Collection](#) on Ancestry. If you know the surname and the town where your ancestors lived, you have a better chance of locating them.

Maureen Brennan How can I deal with the lack of census records in Ireland for the 1800s?

While it's true that almost all of the censuses of Ireland in the 1800s were lost in the fire in Dublin's Four Courts building in 1922, there are other records that can help fill that void. [Griffith's Valuation](#), which was taken between 1847 and 1864, lists more than 1 million household heads who occupied property and is often referenced as a substitute for census records.

Irish civil registration of marriages began in 1845 and for births and deaths in 1864 and these records have survived. Church records can also help fill the void. While about half of the Church of Ireland parish registers that had been stored at the Four Courts were lost, many survived. Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian records were not at Four Courts and have survived. Ancestry has several collections of Catholic parish registers and by searching for the parents' names in baptisms, it is possible to reconstruct households.

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries(continued)

For links to Irish collections on Ancestry and additional tips, download our free guide to [Finding Your Irish Ancestors](#).

[Iron Deirdre Garmon](#) Is there an alternative to the destroyed copies of 1890 census?

The 1890 U.S. federal census was mostly destroyed by a fire at the Commerce Department in Washington, D.C. on 10 January 1921. Bridging the gap between the 1880 and 1900 can be challenging, but there are substitutes.

City directories allow you to track ancestors in between censuses and directories from the 1890s can help fill in for the lost census. Ancestry has good coverage from this period in its [U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995](#).

State censuses, where available, can also help fill the void left by the missing 1890 Census. Typically taken between the decennial federal censuses, state censuses vary in availability and in the information included. Click on the map in the lower left corner of the [Search page](#) on Ancestry to see whether Ancestry has censuses for your ancestor's state.

Although the 1890 population schedules were mostly destroyed, fortunately nearly 75,000 special schedules from that census with the names of Union veterans and widows survived. [1890 Veterans' Schedules](#) for part of Kentucky through Wyoming, Lincoln Post #3 in Washington, D.C., and selected U.S. vessels and navy yards are available, and for those whose ancestors appear in the surviving records, they're a unique look at the veterans and widows of the Civil War.

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries(continued)

On the schedules, you'll find the name of the veteran or his widow, rank, company, regiment or vessel, dates of enlistment and discharge, and length of service. On the lower half of the schedule, it also lists the address, any disabilities incurred (and sometimes where), and remarks.

And of course, you could get lucky and hit the genealogical lotto if your ancestor was enumerated on one of the surviving 1,233 pages or pieces, which document only 6,160 of the 62,979,766 people enumerated that year. You can search the surviving fragments [here on Ancestry](#).

Marsha Smith-Mott asks: Both of my husband's grandparents were adopted and the records were sealed. Information on their names and birth dates have been changed. How can I get around these obstacles?

The first thing you need to do is get your husband (and any of his parents or aunts/uncles that are still living) tested with AncestryDNA. If none of his parents or their siblings are living, getting a 1st cousin tested on each side of the family will help him sort his DNA matches out between maternal and paternal.

Where he is looking for biological parents of his grandparents, they would be his great-grandparents. That means that if either of them had any other children, their descendants would be your husband's ½ 2nd cousins. If any of them (or their parents or children) have taken an AncestryDNA test, they will show up on your husband's DNA match list. Contact them to find out more about their great-grandparents so you can figure out which one of them was in the right time and place to be the biological parents.

For more information about how to do this, you can download our free research guide:

[AncestryDNA for Adoptees: Search Strategies](#)

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries(continued)

Jordan Briley asks: My great-grandmother immigrated from Germany as a little girl, by way of a ship. I haven't been able to find the name of that ship, when it sailed, and where it landed.

I don't know how she got to America. Did she enter from Canada or Ellis Island?

You don't mention what time period you are researching to make this discovery so I will share some basic information about mid- to late- 19th century immigration to America that you might find helpful.

The first step in all immigration research is to exhaust all U.S. based resources first. Is your great-grandmother listed in the 1900, 1910, 1920, or 1930 U.S. Federal Census records? Each of those records list a year of immigration. They may not all be consistent but it should give you a good idea of a year or range of years. Also, pay close attention to her citizenship status listed on that census. If she married a U.S. citizen prior to 1922, she will have gained automatic citizenship. But, if her husband was also an immigrant, did either of them apply for citizenship? If so, her date of immigration (and sometimes even the port and the ship she came in on) will be listed on the Declaration of Intent to Naturalize.

The next step is to look at where the family lived in the years immediately following immigration. Those first few years usually meant a lot of movement as the immigrant gets settled into their new country. Use City Directories to track her movement in between census years.

Now, with a year range and a location, start searching ports from that location and expanding out. People didn't just come into New York. So, be sure to check ports in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and elsewhere for East Coast arrivals. Also, check U.S. Border Crossing from Canada. It was sometimes easier (and cheaper) to get passage into Canada and then take a train or other form of transportation across the border.

Research Clues for those Elusive “Brick Wall” Mysteries(continued)

Finally, keep in mind that in genealogy, spelling doesn't count. Just because an ancestor spelled their name a certain way after arriving here in the United States does not mean that they always spelled their name that way. It is also possible that the clerk at the port of departure misspelled their name or that their handwriting was so difficult to read that it was indexed incorrectly. So, be sure to search using variant spellings and wildcards.

Pedigree Collapse, Binary Progression, and DNA (continued)

by genealogists are questioned. Quoting different studies, the answer to the question about the length of a generation is about 33 years for male lines and about 29 years for female lines. However, depending on the study, the numbers range from 31 years for male lines to 38 years and from about 25 years to 29 years. The intervals were calculated on the average age of the mothers from the birth of their first child to the age at last birth.

Given these figures and using the 25-year interval, as the article observes, 20 generations in the past would put an ancestor in about the year 1500 at the outer limits of genealogically useful records in European countries and most of the rest of the world. Nonetheless, you would still have a potential of 1,048,576 direct line ancestors at that point in time. Personally, I do not know anyone who has approached a documented 20 generation pedigree of more than one or two lines at the most. So for all practical purposes, there is no real way to determine who we are related to back even 20 generations and from my own experience, any pedigree going back more than 20 generations is highly suspect.

I would also suspect that these same limits apply to the accuracy of DNA testing results because of the absolute certainty of pedigree collapse, i.e. where people sharing a common ancestor produce offspring. For example, because of the new family tree technology, it is fairly certain that I am related to both my wife's father and her mother, although many generations in the past.

Now, if you try to think this through, you will begin to see that DNA testing has some interesting limits. We know that the actual world population in the past is no longer even realistically represented by the required number of direct line ancestors and ultimately, as is reported by a number of researchers, we are all

Pedigree Collapse, Binary Progression, and DNA (continued)

descended from a couple of proto-ancestors. Here is a summary of the issue from the Wikipedia article on "Human evolutionary genetics."

By estimating the rate at which mutations occur in mtDNA, the age of the common ancestral mtDNA type can be estimated: "the common ancestral mtDNA (type a) links mtDNA types that have diverged by an average of nearly 0.57%. Assuming a rate of 2%-4% per million years, this implies that the common ancestor of all surviving mtDNA types existed 140,000-290,000 years ago."

Most, but not all (see fr. Multiregional origin of modern humans), scientists in the relevant fields consider this observation robust. This common direct ancestor in the line of mother to daughter (or mitochondrial most recent common ancestor (mtMRCA)) of all extant humans has become known as Mitochondrial Eve. (Mitochondria are inherited from the mother only.) The observation that the mtMRCA is the direct matrilineal ancestor of all living humans does not mean either that she was the first anatomically modern woman, nor that no other women lived concurrently with her, nor even excluding the existence of other women being ancestors of today's people. Other women would have lived at the same time and passed nuclear genes down to living humans, but their mitochondrial lineages were lost over time. This could be due to events such as producing only male children. [I left in the links for reference.]

By the way, dividing those estimates of years by 25 gives us 5,600 generations to 11,600 generations. What this implies is that over time genes are lost from the "gene pool." So, if we go back far enough, the geneticists agree that there is pedigree collapse to the point that we all share a common ancestor, but on the other hand just going back a mere 39 generations or about 975 years implies that we have over 549 billion direct line ancestors.

Pedigree Collapse, Binary Progression, and DNA (continued)

Part Two

A paradox occurs when an absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, is investigated or explained and then proves to be well founded or true. Pedigree collapse is paradoxical. You would expect that the number of your ancestors would continue to increase



exponentially. But the reality is that they don't. As I mentioned in the first installment of this series, ultimately, the idea of pedigree collapse postulates that all humans are descendants of a single person or perhaps a small group of people in Africa. What is becoming evident by the DNA studies is that presently all humans are humans by virtue of their shared DNA. Here are a few articles discussing this issue.

- A Single Migration From Africa Populated the World, Studies Find
- Updated: First big efforts to sequence ancient African DNA reveal how early humans swept across the continent
- Oldest known human DNA reveals we're 'complete mongrels'
- Discovery of Oldest DNA Scrambles Human Origins Picture
- Genetic 'Adam' and 'Eve' Uncovered

Pedigree Collapse, Binary Progression, and DNA (continued)

What does this have to do with genealogy? Ultimately, genealogy is based on written records and the existence of those records. DNA, on the other hand, is based on random combinations of genes in our chromosomes. The differences between the two lie in the First Rule of Genealogy: "When the baby was born, the mother was there." In genealogy, the implications of this Rule are far-reaching. Essentially, mothers can be identified with a greater degree of certainty than fathers.

Here is a simple example of the problem:

Look at your pedigree chart. It lists those people who your inherited genealogy or your own research are shown as biologically related. But how do you know that the information you have on your chart is accurate? The answer is that you don't. Your conclusions are based on written records that may or may not have been accurate. For example, you may believe you are related to your known parents. You may even have a birth certificate to "prove" that relationship. But a DNA test may reveal that your named father is not your biological father and the same thing goes for your mother also. What about all those generations of records where you do not have a DNA test to support a biological relationship? What about all those children born out of wedlock or recorded marriages? How many of these relationships were culturally hidden?

One thing is certain. You get a random mix of genes from your parents. See "Relatedness." Another fact is evident, DNA testing results can disturb assume relationships. See "Couple discover they are siblings: Child courts blamed after strangers fall in love, have a son - and then find out they are half-brother and sister." When you undertake the journey of discovering your ancestry, you are entering a world

Pedigree Collapse, Binary Progression, and DNA (continued)

where marriage between closely related people is not only possible but in the case of European royalty and other historically related groups of people, common. From another standpoint, identical twins do not have identical DNA. See "Identical Twins' Genes Are Not Identical." Before extensive DNA or genome sequencing became available, it was commonly believed that identical twins had identical DNA. But this has more recently been shown to be an inaccurate conclusion.

So what is the "real" relationship between genealogical research and DNA? Both approaches provide information about a similar subject: relationships between humans. Both have limitations. Ultimately, DNA testing relies on statistical analysis. See, for example, "On statistical analysis of forensic DNA: Theory, methods and computer programs." When a genealogical DNA test is interpreted, the results are expressed as a statistical percentage correspondence or an "estimate." These ethnicity estimates are often combined with reports of DNA matches of varying percentages of DNA. These percentages are, for the most part, based on very small percentages of "shared" DNA. Unfortunately, a large percentage of these matched people do not have supporting family trees that allow an actual relationship to be established. In other words, even when the DNA matched person has an online family tree, there is no apparent genealogical relationship evident. Without a carefully documented and evaluated genealogically researched family tree, DNA testing is nothing more than an interesting estimate.

Administrative Stuff

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