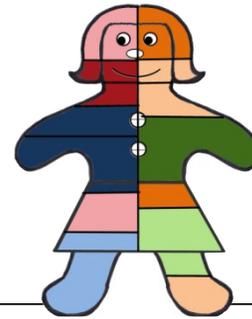


DNA Discoveries: Applying DNA Evidence to Genealogical Questions

Debbie Parker Wayne, CGSM, CGLSM



INTRODUCTION

DNA evidence leads to many kinds of discoveries, expected and unexpected, welcome and not welcome, supporting or refuting hypotheses and family legends. Some unexpected discoveries are related to ancestors many generations back and some to those still living. DNA is not unique in this way. Documentary records have always been able to uncover unexpected family relationships and attempts to conceal certain situations.

DNA and documentary evidence can contradict each other at times. At other times the two work together to support a credible conclusion. DNA test results are the hot, new type of evidence for genealogical researchers. We need to include documentary evidence in order for our research to reach a credible conclusion and meet the criteria of the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS). The cases described here illustrate only a few of the ways to use DNA with documentary research to make discoveries in genealogical research.

CONFIRM PRIOR RESEARCH

While it is not technically a discovery, an important benefit of DNA testing is to confirm prior research. Knowing that the correct ancestors fill the branches of a tree promotes future research in the right place and time. This may lead to discovering the parents of a person in a tree. The DNA confirmation is especially important for ancestors with a common name and when more than one person of the same name lived in a place at the same time.

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So many people in the US have tested today that many of us can confirm branches of a tree using DNA cousins who were not known before showing up in a match list. If matches do not show up in our list, we may need to recruit and pay for tests for relatives in the line we wish to confirm.

Tree accuracy and completeness is important for all aspects of genetic genealogy, including confirming prior research. An incomplete tree with a blank where an ancestor name should be means there could be a shared ancestor who cannot be identified. Figure 1 illustrates that the accuracy of the trees is more important than the fact that multiple trees list the same ancestor. If one person published an inaccurate tree that dozens of others copied then it may appear to confirm a common ancestor, but the error will likely be uncovered once thorough research is done.

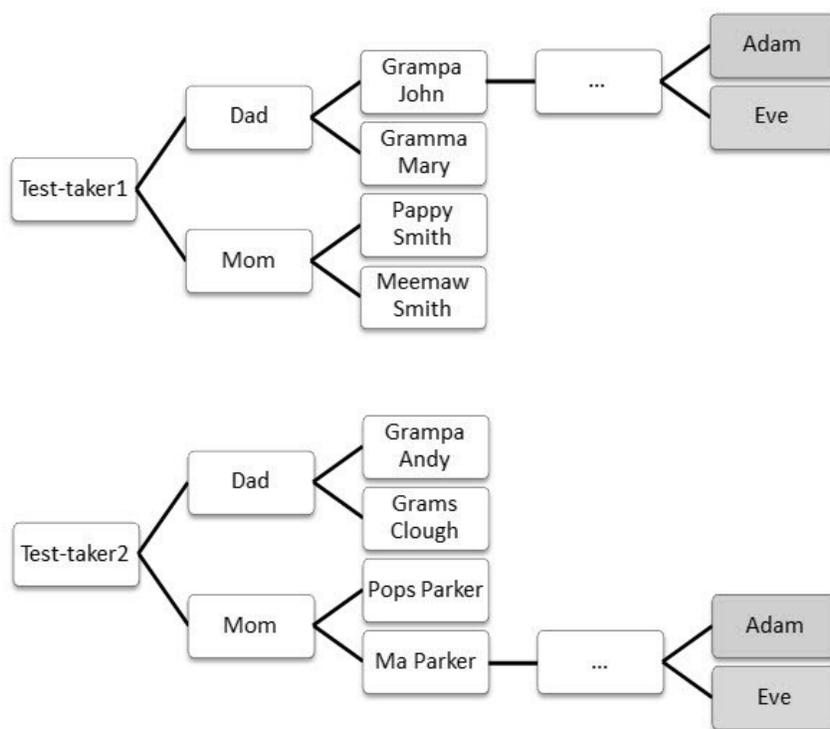


Figure 1. Family Tree Naming Adam and Eve as Ancestors
(Unproven No Matter How Many Copies Are Found)

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Tracking speculative ancestral links before the line is thoroughly researched can be useful for DNA matches, but entering speculative lines into a genealogy program or online tree may mislead others. Some users add speculative ancestors to a private tree and keep a public tree for the lines more credibly linked with thorough research.

For those who like to have a compact document with maximum information to print and carry, my solution is to keep a tree with the status of ancestors color-coded or highlighted. A seven-generation compact pedigree chart (in Microsoft Word table format) uses pink and blue shading to indicate potential X-DNA ancestors. For those with access to an 11x17 printer a ten-generation version of the chart is available.¹ My 11x17 X-DNA inheritance chart includes names of all thoroughly researched ancestors (those “proven” by documentary research) in boldface print, speculative ancestor candidates without boldface, and an added highlight in yellow marking the ancestors who have been confirmed with a DNA match. See figure 2. With this information in a compact format it is easy to quickly compare to the tree of a DNA match and see what is known and which links are speculative.

¹All URLs were accessed on 10 July 2017.

Debbie Parker Wayne, “Quick Reference Links by Debbie Parker Wayne,” Publications, Wayne Research (<http://debbiewayne.com/pubs.php#quickref> > X-DNA > Microsoft Word format charts > select male or female version, basic versions are 7 generations on 8x11 paper, extended version is 10 generations on 11x17 paper).

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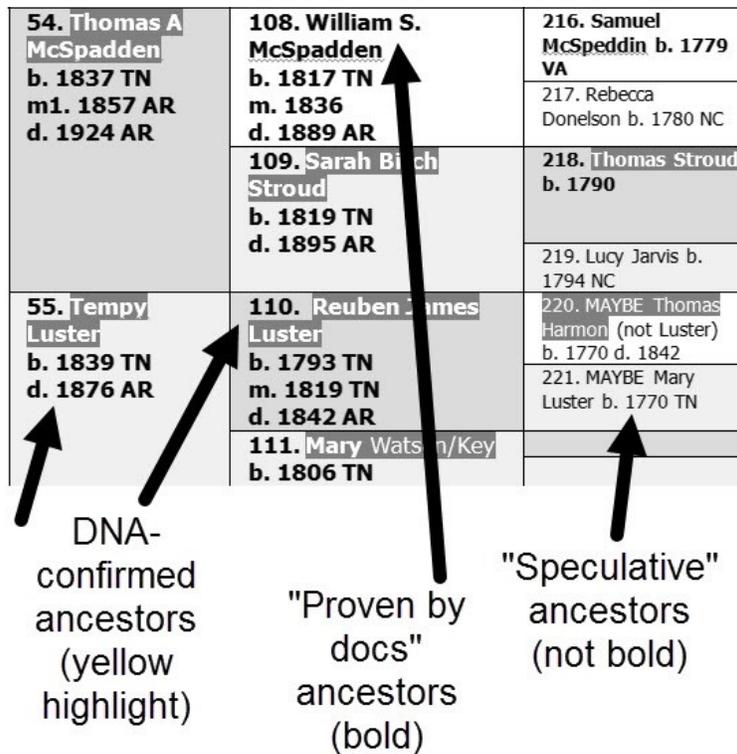


Figure 2. Debbie’s X-DNA Chart with DNA-confirmed Ancestors, “Documentary Proven” Ancestors, and Speculative Ancestors

FIND COUSINS YOU HAVE KNOWN FOR YEARS IN GENEALOGICAL GROUPS

DNA is proving how small our world really is and how we are all more related than we may think. Keep your eyes open for names you recognize as you peruse DNA match lists. Exploring your DNA matches will often reveal some cousins you never knew were related, but have known for years.

My own results and those of my siblings link to eighteen colleagues known through the Association of Professional Genealogists and the Board for Certification of Genealogists; six known through the Texas State Genealogical Society, National Genealogical Society, and local societies; many who attended a lecture or institute where I was speaking; and several

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who recognized common ancestral names in DNA articles I wrote in journals.

FIND COUSINS WITH WHOM TO COLLABORATE

Experienced researchers collaborating have a better chance of breaking through brick walls than any one researcher working alone. I have made contact with researchers on my Ryan and Black lines with whom I now work so we can identify our common ancestor. On the Ryan line, we all trace back to different ancestors whom we suspect are siblings. Our shared DNA, assuming we have no other common ancestors, proves we are related. Once one of us makes a breakthrough in identifying the parents, it will help the others.

LEARN OF UNKNOWN LIVING RELATIVES (WHO MAY HAVE RECORDS LIKE A FAMILY BIBLE OR PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANCESTORS)

One person on my DNA match list shared with me several photographs she had of my grandfather as a boy with his father, my great-grandfather. These are the only photos I have of my great-grandfather.

REFUTE OR CONFIRM A FAMILY LEGEND

All genealogists learn that family stories may have a kernel of truth, but not be completely accurate. My father's Parker family had a story that we were related to Quanah Parker, who was the son of a captured Anglo girl named Cynthia Ann Parker and a Comanche tribal chief. Using the Y-DNA that my father inherited and passed on to his descendants, we proved we are not related to Quanah Parker through his Y-DNA line. A theory then developed that perhaps the story was mangled as it was passed down and we were really related to Cynthia Ann's Parker family. That same test proved we were not related to Cynthia Ann Parker's family on her paternal line.

In this case, information on known Native American Y-DNA haplogroups disprove the Quanah link. Comparison of my family's Parker Y-DNA to men

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who had already tested and were descendants of Cynthia Ann Parker's grandfather disprove the second theory.²

FIND CLUES TO EXTEND A FAMILY LINE

We all have lines that we just have not had time to research thoroughly yet. We may get lucky and have a DNA match who has worked diligently on that line. We might even find that combining our information with that of our cousins gives us a more complete and accurate story for an ancestor.

One of my aunts told me her grandfather's name was William Granville Rogers. She had approximate birth and death dates for him. I was able to obtain a Texas death record, census, land and court records but all included only middle initial "G." That uncommon middle name did not help me learn more about William as I thought it would. The 1920 census enumerated him with a new wife who I assumed to be a second wife he married after his first wife died. Williams' death record named his father as Frank.

A DNA match had a family tree listing my grandmother as William's child, but had a different woman named as the mother. Figure 3 compares my tree for William and the tree of my DNA match for a William. Dates and places are not shown in this image, but known dates and places matched in both trees. Frank could easily be Benjamin Franklin. No documents indicating a middle name of Granville have been found, but many documents give a middle initial of G. I am sure my grandmother is the daughter of Tempy Snyder; the DNA match knew my grandmother was not the child of Julia so assumed the mother was the only other wife known.

² For more information, see articles by Debbie Parker Wayne: "Genetic Genealogy: Henry Parker Y-DNA and the Family Legend," Texas State Genealogical Society, *Stirpes* 55 (September/December 2016): 23-26. See also "Bailing, Bigamy, Brotherly Love: The Family of Henry Parker and Nancy Black" cited below.

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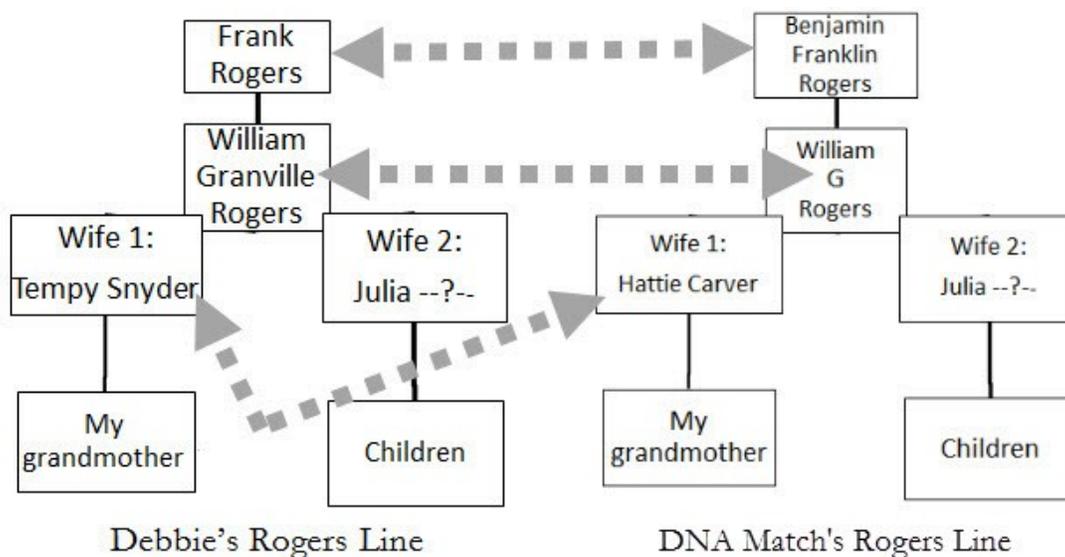


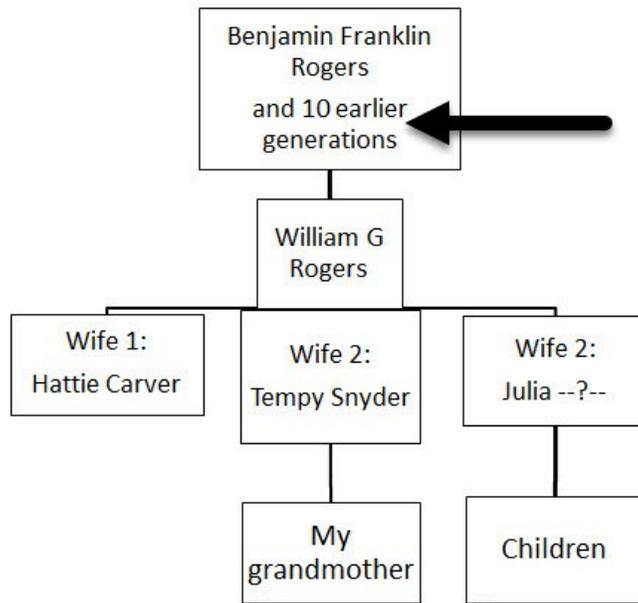
Figure 3. Rogers Lineage for Debbie and a DNA Match

Figure 4 illustrates known information on William once we combine our documented evidence. He had three wives total instead of the two each of us had already documented. In addition to learning more about William, my DNA match has many more earlier generations naming ancestors of William and Benjamin Franklin Rogers. Even though the tree of the DNA match has multiple sources attached, I will only use those ancestors prior to William as speculative ancestors until I can research them myself and am sure they are my real ancestors. I have some fabulous clues to follow from the tree of this DNA match.

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Combined Research on Rogers Line

Figure 4. Rogers Lineage Combining Knowledge of Researchers

CONFIRM A PERSON FOUND IN THREE LOCATIONS IS THE SAME PERSON

My earlier research and writing used indirect evidence to show that the Henry Parker in Pope County, Arkansas, the Henry Parker in Milam County, Texas, and the Henry Parker in Hood County, Texas, were the same man.³ An 1867 Voter Registration in Milam County, a Mexican War pension file in Hood County, and a Mexican War Compiled Military Service Record in Arkansas indicate indirectly that these are the same man. Henry was also linked to his father through tax records in Pope County, Arkansas, and “tick marks” on the 1830 and 1840 census enumerations. A timeline showed that the records of these men had no overlap.

³ Debbie Parker Wayne, “Bailing, Bigamy, Brotherly Love: The Family of Henry Parker and Nancy Black,” Dallas Genealogical Society, *Pegasus* 1 (2013): 11-20; online at Wayne Research (http://debbiewayne.com/pubs/pub_HenryParker2012_DPW.pdf).

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All record groups found were searched in all three locations and the surrounding areas. While the documentary evidence seemed conclusive, DNA could provide evidence to definitively support or refute this conclusion. Once a member of my Y-DNA Parker line tested, we had many matches to other Parkers descended from Henry Parker in Milam County and from Henry's potential brothers in Arkansas. The search for a descendant of Henry Parker in Hood County started in about 2008, but no descendants responded to contact.

In 2016, after the search went dormant, a Hood County descendant saw an online article about Henry, contacted me, and agreed to take a DNA test. His Y-DNA matches as expected to other descendants of Henry Parker Jr. and his autosomal DNA includes segments shared with other Henry Parker descendants in Texas and Arkansas. Figure 5 illustrates the lineage of some of the Y-DNA test-takers. Due to space limitations, not all test-takers are shown in the chart. There are more test-takers. Autosomal DNA test-takers include descendants from all of the Y-DNA lines in the chart plus several female lines descended from both Henry Sr. and Henry Jr.

The Y-DNA initially proved these Parker links as only Y-DNA testing was available and pertinent when the study started. The autosomal DNA confirms what was learned with the Y-DNA study. Autosomal DNA can be used whether the focus person (Henry Parker in this case) is male or female. Mitochondrial DNA and X-DNA might also be pertinent in some cases.

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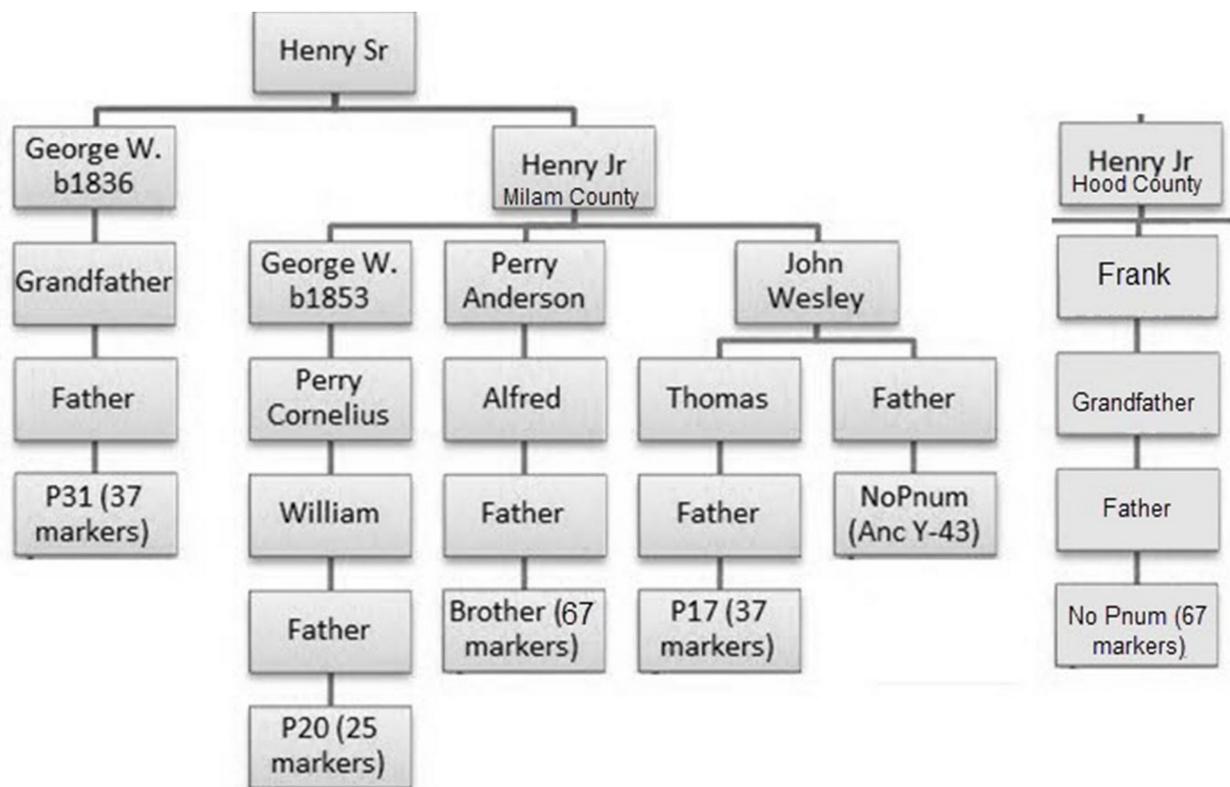


Figure 5. Parker Y-DNA Test-takers

FIND CLUES TO BREAK BRICK WALLS DUE TO MISATTRIBUTED PARENTAGE MANY GENERATIONS AGO

As I scanned the list of DNA matches for my family members, I noticed a lot of Harmons and matches with Harmon ancestral lines. I had no known links to a Harmon ancestor. A DNA match I met at a seminar had a fairly small shared segment. A small segment may come from a shared ancestor many generations back. We exchanged trees and found several common surnames. None of those shared surnames seemed to be in the same place at the same time, but we both had lines with different surnames in some of the same counties. We placed our correspondence on the back burner until one of us learned more and had a more complete tree.

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Several years later, as the DNA match was focused on proving her Harmon line, she kept seeing references to a Luster family in the trees of Harmon descendants. I have a Luster line in my tree, but had not traced it very far back. Because my DNA match was diligently searching court records and the less-used genealogical records, she found a record that may explain our DNA match. If true, this record explains why I have so many Harmon DNA matches while I have no known Harmon ancestor, and it can save me time in the future that I may have wasted searching Lusters.

My correspondent found a derivative source referencing a bastardy bond in Greene County, Tennessee: "Thomas Harmon enters into bond with Peter Harmon, his securities in the sum of 1000 dollars for the maintenance of a bastard child born of MARY LESTER." Lester is very close to Luster. If this bond contains the information indicated and there is no contradicting evidence found, then it is possible that my Luster line is really a Harmon line.

Greene County, Tennessee, is now high on my priority list for research locations so I can find the original record referenced above and other records for relatives in this area. The DNA matches cause me to believe this information is likely true, but thorough documentary research and analysis is needed before accepting this link as factual. There are so many Lusters and Harmons in the area, many with common names like Thomas and Mary, that this will become a major project requiring a lot of time. Luckily, many of the Greene County, Tennessee, record images are now online at *FamilySearch* so some of my research can be done without leaving home.

CONFIRM A BIOLOGICAL PARENT WHO WAS UNKNOWN IN RECENT GENERATIONS

The mass media market is full of stories of adoptees and foundlings using DNA to find biological parents. My own family has one adoptee story with a happy ending and several unknown parentage stories not yet solved. Most unknown parentage stories have happy reunions at the ends. Occasionally, a biological family does not want contact with newly discovered potential family members. This seems to be more rare than the situations where family members have been searching for each other or openly accept

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previously unknown family members. Whether the story has a happy ending or not, emotions run high. Diplomacy, tact, respect, and an unbiased response may turn an unhappy ending into a happy one for all.

CONCLUSION

No matter how we use DNA findings, to link recent family members or those many generations back, DNA has revolutionized genealogical research. DNA has not eliminated all of the tried and true documentary research techniques and the Genealogical Proof Standard. DNA has added a new technique to help us solve problems we could not resolve before and to provide new clues to be followed.

Debbie Parker Wayne, CG, CGL, is experienced using DNA analysis as well as more traditional techniques for genealogical research in Texas, the South and the West. She coordinates the genetic genealogy courses at several genealogy institutes and is the Texas State Genealogical Society's DNA Project director. She wrote the NGS *Continuing Genealogical Studies: Autosomal DNA* course and co-authored the first genetic genealogy workbook, *Genetic Genealogy in Practice*, published by NGS. See <http://debbiewayne.com/> for more information.

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