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Phillips DNA News

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Please submit news articles or ideas for articles to the editor. Questions about Genetic Genealogy can always be sent to the editor.

Project News

The dog days of summer are upon us. This has been a season of record breaking high temperatures here in the USA. Thank God for air conditioning!

This summer has also heated up in the USA with regard to whether or not the Federal government needs to step in and regulate DTC (direct-to-consumer) DNA testing. In June, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sent letters to five personal genomics companies basically telling them that they need to obtain FDA clearance or approval to sell DNA tests directly to the public. This was followed up by letters to another fourteen companies in July.

On the 19th and 20th of July, the Food and Drug Administration held a public meeting on the oversight of laboratory developed tests, which include DNA tests for genealogical purposes. Katherine Borges, the Director of the International Society of Genetic Genealogists, gave a presentation at the meeting. The full program of the meeting and the live webcast can be seen here:

<http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/NewsEvents/WorkshopsConferences/ucm212830.htm>

On July 22nd, the Committee on Energy and Commerce held a hearing on “Direct-To-Consumer Genetic Testing and the Consequences to the Public Health.” The documents relating to the meeting and the webcast can be seen here on the Committee’s website

http://energycommerce.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2083:hearing-on-direct-to-consumer-genetic-testing-and-the-consequences-to-the-public-health&catid=133:subcommittee-on-oversight-and-investigations&Itemid=73.

Most of the attention is being directed at DNA tests for medical purposes; i.e., DNA tests that are supposed to show what diseases and illnesses you might or might not be more prone to develop based on your genes.

Although DNA testing for ancestry was mentioned in the hearings, Bennett Greenspan, the president of Family Tree DNA, assured me that he has been in contact with the FDA and at present it appears there is no likelihood of Congress getting involved in the genealogy side of the direct-to-consumer DNA business.

Featured Family Story

The Journal of Brannock Phillips - His Conflict

By Cyrus E. Phillips IV, Phillips Family Group 2

Prologue:

In 1870, Brannock Phillips (1799-1875), a resident of Unionville, and a member of the Iowa Legislature for Appanoose County, recorded his family history in a bound journal. He had used this journal for many things: recording his accounts, digests of sermons given in Albia and Unionville in 1857, notes for speeches Brannock Phillips made on Reconstruction after the American Civil War, voter roles for Appanoose County (with careful annotations that Brannock made to identify persons he suspected were Copperheads), and, finally, the family history.

Brannock Phillips fathered six children, two of whom served in the Civil War: Cyrus E. Phillips (1829-1903), who served as Captain of the Eddyville Guards, Iowa Militia, and Sardis B. Phillips (1840-1861), who enlisted in the Iowa Second Infantry at Unionville, Iowa in 1861, and, according to the account in the register of the family bible, "died Nov. 23, 1861 Hospital Cairo Ill. being a nurse therein. Buried in Cairo Cemetery."

Brannock Phillips was an acid writer. His account of our family history reflects a strong distaste for things Southern (understandable, since he had lost a son). But there is an interesting conflict in this, and it is that in compiling the family history, Brannock must deal with his own antecedents in Dorchester County, Maryland, on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

The Journal:

Believing our American people are not, as a whole, as careful as they should be, to leave, and maintain records of chronology of families: therefore, I shall herein give as full and complete history of my progenitors as I can. But having nothing from which to draw items but a rather treacherous memory of words uttered by my parents long since; it may not, in all cases be reliable.

My parents claimed that each family was of English descent. And that they were the second generation from the emigrating parents. That each family settled on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where they remained; where my parents were born and raised.

My mother's maiden name was Sarah Brannock. I am not sure, but think his first name was Nehemiah. He was a farmer; owned a farm and some 15 or 20 slaves. A man of pleasure, but small amount of perseverance in doing good in life. When I was only a small boy, my mother was visited by a distant relative of the Brannock family who said his residence was in

Harrison County, Ky. This was the only branch of my grandfather's family on my mother's side, I ever saw, or knew anything about. And he did not seem likely to set the world on fire. Of the Phillips Stock, I know more.

Each of my grandfathers lived in Dorchester County, Md. and on the Bay shore where father and mother were born, raised and married.

Philemon Phillips, my grandfather had, I believe, 6 sons: Wm., Philemon, Ezekiel, Thomas, John (my father) and James. In after life all moved to N.C. except Philemon, who I suppose, remained in Md. But of him or his, I know nothing.

William and father about 1795 emigrated from N.C. to Ky. Settling in Jessamine Co. where I was born. But a few years later moved to Montgomery Co. where each died at a good old age.

Uncle Wm. had 4 sons. William who married and died in Jessamine Co. leaving 2 or 3 sons. Ezekiel, who died an old beak. Thomas who died near Bloomington Ind. leaving a family. And James who married in Montgomery County and was yet there some 4 years since.

And 3 daughters. Sallie who married a Wornback and lived in Jessamine Co. Ky. Rachael, who married Churchwell Garner, and was living a few years since in Montgomery, a widow and very old. And Nancy who married Jas. Carson and was living in Tippecanoe Co. Ind. the last I knew of her.

Uncle Ezekiel, ultimately left N.C. for Ky. where he lived a few years, and died leaving 4 boys + 2 girls, by his first marriage. And 2 sons of his second marriage. Of his descendants, I know but little. They are scattered in Oregon, Utah, Iowa and mostly in Ind.

Uncle Thomas finally settled in Ill. where he died at an advanced age leaving 3 sons, Nimrod, Thomas and Nathan. The father was a local preacher of the M. E. Church. Nathan an M.D. I imagine they and their children are living somewhere about Peoria, Ill. or adjoining cos.

The last intelligence of Uncle Jas. + family was that they lived in the mountains of Virginia on New River. Not doing well.

My father was born about 1761 or 62. I am not positive which and mother about 2 years later. He died in Montgomery Co. Ky. where his remains lie, in his 77 year, and mother some 2 years later in Putnam Co. Ind. where her remains were deposited: she living after his death, with her only surviving daughter Sallie Gibson.

I suppose there is not a Slab or anything to show where either lies! Such is the laxity of Southern life, degenerated under the influence of slavery. Were I where they lie, I would have plain Slabs affixed.

My father was a farmer, as was all his brothers: was not a lazy man. But seemed content with little home, having some of the comforts of life without any of the luxuries thereof. Thus they lived, and raised 7 children.

Aseneth, the oldest married Saml. Whitsitte, died leaving 4 sons and 4 daughters, who are scattered, some in Mo. others in Iowa, but mostly in Ind.

Alley the second, who married Ralph Whitsitte, who died leaving 4 children. Three of whom I suppose are living now. Wm T.+ Betsey, living in Fayette Co. Mo. And Polly widow of John Miller decd. now, living in Jefferson Co. Ind.

Sally the third, who married James Gibson-raised a large family-lived to see all settled in life, and died in Putnam Co. Ind. in April 1863. Being 77 years old. I believe most of her children are in Iowa but some in Ind. She has grandchildren in and about Centreville Iowa. And one son in Monroe Co.

John the 4th child lived in Jefferson Co. Ind. and raised a large family. All of whom live there or in adjoining Cos. He died in his 69th year leaving a third wife. I cannot name all his progeny, and shall omit all.

Mary, the fifth who married Wm. C. Wilson, but died young leaving 4 children Brannock, John C., Peter and Ally Jane. All living in Indiana.

William the sixth died in Cincinnati on Aug. 4th, 1836, being then Assistant Editor of the Western Christian Advocate. He left 5 children. Only two are now living. John Mitton and Frank W. The former resides in Cin. Ohio, the latter in Ill. Is an itinerant minister of the M.E. Church of some eminence.

Brannock the 7th the writer hereof was born July 12th, 1799. Married Sept. 30th, 1819 to Eliza M. Wells. Since that time we have lived together in harmony, and raised 5 sons and 1 daughter."

Iowa Legislature Debate Notes:

Reconstruction implies having been demolished.

Who done it?

Not the Republicans

That no governments existed all agreed.

The president appointed governors + other officers.

And said what should be done.

Congress the only constructing power.

Should we give the power of government to Cops? [Copperheads]

They robbed treasury.

Sent ships abroad.

Arms + munitions South.

Rebelled against the Government.

Prolonged the war.

Encouraged Rebels.

Discouraged Union Soldiers.

Met in secret conclave to resist conscription.

Fled to Canada + the mountains.

Killed our officers at home.

Many of them fled South and fought against us.

Refused our soldiers the franchise.

Postscript:

Brannock Phillips, the seventh child of John Phillips and Sarah Brannock, was born on July 12th, 1799 in Jessamine County, Kentucky; married Eliza M. Wells on September 30th, 1819; and died in Unionville, Iowa on March 1st, 1875.

Brannock Phillips was involved in some way in the Underground Railroad at his home in Appanoose County, Iowa, and this likely also is another source of the conflict created for him by our Phillips family origin in the United States on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Here is a link to a scanned copy of the Brannock Phillips Journal:

[Brannock Phillips Journal with annotations](#)

Guest Column

Ellis Island and Your Ancestors

By Richard W. Eastman

The following article is from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com>.



Close to the mouth of the Hudson River in New York Harbor is a small island that is forever etched in our country's history. Formerly known as Oyster Island, Ellis Island was the gateway to the new land for more than 10 million immigrants between its opening in 1892 and its closing in 1931. For most of these “huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” processing through Ellis Island often required several days.

As each ship entered the Lower Bay of New York Harbor, it was diverted to a quarantine area. Here medical inspectors would board the incoming ships to check for possible contagious diseases: cholera, plague, smallpox, typhoid fever, yellow fever, scarlet fever, measles, and diphtheria. The quarantine examination conducted aboard ship was reserved for first- or second-class cabin passengers. U.S. citizens were altogether exempt from the examination, so for them this was just an aggravating pause. However, passengers in steerage had to wait for their examinations later at Ellis Island. For them, quarantine was a time of heightened

frustration and ever-increasing anxiety. Ships were examined from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. This meant that any vessel arriving after 5 p.m. had to anchor for the night, yet another day's delay for the weary immigrants.

After passing medical inspection, the ships were allowed to dock in New York. Each immigrant wore a nametag with the individual's manifest number - their identifying number from the ship's passenger list - written in large figures. The immigrants were then assembled in groups of thirty, according to manifest numbers, and were crowded onto the top decks of barges while their baggage was piled onto the lower decks. Soon they arrived at Ellis Island's landing slip and were led to the main building's large reception room. Here, at last, immigrants would take the final step in their journey to freedom in America.

The sea of humanity is difficult to imagine. An ocean steamship typically carried 600 to 1,000 passengers, all of whom walked down the gangplank within an hour or so. It was not unusual for five or six steamships to arrive in a single day, flooding the Immigration Office with people speaking many languages. The baggage often was piled in mountains wherever it could fit. The sense of smell would be offensive by today's standards: many closely-packed bodies of people who had spent weeks at sea without proper bathing facilities. With hundreds of babies crying, youngsters anxious to run after weeks at sea, and adults anxious to see the "land of gold," the confusion must have been overwhelming to many of the new arrivals.



The huge halls at Ellis Island provided basic accommodations, dormitory-style sleeping quarters, and a large dining hall. The immigrants had to stay here for one to three days or sometimes even longer, their costs paid by the steamship company that brought them, until relatives or friends called for them. Most of the newcomers had to have a "sponsor" meet them and guarantee to pay their living expenses. Those immigrants carrying funds of at least \$20 to prove they were self-sufficient could enter the country without a sponsor. Most arrivals had less than that in their pockets.

Any unfortunate travelers with neither funds nor sponsor were sent back to the old world at the expense of the steamship company. The same was true for anyone found to have a noxious disease, as well as for those identified as idiots, lunatics, and convicts.

One myth that persists today is that all immigrants passed through Ellis Island. In fact, that port of entry was open only from 1892 to 1931. From 1855 to 1892, immigrants arrived at Castle Garden. Millions of others arrived in Portland (Maine), Boston, Fall River, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, Galveston, Los Angeles, and Angel Island (San Francisco), plus numerous other ports, as well as overland from Canada and Mexico.

Another myth is that many immigrants had their names changed at Ellis Island because they could not converse with English-speaking immigration officials. However, a close examination of government records soon dispels this American legend. Each immigrant carried documentation written in their native language by authorities in "the old country." These documents always listed the complete name of each immigrant, along with details of their nationality and place of origin. Here again, any immigrant arriving without proper documentation was sent back at the expense of the steamship company. Having no desire to pay such expenses, all the shipping lines would verify documentation in the old country before allowing their passengers to embark. This verification in "the old country" typically was done by local natives who were fluent in the language involved and then was examined again at Ellis Island by interpreters who spoke and read that language.

Ellis Island hired a small army of interpreters. The interpreters spoke the required languages fluently. Most were either prior immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants who learned their mother tongue as children. In retrospect, these interpreters were the unsung heroes of the entire immigration screening process. Their patience and skill often helped save an immigrant from deportation. The average number of languages spoken by an interpreter was six, but fluency in a dozen languages (including dialects) was not uncommon. The record for a single interpreter was fifteen languages.

As a result of the required documentation and the examinations held in the would-be immigrant's native language, almost all immigrants had well-documented names and origins. The many family claims of name changes at Ellis Island, stowaways, "jumping ship," and such are almost always fictitious.

One interpreter at Ellis Island was Fiorello La Guardia, who would later become famous as the mayor of New York City responsible for cleaning up the corruption of Tammany Hall. He worked at Ellis Island for an annual salary of \$1,200 from 1907 to 1910 and helped thousands of Italians and other immigrants enter the country.

These interpreters led groups through the Ellis Island processing. A doctor would meet the immigrants first at the top of a flight of stairs. As the immigrants climbed the stairs, the doctor looked for signs of lameness, heavy breathing that might indicate a heart condition, or "bewildered gazes" that might be symptomatic of a mental condition. As each immigrant passed, the doctor would examine the immigrant's face, hair, neck, and hands. The doctor wielded a piece of chalk to mark the nametags of those who were to be detained for further medical inspection. Roughly 20 percent of the immigrants had their nametags so marked.

Sometimes whole groups would be made to bathe with disinfectant solutions before being cleared - not too surprising, considering how many were unable to bathe during the crossing. Next the immigrants encountered a group of doctors known as the dreaded "eye men." They were looking for symptoms of trachoma, an eye disease that might cause blindness and even death. This disease was the reason for more than half of the medical detentions, and its discovery meant certain deportation. This inspection was over in a few seconds, as the doctor tilted the immigrant's head back and swiftly snapped back the upper eyelids over a small instrument that was actually a hook for buttoning shoes. If immigrants had any of the diseases proscribed by the immigration laws, or were too ill or feeble-minded to earn a living, they would be deported.

Roughly two percent of the immigrants seeking refuge in America who made it as far as Ellis Island failed to be admitted. Disability or disease, particularly trachoma, were the main reasons for not allowing entry. Sick children aged 12 and over were sent back to Europe alone and released in the port they had originally departed from. Younger children had to be accompanied by a parent. We can only imagine the tearful scenes as the mother and father decided who was to accompany the sick child back to the embarkation port, perhaps never to see the rest of the family again. Even worse, sending sick teenagers alone back across the ocean often meant certain death for the youngsters from disease, starvation or neglect.

Immigrants who passed their medical exams were now ready to take the final test from the "primary line" inspector, seated on a high stool with the ship's manifest on a desk in front of him and an interpreter at his side. This questioning process was designed to verify the 29 items of information contained in the manifest for each passenger. Since each inspector had only about two minutes in which to decide whether each immigrant was "clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to land," nearly all of the immigrants received curt nods of approval and were handed landing cards. They were then free to leave, settle in this strange new land, and raise families. Many of us are thankful that our ancestors "passed the test."

If you want to research your ancestors' passage through Ellis Island, you will be glad to know that all the records were preserved and are available for inspection today. Even better, you do not need to visit Ellis Island to view them. Space on the island has always been limited; the records were removed within days of the immigrants' entry and then stored in government filing cabinets on the mainland. In later years all the records were microfilmed, and thousands of copies are available. You can probably find microfilm copies near you. If not, you can rent the reels of microfilm at very modest costs.

Many of the Ellis Island records have also been transcribed into computer databases and are available on the Internet at <http://www.EllisIsland.org>. Images of the original records are also available online. With a bit of patience, you may find your ancestor in those records. For more information about Ellis Island, go to <http://www.ellisland.org>.