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Phillips DNA News

www.phillipsdnaproject.com

August 2013

Volume 5 Issue 8

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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

Here are some questions of general interest we have received by email from various participants over the years.

Question:

How does one request a kit for someone else? Doesn't the individual have to do the requesting? How is the kit delivered? Can it be "drop shipped" to the person taking the test?

Answer:

To order a kit from Family Tree DNA for someone else, just fill in his name, address and telephone number on the registration form. Be sure to order his kit through our Phillips DNA Project so that you will receive the discounted prices. Include your email address on the form as well as his so that you will get notices from Family Tree DNA. I recommend that you choose "Invoice" as your form of payment, rather than paying online with your credit card. Select whatever level of test you want. Then click "Continue". On the next page under billing information, fill in your name and address and telephone number. This way the invoice will be sent to you and the kit will be sent to him.

The nice thing about this method is you don't have to actually pay for the kit until the person returns his samples for processing. The lab will notify you by email when he returns his samples and you can then send FTDNA a check or call them and pay by credit card. A few years ago (before I knew better), I ordered a kit for my great uncle and paid for it with my credit card. I did not know about the invoice method. Unfortunately, my great uncle got cold feet and refused to take the test after I had paid for it. Fortunately, I found another family member who agreed to take the test.

Although you can order and pay for a kit to be delivered to someone else, Family Tree DNA will not allow you to upgrade someone else's existing test without his permission. This is because FTDNA is trying to protect everyone's privacy. For example, when someone matches someone else with a different last name, it might be natural to want the other person to upgrade his test to see if you still match at a higher number of markers. However, some people do not want to know if there was a possible non-paternal event in their paternal line! If you were allowed to upgrade someone's test without his permission, you would be violating his desire to remain in blissful ignorance.

Question:

I keep receiving notices of matches from FTDNA, but when I go to my personal page, I can't figure out who my new match is because my newest matches are no longer listed first. The match dates are all jumbled up.

Answer:

You can sort the various columns on your match page by clicking on the underlined heading at the top of the column. If you click on the underlined header that says Match Date, the column will sort to show your oldest matches first. If you click on the header a second time, the column will sort again to show your newest matches first.

Question:

What is a gedcom file? The FTDNA site tells me to upload my gedcom file but it does not tell me what a gedcom file is other than a way for people who seem to know what they are doing to share information. It tells me to browse for it, and I don't even know if I have it.

Answer:

A gedcom is created from special genealogical software that is not normally found on computers unless you upload it. Gedcom is an acronym for "genealogical data communication" and it was developed by the Mormons, who are really into genealogy. Most genealogy software programs support importing from and/or exporting to gedcom formats.

Question:

My mother will be 92 on her birthday this year. Before the inevitable happens, would it benefit me or other researchers to have her mtDNA tested?

Answer:

I say yes, although mtDNA is not very useful for genealogy at the current time. However, I believe scientists will discover more and better tests as time goes on, and for that reason, it would be good to have your mother's DNA in storage somewhere. FTDNA promises to keep DNA samples in storage for 25 years.

Question:

A lady friend of my wife asked us today if DNA could be used to prove or disprove whether or not she has American Indian ancestry and if so, what tribal group. She has an old family history of Cherokee descendancy and has not been able to prove it.

Answer:

Y-DNA analysis can indicate whether or not your straight paternal line is Native American and mtDNA can indicate whether or not your straight maternal line is Native American, but neither can identify the tribe. If the lady is not sure which one of her lines is Native American, she can take something called an autosomal test. However, if she is less than 10% Native American, the autosomal test may not detect it, because it is a random sample test of all of your DNA. Also, the autosomal test can't tell you which tribe. Basically, not enough Native Americans have been tested thus far to be able to distinguish the small differences between the different tribes. As more and more Native Americans get tested, I think scientists will begin to figure it out.

Question:

My Y-DNA signature is very close to that of another man's Y-DNA signature. It differs on only 2 markers out of 37, one black and one red. My question is how long ago did our common paternal ancestor live?

Answer:

Y-DNA tests cannot tell the precise person who was the earliest known paternal ancestor of two people who match on 35 out of 37 markers. The best Y-DNA can do is give you a range of years within which the common paternal ancestor most probably lived. You can utilize the TiP Report provided by FTDNA to compare your Y-DNA with someone else's Y-DNA. Here is an example of a TiP comparison for two men in our Phillips DNA Project who mismatch on 2 markers out of 37 markers:

COMPARISON CHART

Generations	Percentage
4	28.94%
8	68.67%
12	89.14%
16	96.71%
20	99.08%
24	99.76%

What this chart says is these two men have a 99.76% probability of sharing a common paternal ancestor sometime between now and 24 generations ago. There is only a 0.24% chance that he lived longer than 24 generations ago. Note that this does NOT mean that there is a 99.76% chance the common paternal ancestor lived 24 generations ago. Instead, there is a 99.76% chance he lived sometime BETWEEN now and 24 generations ago.

Question:

Someone in my Phillips family group mismatches the group on 2 markers out of the first 12 markers, but matches perfectly on the second panel (markers 13 through 25). This makes me wonder about all the people only testing 12 markers. What does this mean for accuracy and for those not placed in a group based only on a 12 marker test? Are there other people who could be grouped together if they had more markers tested?

Answer:

Probably yes. When my cousin's first 12 markers came back from the lab, he was a 10/12 match with a man in the project who had only tested 12 markers. I wanted to group them together since their Phillips ancestors both lived in the same locality, but FTDNA advised against it. They told me it is unusual for two men to be related within a genealogically significant time frame if they only match on 10 out of the first 12 markers. However, a year later, the man upgraded to 37 markers, and lo and behold, he matched my family group at the higher resolution!

So I think it is quite possible (even likely) we have some 12 marker people in the project who have not been properly grouped. However, if you study the results on the DNA chart that shows the family groups, you will note there are indeed very few men who mismatch by more than one marker out of the first 12 markers, but who go ahead and match on a higher number of markers. Therefore, I think FTDNA is right about their general rule, which simply says if two men mismatch on 2 out of the first 12 markers, they are only possibly related within a genealogically significant time frame.

Question:

Please explain "genealogically relevant or significant time frame" in terms of generations.

Answer:

According to FTDNA, a genealogically relevant or significant time frame means 15 generations or less. A generation is usually considered to be 25 to 30 years for calculation purposes. Therefore, 15 generations equals approximately 375 to 450 years.

Here is a chart from FTDNA showing the interpretation of Y-DNA relationships at each testing level for relevant genetic distances:

	Y-DNA12	Y-DNA25	Y-DNA37	Y-DNA67	Y-DNA111	Interpretation
Very Tightly Related	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	Your exact match means your relatedness is extremely close. Few people achieve this close level of a match. All confidence levels are well within the time frame that <u>surnames</u> were adopted in Western Europe.
Tightly Related	N/A	N/A	1	1-2	1-2	Few people achieve this close level of a match. All confidence levels are well within the time frame that surnames were adopted in Western Europe.
Related	0	0-1	2-3	3-4	3-5	Your degree of matching is within the range of most well-established surname lineages in Western Europe. If you have tested with the Y-DNA12 or Y-DNA25 test, you should consider upgrading to additional STR markers. Doing so will improve your time to common ancestor calculations.
Probably Related	1	2	4	5-6	6-7	Without additional evidence, it is unlikely that you share a common ancestor in recent genealogical times (1 to 6 generations). You may have a connection in more distant genealogical times (less than 15 generations). If you have traditional genealogy records that indicate a relationship, then by testing additional individuals you will either prove or disprove the connection.
Only Possibly Related	2	3	5	7	8-10	It is unlikely that you share a common ancestor in genealogical times (1 to 15 generations). Should you have traditional genealogy records that indicate a relationship, then by testing additional individuals you will either prove or disprove the connection. A careful review of your genealogical records is also recommended.
Not Related	3	4	6	>7	>10	You are not related on your Y-chromosome lineage within recent or distant genealogical times (1 to 15 generations).

Featured Phillips Family Story

The Four Sons of Bennet Phillips

By Valerie Phillips Gildehaus, Phillips Family DNA Group 7

[Editor's note: The following article was written by Valerie Gildehaus for the July 2008 Phillips DNA Project's newsletter and we are reprinting it here with Valerie's permission. Recently her Group 7 received a match with a man who traces his Phillips line back to Richard Phillips, the son of Thomas Phillips who was born in Somerset County, Maryland, on 12 March 1675. Valerie's brother traces back to William Phillips, who was another son of Thomas Phillips. This is the earliest DNA-confirmed match in Group 7.]

I grew up in a very small town (1,100) in Southern Illinois where being a Phillips was like being royalty. My father and his brother were lawyers; their father had owned the bank, which he had inherited from his father "Judge" Phillips. When I was young (in the 50's), my Great-Aunt Anne lived in the dilapidated Phillips mansion on the edge of town. Most people probably found it very spooky, but it was just a normal part of our lives. Aunt Anne's husband had lost all his money in the Great Depression, and the house had been left to her in its entirety with all its contents. They had not thrown anything out since the house was built in 1893, so it was packed to the rafters. A few items that stand out were a boxed pair of derringers and newspapers announcing Lincoln's death. When I was about 12, the house and all its contents were sold to pay for my aunt's move to a nursing home. The new owners had a bonfire in the back yard with the pictures and letters and sold all the antiques to dealers who came from all over.

When I was 13, we moved to northern Illinois where no one knew the importance of being a Phillips, although that was largely rectified when my father became a prominent Judge in the area. I started doing family research when I was 16, writing a letter to a cousin. I continued on and off through my college years, and was pleased to find that my great-grandfather Judge Winfield Scott Phillips had been included in three different books which contained biographies of prominent residents of Illinois (or those who were willing to pay a fee to get their family in the book). One included the name of Winfield's parents and grandparents and all their children. This was a huge boon when searching a name like Phillips. In my twenty's, I started going to Newberry Library in Chicago where they had census records and DAR records (no on-line stuff in those days and few photocopiers). Among the DAR records I found that Winfield's great-grandfather was Bennet Phillips, a Revolutionary War Veteran.

Over the next few years, I found that Bennet Phillips had a pension for his war service, a will, AND owned land - all very important when dealing with a common name like Phillips. Through these I was able to determine that Bennet was born in Somerset County, Maryland, and lived in Granville County, North Carolina, before he settled in Rutherford County, Tennessee, in 1797. Bennet Phillips had eight children, four of whom were sons. I had the son's names, Samuel Phillips Esq., Richard Newton Phillips, Isaac M. Phillips, and William B. Phillips, but with a name like Phillips it's hard to be sure that you have the right man. In the 1800's in Tennessee, there were at least 2 or 3 Phillips families in every county, and they ALL had a son named William. Samuel and Richard were easy to locate, as I knew they had both lived in Bedford County, Tennessee.

Isaac should have been easy to locate, but he had died before the 1840 census. I did know from Bennet's will that Isaac had left 2 children named Sofrona Jerusha and Isaac William. One day while browsing a book of Tennesseans in Texas, I came across a family that looked promising, but I couldn't be sure - don't you hate it when they used initials!

Cherokee County, Texas, census taken 24th Sept. 1850

Household 22/22

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Value of RE</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>
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W. R. Wadley (m)	32	Carpenter	200	Tenn
E R. Wadley (f)	34			"
Sam P N (m)	7/12			Texas
F. G. Denman (m)	23	Merchant		Georgia
S. J. Denman (f)	14			Tenn
Isaac W. Philips	12			"

In the later 1990's, after we had Internet access, I posted an inquiry about this family on the Cherokee County GenWeb site. Some time later, I received an e-mail from Mansel Phillips, who believed that this was his family, and was delighted to get a lead on where they came from in Tennessee. It turned out that Isaac M. Phillips lived right in the corner of Williamson County, Tennessee, in the area adjoining Rutherford and Bedford Counties. Mansel and I were sure we were cousins, but, again, with a name like Phillips, it's difficult to be 100% sure. In 2005, I decided to venture into the DNA arena and asked my brother to take the test. He was glad to do it, and a few days later I contacted Mansel and asked him if he was interested. He was happy to do it and ordered a kit immediately. I anxiously awaited the results - was all my research going to be thrown out the window? We didn't think so, but we were delighted to get the results - they matched, although not exactly. On the 12 marker test they had a 2-marker difference. This would teach me a lot about the value of a 12 marker match, because when we got the 67-marker results back we had a 3-marker difference and 2 of the mismatches were in the 1st 12 markers.

I knew that Bennet's oldest son Samuel had a number of descendants still living in Bedford County, Tennessee. I had exchanged information with a female descendant whose grandmother was a Phillips. I contacted her to see if she knew any male descendants. She said she went to church with Howard Phillips, who was 88 and had only daughters. She also told me that Howard's brother had been very interested in genealogy, but had passed away the year before. I told her that I would purchase the kit if she would talk to Howard. He was not especially interested in genealogy, but said he would take the test. I anxiously waited, again, (there are an awful lot of Samuel Phillips's, too!) and was thrilled to find that Howard matched my brother 100% on the twelve marker test. Later, we got my brother, Howard and Mansel's 67-marker results and have been able to create a "genetic fingerprint" for Bennet Phillips - 40 years after I had first dabbled in family history.

Bennet's fourth son was named William B. Phillips - an almost impossible name to research. Early in my years of research, I had come upon a book of Rutherford County cemeteries which included a few cemeteries located in southern Davidson County. Among these records was a William B. Phillips who was the right age to be Bennet's son, but how to know for sure?! He looked promising, but I didn't ever expect to solve this one. One helpful thing was that there were two Phillips men buried in the same cemetery with uncommon names - Leonard S. and Richard S. Their birth and death dates were given and their wives were buried with them. About 5 years ago, I took the plunge and subscribed to Ancestry.com. I was able to locate them in the census and other records, and, eventually, was able to get a reliable list of this William B. Phillips' descendants. One of his grandsons was named William Bennett Phillips, so I was almost positive I was on the right track. The family also used the unusual name Richard

Swepton Phillips three times. This really helped with tracking them down in the census. About a year ago, I found that someone had posted a family tree that included Richard Swept Phillips, grandson of William B. Phillips. I contacted the poster and soon got in touch with Joe Phillips. Joe's family had wonderful Bible records, going back to William B. Phillips, but did not have anything on William's father. I wrote Joe a note and asked him if he would be willing to take the test if I supplied the kit. He would! We received the results and Joe was an exact match to my brother!

Now that we have identified the descendants of the four sons of Bennet Phillips, I am ready to turn my attentions to Old Somerset County, Maryland, which includes present-day Wicomico County and part of Sussex County, Delaware. I have an extensive paper trail going back to Roger Phillips who settled there in 1672, and believe there are still descendants in the area. I hope to locate a few who will be willing to take the test. AND the teacher in the room next to mine is a Phillips! I have been working on her to get her father to take the test. Her grandparents were born in England, and I have traced her line back to a small town just 20 miles from Abergavenny, Wales, where I think my Phillips line came from - but that's a different story.

Guest Column

How Do You Research Online?

The following article is from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyrighted 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>.

Employees at all the major online genealogy database providers spend a lot of time and effort watching how users perform searches on the site and analyzing the results. The purpose is to learn and to make future adjustments to the site to improve search capabilities. Those who monitor and analyze users say they have noticed that genealogy newcomers typically perform searches in a very different manner than do the "old pros." I suspect the experienced users typically end up with more productive results, although no statistics are available to prove that assumption.

Genealogy newcomers typically search everything at once. For instance, when looking for records on a particular ancestor, newbies typically enter the person's name into the search field and then search through everything at once. If the person has a rather unusual name, that might work. However, most of the time, the newcomer receives hundreds or even thousands of "hits," can't filter out the ones of interest, loses interest, and then goes elsewhere.

In contrast, the experienced genealogists usually FIRST search for the smallest piece of the many databases as possible.

For instance, the more experienced user will generally enter the name of interest, then perhaps specify only one database (such as the census records for one year), specify only one county, and any other parameters available to narrow the search as much as possible. If the search is unsuccessful and doesn't produce the information needed, the experienced user then expands the search just a little bit and tries again. For instance, he or she might add in the previous census or the following census, then search a second time. If unsuccessful this time, the experienced genealogist might start a third search by adding in the adjacent counties. And so on and so on.

Bit by bit, the experienced genealogist typically expands the search by a small amount each time. All of the search parameters are based upon what the genealogist already knows about the person of interest. Did he likely live in Monroe County? If so, there is no need to search the entire USA at once. Did he serve in the Civil War? If so, there is no need to search for records prior to 1820 and probably not prior to 1830 (on the first search) as he probably wasn't born yet. (Most Civil War soldiers were under the age of 30 although there were numerous exceptions. Very few were 40 years old or older.)

By focusing the first searches on as narrow a geographic area as possible and as narrow a time range as possible, you greatly increase the odds of finding the one person you seek. If unsuccessful in your search, broaden the search area a bit and the years of interest and try again.

I suspect the experienced genealogists have far better results with their online searches than do the newcomers who jump in and search everything, everywhere, at once. Which would you prefer: finding one or two people with your ancestor's name, located in the area where he or she lived, in the years he or she lived there? Or will you find 100 men or women across the country with the same name?