



To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.

For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?

— Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106 B.C.-43 B.C.

One of the advantages of being disorderly is that one is constantly making exciting discoveries.

— A. A. Milne

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Jan., 2006

Want to see your name in print? Submissions welcomed and will be used eventually.
The Editor

A Year of Preservation

by Maureen Taylor

It's that time again. A new year. On January 1st every one I know seems to resolve to change one thing or another about themselves. This year instead of making a set of resolutions that you won't keep make a simple statement. For one year let's try to bring genealogy into our everyday lives. In addition to tracking down the maiden name of great grandmother Mary, I'm going to take control of those other genealogy related tasks that get forgotten such as organizing pictures and paperwork. Here's a list of suggestions for each month.

January

Start the year right and take care of all those family photographs you took during the season. Have you seen the Epson Picture Mate commercial where people are frozen in an active pose because no one has taken time to print their digital images? I laugh every time I see it. It's

all too familiar a scenario in many households. Make a decision to print your digital images or take your film to be processed. Then sit down right away and label them using a writing implement suitable for pictures. See my earlier column "Photographic Memories of the Holidays" for last year's photo resolutions.

February

Valentine's Day makes me think about all the love stories on my family tree. Each marriage represents a tale of passion and sometimes heartache. For instance, I wonder how my grandparents met. My Mom told me about meeting Dad but I never asked my grandmother those important questions. Spend a moment listening to the romantic stories in your family. Write them down, video tape the conversation or tape record it.

March

Here in New England, March is a nasty month of variable weather usually featuring ice and bone numbing cold. What a great time to stay inside putting your photographs in order in acid and lignin free albums or to arrange your family heirlooms. If you need some help, read "Saving Your Family Treasures One Step at a Time."

April

Know any good jokes? April Fools' Day can be a reminder to find out about your ancestors recreational pursuits. Did they attend fraternal organization meetings, play in band, or belong to any local clubs? You can learn more about their leisure activities by interviewing family. My maternal grandpar-

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Denver Central Public Library Seminar

A seminar of broad genealogical and historical interest will be presented on February 26, 2006 by Gary Mokotoff, an internationally recognized speaker on Jewish and Eastern European genealogical research. The seminar, sponsored by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Colorado, will be held at Denver Central Public Library with presentations starting at 9:15 a.m. and continuing through the day until 4:15 p.m.. Major topics will be: Holocaust Research:

Documenting Victims, Locating Survivors; Recent Advances in Jewish Genealogical Research; The Changing Geography of Central and Eastern Europe; and Fundamental of Researching Jewish Families. The two afternoon sessions are particularly designed for a non-Jewish as well as a Jewish audience. For registration forms contact Anne Fendrich, 303-759-9824 or Rita Jo Tensly, 303-758-8260.

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Annual Dues: \$10 Singles; \$12 Family. Membership period is March 1st to April 30th. Those with **UNPAID DUES (after April 30th.)** will not receive the Newsletter. **Send a SASE to receive a current membership card if you do not attend regular meetings.**

Contributions of neatly typed or written stories, requests for/ or giving information, queries, or other information of importance to the membership are welcomed.

The Society disclaims responsibility for statement of fact or opinion made by contributors and will not accept material with obvious errors.

"TRACE YOUR ROOTS WITH DNA,"

by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak and Ann Turner
<http://www.ancestry.com/rd/prodredir.asp?sourceid=20623&key=P4128>

If you're like many of us, you have a bit of a fascination with DNA, but did you know you could use it to explore your family's past?

"Trace Your Roots with DNA" is an easy-to-follow, yet comprehensive guide to using DNA tests for genealogical purposes. Packed with real world examples, it will show you how to solve your own history mysteries. Normally this book retails for \$14.95

The Mesa County Genealogical Society was established in 1980 as a non-profit organization to promote an interest in genealogy. A Newsletter is published in March, June, September, and December. **Note: All Society meetings are held at the Museum of Western Colorado 7:00 p.m., on the second Thursday of each month.** Visitors are welcome. The Museum is located at 4th and Ute. The meetings are held in the conference room located in the Whitman School Building.

February 2006

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March 2006

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April 2006

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A New Year

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ent's and their extended family used to entertain themselves with musical evenings of song and dance. I know this because my mother and her sisters told me stories about them.

May

Plant some genealogical seeds in your children's minds. In "Why Genealogy is Important to Kids," I explored some reasons why family history and kids is a natural match.

June

How about taking a few moments to look at the photos and papers that have accumulated during the school year? Ask your child to help decide what to discard and get them talking about their

Ancestor's And Alcohol

Alcohol has always been an important part of American history. For example: The Puritans loaded more beer than water onto the Mayflower before they cast off for the New World.

While there wasn't any cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, or pumpkin pie to eat at the first Thanksgiving, there may have been beer, brandy, gin, and wine to drink. A brewery was one of Harvard College's first construction projects so that a steady supply of beer could be served in the student dining halls.

The early colonialists made alcohol beverages from, among other things, carrots, tomatoes, onions, beets, celery, squash, corn silk, dandelions, and gold-enrod.

The production of rum became early Colonial New England's largest and most prosperous industry.

Tavern owners enjoyed higher social status than did the clergy during part of the Colonial period.

The laws of most American colonies required towns to license suitable persons to sell wine and spirits and failure

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memories. "School's Out for Summer" offers other suggestions for keeping on top of the mess.

July

During those hot moist summer days watch out for temperature and humidity damaging your heirlooms. Color photographs left in a stack can end up stuck together just from fluctuations in those two environmental issues. If you're storing things in a hot attic or damp basement it's definitely time to get those boxes of heirlooms in a stable area like an indoor closet. Consult the useful tips in "Protected from the Elements: Storing Heirlooms at Home."

August

Every two years my husband's family has a reunion. It's fun for kids and the adults like seeing each other. The lazy hazy days at the end of the summer are good for getting together with relatives. Plan a small family barbeque or a large reunion. Ask family to contribute some food and RELAX.

September

Now that the kids are back in school it's time to hit a historical society or two looking for missing family data. Last August I wrote an article about stepping away from your computer to walk into a library or historical society. The response was overwhelming. See what caused the fuss in "Custodians of Our Past" and the follow-up article.

October

I know we just finished with the holiday season, but in October it's time to start planning those family history related holiday gifts. Craft, hobby and scrapbook stores begin thinking about the winter holidays in the summer. Here's an interesting tidbit -- those stories that appear in December magazines are written in July.

November

Ask family to bring a story, heirloom or picture with them to the holiday table to share with relatives. Just watch out for gravy and make sure your hands are

clean. You're bound to learn at least one new fact about your relatives.

December

You've come full circle. It's been a busy year of remembering family and tracking down genealogical information. Congratulate yourself on a job well done and take a rest. There's always next year to make a set of resolutions.

Visit the Local History Room

Treasures in the Local History Rooms
What do local history rooms have that might help in your research? The resources vary from one library to another, but you might find some of these gems:

- * Card indexes to a local newspaper or two
- * Neighborhood, town, city, and county histories
- * Limited publication family histories
- * Manuscript family histories
- * Files of local genealogists
- * Vertical files of miscellaneous items
- * Collection of the local genealogical society
- * Local business information
- * County or city directories
- * Yearbooks for area schools
- * Local organizations records (both current and historical)
- * Church records or abstracts of the records
- * Lists of area residents who served in the military
- * Cemetery records or transcriptions
- * Scrapbooks
- * Maps
- * Photographs
- * Local census records and indexes

Many of these items are one-of-a-kind resources and are not even micro-filmed. I have found that lots of these rooms have the material and books on open shelves. If you are lucky, there might even be a copier in the room.

My Ancestor's John Hancock

Whether he signed with a flourish, scribbled out a scrawl, or literally made his mark, seeing your ancestor's "signature" provides a different perspective especially when pictures and images are not available. This week we look at some places where you might find traces of your ancestor's handwriting among the records.

Wills

If your relative left a last will and testament, the original document may have been filed for record along with other loose papers. These materials are usually grouped together in a packet or case file. The actual will should contain your ancestor's signature (or at least his mark). In some areas, the will record is actually a transcription of the will which unfortunately also contains a transcription of your ancestor's signature. If the handwriting of the will looks an awful lot like your ancestor's "signature," then you are probably reading a transcription of the will.

Estate Records

In 1861, Melinda Newman relinquished her right to administer the estate of her deceased husband. She signed the document. Another paper from the estate file contains the signatures of several of her children who were acting as either administrators of the estate or bondsmen. Receipts and other documents in the file could contain signatures of heirs or others with an involvement in the estate.

Court Records

Was your ancestor involved in a court case? If so did he sign any of the documents in the case file? Early court records usually consist of transcriptions of various records, but later materials should contain the actual papers filed while the case was active. If the legal action dragged on over several years, you may find numerous copies of your ancestor's signature.

Petitions

Did your ancestor sign any petitions?

State, regional, or local archives may have copies of various petitions, such as ones to build a new road, establish a new county, remove a county official, etc. The difficulty is that many of these records are unindexed and locating them requires diligence. My own ancestor signed a Maryland petition during the Revolutionary War protesting the selling of real estate by the colonial government. The property being sold was owned by a British subject and rented by my ancestor.

Marriage Records

Your ancestor's marriage record may contain his signature, if the record is relatively recent (early records frequently just list names and dates). If your ancestor served as a bondsman on his relative's marriage bond his signature as bondsman should be included. If your ancestor gave consent for a child to marry, the consent may be simply noted as "parental consent" without even a name specified. If you are lucky, the parent's signature has been scrawled on the record. Consider marriages your ancestor could have witnessed as well. My own ancestor's 1907 marriage contains a sibling of the groom and a sibling of the bride as witnesses. Both signed the marriage license.

Note Holder

Did your ancestor loan money to someone else? If the loan was secured by real estate, a mortgage should have been recorded in the jurisdiction where the property was located. A release of mortgage may have been recorded when the debt was paid, filed in a separate series of documents or perhaps recorded right on the mortgage copy itself. The transcriptions recorded separately likely do not contain your ancestor's signature, but the notation made on the copy might. In this case, the clerk writes a note in the margin of the recorded mortgage indicating that it has been paid. The holder of the note signs under the clerk's note, right in the record book indicating that the property is now free and clear. Antje Fecht signed such a release on a mortgage to her son-in-law in Illinois in the 1890s. It was a

great place for me to get my third great-grandmother's signature.

Pension Records

If your ancestor filed for a pension, there's a good chance his signature is on one of the application papers. In some cases, there may be many copies of his signature throughout the file. If his widow later filed for a widow's pension, her signature may also appear in the same set of documents.

World War I Draft Cards

Was your ancestor of an age to register for this draft? If so, his signature should appear at the bottom of his card. All of these cards are available to the public via microfilm and are now indexed and available to Ancestry.com subscribers.

World War II Draft Cards

Was your ancestor required to register for the World War II draft? Cards are available to any interested person for men born between 28 April 1877 and 16 February 1897 and were mentioned in an earlier column. Draft cards after that date are available subject to restrictions from the Selective Service Administration and were also mentioned in an earlier column.

SS-5 Applications

If your ancestor completed their own SS-5 form (Application for a Social Security and Tax Account Number), their signature should be at the bottom of the form. These forms are available from the Social Security Administration for any deceased individual with a social security number. More information about obtaining copies of the SS-5 forms can be obtained here.

Birth Records

If your ancestor's birth was recorded in a timely fashion, she likely did not sign the record, regardless of how precocious she was. However, you may find that your relative's parents signed the relative's birth certificate. It happened. This signature will not be obtained if you receive a transcription of the record instead of an actual copy. My birth certificate has my mother's signature. The copy I obtained when I first started genealogy is

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John Hancock

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a copy of the actual record, including Mom's signature. The copy I obtained as proof of citizenship is simply a transcription of the document (minus Mom's signature). My oldest daughter's birth certificate has the signatures of both her parents, not just the mother. Record keeping practices do change over time (I did not have to sign my youngest daughter's birth certificate, but was required to sign the oldest one's because I was named as the father). If your ancestor obtained a delayed certificate, his own signature likely is included. Signatures of other relatives may also appear in delayed birth recordings.

Death Certificates

If your ancestor signed his own death certificate, I'd love to see a copy! The more likely scenario is that a family member was an informant on a relative's death record and signed the document. Knowing the name of the informant on a relative's death record is usually enlightening as it puts the information provided in perspective. It is even better when the signature is that of one of your ancestors.

Home Sources

Letters, diaries, and other materials in your home (or your relatives' homes) may contain the signature of your ancestor and even more of her handwriting. Greeting cards are another good source of more recent ancestral signatures.

Extended Family Approach

It has been hinted at in some of the record sources mentioned, but records on your ancestor's siblings or cousins may contain her actual signature. This is particularly true for those records where siblings might have had to provide testimony or signed an affidavit. Some military pension files are full of signatures of other family members (in addition to neighbors, justices of the peace and other individuals).

Other Places

We have scratched the surface of places where your ancestor may have literally "left his mark." Considering searching for your ancestor's handwriting. You may learn more about her than just how she crossed her "t."

Michael John Neill is the Course I Coordinator at the Genealogical Institute

of Mid America (GIMA) held annually in Springfield, Illinois, and is also on the faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois. Michael is currently a member of the board of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (www.fgs.org). He conducts seminars and lectures nationally on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including *Ancestry Magazine* and *Genealogical Computing*. You can e-mail him at mjnrootdig@myfamily.com or visit his website at: www.rootdig.com, but he regrets that he is unable to assist with personal research.

Michael John Neill will be speaking at the following upcoming events:

- * Lee County Genealogy Workshop, Ft. Myers, Florida, 28 January 2006
- * Genealogy Computing Workshops, Galesburg, Illinois, 6-11 March 2006
- * Research Trip to Salt Lake City Utah, 17-24 May 2006

More information on these events can be linked to from www.rootdig.com/schedule.html.

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And the Question Is: To DNS or Not To DNA

I have been hesitant of DNA Testing in the past. It has always been one of those things that I questioned because of privacy issues. But as I get older and realize that it becomes increasingly more difficult to link to certain relatives and establish family ties because of loss of family and information. So, I have come to the conclusion that DNA may be the only way to establish those ties. I have been able to find several Sheldon's who shared the same patriarch. But none of us have been able to trace our ancestry past our mutual Grandfather. Our line begins and dies in 1789. No siblings, no parents, no nothing. There is a large family or-

ganization built entirely on the Sheldon line based on certain family members. But neither I or any of my family cousins are able to join or use any of the information available, because we cannot not link to this original English family. We (my Sheldon Family) all trace our ties back to one man and that is as far as it goes. DNA testing may be our only answer. Because there are several males of the line we should all share the same DNA. There have been some Sheldon's who have already done some testing. With our joint DNA results we should be able to see where our ancestors crossed paths if those paths exist. And hopefully establish

family ties that currently we are unable to. Now I realize that DNS may not give us the answers we are looking for, and may not even give us the links to the original Sheldon Family, but without it we are in the same quandary that exists now. Stuck in 1789 in New Jersey with nothing. So this March at the Family History Fair I will be signing up for the DNA clinic, getting my discount coupon along with a brother and my son getting our DNS results and hopefully resolving a genealogy mystery with the results of DNA testing.

The editor

Ancestral Signatures: Part II

Many readers responded to the recent column on ancestral signatures. Readers who missed this column can view it here. Additional sources of signatures were mentioned, including declarations of intent and autograph books. In a nutshell, any paper your ancestor might have written on could contain his signature. The difficulty is in finding that paper!

It was noted that your ancestor's occupation may have resulted in numerous examples of his signature. Census enumerators, county clerks, record keepers, justices of the peace, judges and others may have left their signature (and numerous examples of their handwriting) in many permanently recorded materials.

Uses of Signatures

Several readers wrote in with creative ways they use their relative's signatures. Some scan at least one signature of every ancestor and use it in addition to or in place of a photograph in their genealogical database. Others have created family trees using signatures instead of pictures. Additional ideas included creating chronologies of signatures showing the change over the years.

There are other ways to use ancestral signatures. From a research standpoint, signatures are often used to distinguish between two individuals with the same first and last name. The difficulty lies in obtaining information on your ancestor where the actual paper he signed was retained instead of being transcribed and recorded in that fashion by the clerk. In locations and time periods where it is impossible to obtain a precise date of birth for an individual, linking a "name" to a physical signature may be one way to separate out two seemingly indistinguishable people.

Our Ancestor's Handwriting

Most of the time the only writing we have on a document from our ancestor is his signature, but we often have nothing for comparison. Our ancestor probably did not actually write out his own will or fill in the blanks on his draft card. Someone else did. This reality increases the difficulty in reading the name if the handwriting is questionable. In many cases, there may be no other writing of the individual with which to compare the signature. A technique used by many genealogists with some documents is to read several pages of records written by the same person so that those writings can be compared to a specific entry or name that is questionable. Most of us cannot do that with an ancestral signature. Compounding the difficulty is that clerk may have been taught a different style of writing from our ancestor, if our ancestor even had formal schooling.

Time Plays a Role

Your ancestor's handwriting might have changed over his lifetime, especially if the signatures cover a fifty year time span. A marriage bond may have been signed when the individual was hale and healthy. A will may have been signed when the person in question was in very ill health. The result is signatures that may look very distinct. Perhaps even different enough that one suspects another person actually signed the record. As with any document, remember we are not privy to exactly what was transpiring when a document was written or signed or how healthy the signer was. All we have is the document; the circumstances under which it was signed have pretty much been lost to history.

Spelling, Schmelling

Our ancestor might not have known how to spell his name. He might not have cared if he spelled it consistently from one record to another. He might not have cared if it were spelled different ways on the same document, as-

suming he could even read the paper he signed. To some today the variations seem significant (and sometimes they may provide clues as to how the ancestor might have pronounced the name). However, the alternate spellings on the same document were likely irrelevant due to the concept of idem sonans.

According to Black's Law Dictionary, idem sonans means, "sounding the same or alike; having the same sound." A term applied to names which are substantially the same, though slightly varied in the spelling.

Your ancestor (unless he had a legal background) did not know what idem sonans meant. But idem sonans is why there was no problem when a man is deeded land under the name of James Ramply and sells the same land under the name of James Rampley.

Today most of us are pretty obsessive about having our names spelled correctly on various documents and in various databases. Our ancestors were not as concerned and even their own spelling might have reflected it.

Similar Signatures

There is always the chance that what you think is your ancestor's signature is not actually his signature. An early nineteenth century Fleming County court case contains the signatures of my ancestor Enoch Tinsley and his father James. The writing looks extremely similar. So similar that I think there is a reasonable chance that one person signed both names (I have joked that they had the same second grade teacher, but that is extremely unlikely). One person likely signed both names.

I have encountered this more than once. There are two separate occurrences of the signature of my ancestor Sarah (Gibson) Rampley in Harford County, Maryland, and several different instances of her husband James' signature. On a document where both sign, Sarah makes her mark and James signs his name. On an earlier document involving Sarah's inheritance, Sarah's signature appears. Interestingly enough,

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Family History Fair March 3-4 2006

Family History Fair Events

"Genealogists Travel Through Time" is the theme of the 2006 Family History Fair on March 3rd and 4th 2006. This fair will celebrate the 15th Anniversary of Family History Fairs in Grand Junction.

Several special event are planned to celebrate this Anniversary. A Transportation Parade of Early-day Vehicles - "How our Grandparents and Great Grandparents Traveled" Friday afternoon at 3:00 PM.

"Tracing Your Family Through DNA" Presented by the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation of Salt Lake City with classes Friday evening and the Key-note Address Saturday Morning.

Dave Fishell will help participants get the most out of the Family History Fair.

His address: A Fair Story -Western Colorado's Unknown Hero Friday evening March 3rd.

Putting your veteran's history in the archives of the "Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, Washington DC" presented by Don Norton from BYU.

"Genealogy Paraphernalia" a special exhibit featuring many different way that people share their family histories and traditions. For example: a quilt or wall hanging, embroidered sampler or picture, photograph, paintings, carving or sculpture, family recipes of years gone by, family transportation, toys or tools of earlier generations, or other things that we haven't yet thought of. There is a website where more information will be posted regularly: www.talkingdigital.org/familyhistoryfair/

There are over 20 different exhibitors and more than 20 different teachers with over 30 classes available Friday evening and from 8:30 to 4:30 Saturday. A syllabus will also be available for pre-purchase the latter part of February.

Food will be available Friday evening by pre-ordering and pre-payment and food

will be available on demand Saturday.

Class schedules will be available not later than mid February. Call 970-242-6969 or

970-242-1044 for more information.

Classes, speakers, exhibitors and class schedules will be posted as soon as they are available.

Tracing Your Family Through DNA

The Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation will be returning to the Grand Junction Family History Fair, March 3-4, 2006.

The Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation is a Utah based project that travels the world collecting DNA and genealogies to create the worlds largest genetic genealogical database. Submission to the study is free. Participants must be at least 7 years of age and older, provide a computer printed four generation chart complete with dates and locations of birth for themselves, their two parents, four grandparents and eight great-grandparents, and they must sign a consent form. Submission of more than four generations for each is strongly suggested. Please provide a CD or disk with the GEDCOM or PAF file of the additional generations of genealogy.

Participation is painless re-

quiring only a simple mouth-wash rinse.

The SMGF Y-Chromosome (paternal line) public database is available for querying. First you must obtain your own genetic information from a commercial company. Once you have your own genetic results in-hand you can use that information to search the Y-Chromosome database to find genetic matches and review pedigrees submitted of individuals born in the 1800s and earlier. You can use this information to help you extend and confirm pedigree information or to help you find genealogical links that have been blocked due to a non-paternal events or adoptions.

Everyone who meets the requirements for participation and completes their donation will receive a coupon for discounted testing with a commercial company called Relative Genetics. The coupon allows you to receive a 26 Marker Y-Chromosome Paternal Line Analysis or a mtDNA Maternal Line Analysis for \$95.

Those who may not make it to the Family History Fair this year may participate in the program by visiting the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation website at <http://www.smgf.org/>.

HONORING OUR ANCESTORS: "DNA DATABASE DIVING,"

by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak
In my last article (<http://www.ancestry.com/rd/prodredir.asp?sourceid=20623&key=A1073801>) on genetic genealogy (which I like to shorten to 'genetealogy'), I explained that many of us have already been DNA tested by proxy, even if we're not aware of it! Because of the way Y-DNA is passed down through family trees (that is, essentially the same way as surnames), one man's sample can represent countless cousins, both living and deceased. Consequently, I provided some suggestions for finding out whether you're one of the lucky people who's already been tested by virtue of a male relative of the same surname already having taken the plunge into the world of genetealogy. In this follow up, I'll share a collection of online resources for extracting a bit more meaning from your results -- that pile of numbers that looks like some sort of parts list (also known as a 'haplotype'). I hope this will prove use-

ful for those of you who have recently taken a test and aren't sure where to go from here. And of course, this is also for those fortunate ones who have just discovered that they've already been tested by proxy.

THE MATCHMAKING GAME

The pile of numbers you receive after testing is not especially meaningful in and of itself. Its value comes through what I like to think of as a matchmaking game. When you search a conventional genealogy database for entries that match the known details of one of your ancestors, you're involved in a matchmaking quest. You enter a name and perhaps a date or location and hope to find results that are a perfect or, at least, a very close fit.

The same applies with genetic genealogy. There are a number of databases, both public and private, where you can enter your results in the hope of finding perfect or, at least, close matches. Fortunately, some of them are quasi-

automated so you can either upload your numbers with the press of a button or just enter them one time and save them for future use. This is a handy feature because, like all databases, they grow over time and you'll want to check back from time to time to see if any fresh matches have appeared.

THREE LAYERS

When you receive your results, there are essentially three layers of analysis you can perform. You can play the matchmaking game in:

- your own project
- your testing company's proprietary database, and/or
- public access databases

Some are content to stop at the first level, but most genealogists are curious souls, so we can't help but explore for more insight.

YOUR OWN PROJECT

Most current projects are surname-focused (although as I explained in the last article, there are a growing number of geographically- and ethnically-oriented projects), so it's logical that the first step you'll take is to compare results with others of the same surname within your project. Most project managers make this easy for participants by providing color-coded charts on their websites, such as this example:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~grannyapple/SHIELDS%20DNA/DNA%20Test%20Results.html>

You can simply scan them, look for your own results (usually listed under the name of the earliest known ancestor in that line or some sort of code), and inspect others in the same color. Any differences between your numbers and those of your neighbors are generally highlighted in some way so they're easy to spot and you don't have to compare number by number.

Anyone who matches you is now your research buddy because you know that you share a common ancestor at some point. DNA testing can't reveal who that ancestor is, but you now know for sure that your lines converge at some point. And if you're really fortunate, you'll match with someone who's done

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Ancestral Signatures

(Continued from page 6)

the "Rampley" Sarah made on the inheritance paper looks very similar to the "Rampley" James wrote on the document where Sarah made her mark. I am now wondering if the signatures were made by the same person. At any rate, they are extremely alike.

Remember that interpreting handwriting also requires you to know your ancestor's ethnic background. A native born German was taught a different style of writing from his contemporary growing up in rural Kentucky. Readers who would like to try their hand at reading handwriting can view twenty samples (with answers) that have been posted on my site.

Michael John Neill is the Course I Co-

ordinator at the Genealogical Institute of Mid America (GIMA) held annually in Springfield, Illinois, and is also on the faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois. Michael is currently a member of the board of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (www.fgs.org). He conducts seminars and lectures nationally on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including Ancestry Magazine and Genealogical Computing. You can e-mail him at mjnrootdig@myfamily.com or visit his website at www.rootdig.com, but he regrets that he is unable to assist with personal research.

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"DNA DATABASE DIVING,"

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a lot more research than you!

TESTING COMPANY'S DATABASE

Even if your project lacks a dedicated website, the company you test with will notify you of any matches within your project or throughout its entire proprietary database. This assumes, of course, that you have signed the release form that allows the company to play matchmaker on your behalf. All this release permits the company to do is to seek matches and provide an email address to both parties when one is found.

Just as you might send an e-mail to someone who's posted a branch of your family tree online, you'll want to contact those who match you to compare notes. There is one caveat, however. As you peruse your project's results, you'll discover that haplotypes behave much like surnames in that some are more common than others. Some will have lots of matches -- almost the genetic equivalent of being a Smith -- while others will find that their results are very rare.

If your results are rare, by all means, contact your genetic mates. For instance, my father's Y-DNA is quite rare and has sat forlorn and matchless since 2001. Just when conducting research for this article, though, I discovered his first match -- a fellow from Poland. Did I email him? You bet.

But if your haplotype is very common, you might want to be more selective, just as you might think twice before emailing hundreds of Smiths. In fact, those with common haplotypes might want to consider upgrading to a higher resolution test to narrow the field of matches.

PUBLIC ACCESS DATABASES

When genealogy first came into being back in 2000, what I've outlined above were essentially our only analysis options -- that, and a scientific database (<http://www.yhrd.org>) that genealogists tripped across and started using for our own purposes. Since then, several other databases have emerged. Now when you get your results, you can enter them at any or all of the following to see if any additional

matches or other information are revealed:

YHRD: (<http://www.yhrd.org>) A database

for the scientific community that furnishes no genealogical data, but can be used for indications of geographic origin.

YBase: (<http://www.ybase.org>) Sponsored by DNA Heritage (<http://www.dnaheritage.com>), but open to all regardless of which company you tested with. Can be searched by haplotype or surname, and has some fun features such one that plots your matches on a map.

YSearch: (<http://www.ysearch.org>) Sponsored by Family Tree DNA (<http://www.familytreedna.com>), but open to all regardless of which company you tested with. Can also be searched by haplotype and surname and includes useful features such as the ability to attach a GEDCOM to your results.

SMGF: (<http://www.smgf.org>) This is where the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation (a topic for its own article) shares results, including pre-1900 pedigrees, from its worldwide study. Some of you may have participated if you gave a blood or mouthwash sample at a genealogical event over the last few years. You can add to the database (for free) by requesting a kit by mail and submitting it with your pedigree.

Yfiler: (<http://www.appliedbiosystems.com/yfilerdatabase/>) Another non-genealogical database that we've co-opted because of its ability to provide population group affiliation.

HAPPY DIVING!

For those of you who go database diving, I wish you good luck with your quest for genetic cousins. For those of you who would like to learn more, please explore my mini-library of articles on this topic at: http://honoringourancestors.com/library_dna.html

For those of you still pondering whether to dip your toe into the waters of genealogy, I know quite a few people who have requested a test for a birthday or other special event (hint, hint!). And

finally, in a shameless plug for my own DNA projects, please consider contacting me if you have roots in Osturná, Slovakia or are interested in exploring any of the following surnames: Nelligan (Neligan, etc.), Motichka (Motyczka, etc.), Reynolds and Shields.

Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak, co-author (with Ann Turner) of "Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree"

Home Brew

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to do so could result in a fine.

Colonial taverns were often required to be located near the church or meeting-house.

Religious services and court sessions were often held in the major tavern of Colonial American towns.

A traveler through the Delaware Valley in 1753 compiled a list of the drinks he encountered: all but three of the 48 contained alcohol.

The first Kentucky whiskey was made in 1789 by a Baptist minister.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence in a tavern in Philadelphia.

George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson all enjoyed brewing or distilling their own alcohol beverages. George Washington was one of the country's first large commercial distillers.

The Colonial Army supplied its troops with a daily ration of four ounces of either rum or whiskey.

The heavy taxation of whiskey led to the first test of federal power, the Whiskey Rebellion (1794).

In the 1830's the average American aged 15 or older consumed over seven gallons of absolute alcohol (resulting from an average of 9 1/2 gallons of spirits, 1/2 gallon of wine, and 27 gallons of beer), a quantity about three times the current rate.

Abraham Lincoln held a liquor license and operated several taverns.

"Have You Already Been DNA-Tested?"

by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak

A few months ago, I was interviewed as part of an "expert panel" on the future of genealogy. Not surprisingly, I spouted off about my confidence in the ever-growing role of genetic genealogy, which I like to condense to 'genetealogy.'

EYE-OPENER

When the article came out, I received a bit of an education. Others had remarked that genetealogy wouldn't be much of a factor until the databases of genetic data were as large as those of genealogical data -- until the entries numbered in the millions as they do at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org and so forth.

It was only then that I realized for the first time that many -- and possibly most -- genealogists are unaware of an important, fundamental aspect of genetealogy. While it's true that genetic databases are measured in the thousands rather than millions, each person whose results are included is representing tens or hundreds of relatives by proxy. In other words, the DNA databases are far beefier than their absolute numbers would seem to indicate.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

This might be a good time to back up a bit for a quick refresher. For those who are new to genetealogy, it helps to know that Y-DNA testing is by far the most popular. Only men have a Y-chromosome and it's passed intact from father to son down through the generations. It travels through the centuries and worms its way through our family trees essentially the same way that surnames do, and that's why surname projects are such a popular application.

Simply put, Y-DNA and surnames go hand-in-hand. Because of this, when one man gets tested, he represents a number of others sporting the same surname. His father, brothers, paternal uncles, and paternal cousins (both living and back in time through the generations) all share the same Y-DNA.

For instance, being female, I don't have Y-DNA, so when I wanted to test the Smolenyak family I was born into, I asked my father. But I could have also turned to one of my brothers, my father's brother, or a male Smolenyak cousin. Similarly, when I wanted to get my maternal grandmother's maiden name (Reynolds) represented in a Reynolds surname project, (<http://www.ftdna.com/public/Reynolds%20Surname%20Y%2DDNA%20Study/>) I sought out a male Reynolds cousin -- in this case, a first cousin once removed -- to take the test.

ONE Y-DNA TEST GOES A LONG WAY

I was curious about the ripple effect of a single DNA sample, so as an experiment, I counted how many people in my family tree were represented by proxy by my father's test. The result? 62.

Of these, 32 are alive. Of course, that figure will grow over time as I continue my research and identify other Smolenyaks -- and as fresh sprouts are added to the branches of our family tree!

On the day I wrote this article, the largest testing company's website indicated that their database contained 47,857 Y-DNA records. If my father is typical, then 47,857 x 62 people have been tested by proxy -- about 2,967,134 people by just one company.

How typical is my father's 62? I have no idea. His family strikes me as fairly average size-wise, but even if we were to assume that his family is three times the average, this one company's database would still hold genetic clues for about a million people. And if his figure is on the low side, who knows how many millions have already been tested-by-cousin and simply don't know it?

WHERE TO DIG?

So how do you find out if you're one of the many whose distant cousin has already swabbed his cheek for your benefit? That's the tricky part. Ideally, in the future, genetic and genealogical databases will merge so that you'll be informed of DNA representation when you search on an ancestor's name in a conventional genealogy database, such as Ancestry World Tree.

Current DNA surname project managers might want to consider using the Post-em feature (<http://www.ancestry.com/rd/prodredir.asp?sourceid=20623&key=A986601>) to add notes to relevant, existing family trees at Ancestry.com to inform others that a genetic project is underway and explain where to go for more information. Doing so could serve as a bit of a bridge for the time being. It's also possible to add a comment when uploading your own trees, although the only examples I can find at present are ones dealing with mtDNA, which focuses primarily on maternal lines (<http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=dnacousins&id=I391>).

But for now, if you want to find out if there's already a project on one or more surnames of interest to you, you'll have to do a little surfing as I explained in an earlier article. (<http://www.ancestry.com/rd/prodredir.asp?sourceid=20623&key=A958201>)

To be thorough, you'll want to explore several DNA testing company sites and one or more of the online public access databases. Also, since the time I wrote this previous article, it's now become possible to search by surname at the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation site (<http://www.smgf.org>). Results come with pedigrees attached, so you can browse them for your ancestors -- a powerful option.

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New Years Resolutions

When with friends, never look at the clock.

Look up old friends. Make new ones. Drink more Scotch. For "malt does more than Milton can/To justify God's ways to man." - A.E. Housman. But, as my father told me, never drink alone; life is together with other people.

Practice what you preach. Better yet, don't preach, just practice.

For every new book you read, read an old one.

It is good to love others, but don't forget to love yourself. Give yourself a

nice, gentle pat on the shoulder from time to harried time. Even with all your sins and hang-ups, you're not such a bad sort. How can you be? God loves you. Rely on grace. Don't dwell on your shortcomings. He'll let you know soon enough when you mess up. Which reminds me:

"If you believe you can damage, believe you can repair!" - Reb Nachman of Breslov, Chasidic master

Make exercise a must, not something you'll do if you have time. Just do it. Ditto, giving to charity. Both will leave you feeling so much better. In body and soul.

Pray more, wish less.

Answer your e-mails only at the end of the day. Or else you'll never get anything done. Save your most productive hours for better things.

Let a smile be your umbrella.

"Whenever you feel like criticizing any one, just remember that all the people in the world haven't had the advantages that you've had." - from the opening page of "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald

"Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried." - Henry David Thoreau

Kiss somebody every day. Yes, your dog is somebody.

When you're down, dress up. Plan ahead, but not too far. "Want to make God laugh? Make plans." - Yiddish proverb

"Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense." - Emerson

Remember that we learn most from our critics. "My disciple Hui is of no help to me. In my words there is nothing which he does not admire." - Confucius Remember people's names. And use them.

Be nice. "Anyone can be accurate and even profound, but it is damned hard work to make criticism charming." - H. L. Mencken

"Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual." - Mark Twain

"Never tell your resolution beforehand, or it's twice as onerous a duty." - John Selden

"Have You Already Been DNA-Tested?"

(Continued from page 10)

And the old standby -- googling a combination of 'DNA' and 'genealogy' and the surname of interest -- will frequently pop up a website dedicated to the relevant project. You might also want to try substituting a location or ethnic group for the surname, as there are more and more such projects. Louis Loccisano's Calabria DNA Project (<http://www.calabriadna.com/>) and Doug Miller's French-Canadian/Acadian/Metis/Cajun Heritage DNA Project (<http://home.earthlink.net/~djmiller/fcdna.html>) are a couple of interesting examples (and if you have any roots in Osturnia, Slovakia, be sure to contact me to join my village study!).

ALREADY TESTED?

What if your surfing reveals that you're one of the lucky ones who have already been tested by proxy? Perhaps you've discovered that other descendants of your direct line great-great-great-grandfather have already participated in a project centered on your surname. If so, congratulations! Now what? You'll definitely want to communicate with the project's manager, and if the contact information is provided, that cousin of yours who was thoughtful enough to

get tested. But if you want to learn still more, scribble down that pile of numbers that represents your DNA results and stay tuned for my next article on online resources for further analysis. That also goes for those of you who have just been tested yourselves and aren't sure what to do next!

P.S. ON ORPHAN HEIRLOOMS

In addition to the orphan heirloom rescues I write about in this column, I'll be sharing still more rescues in an "Ancestry" Magazine column, so I'm on the lookout for more strays. If you have any you'd like to submit, please use the form on my website (http://honoringourancestors.com/HiQFM/apply_orphan.html) to do so.

Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak, co-author (with Ann Turner) of "Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree" (as well as "In Search of Our Ancestors," "Honoring Our Ancestors" and "They Came to America"), can be contacted through <http://www.genetealogy.com> and <http://www.honoringourancestors.com>.

General Land Office Records Back Online

The Bureau of Land Management-Eastern States announced that its General Land Office (GLO) Records Web site is now back online at <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>. Title companies, historians, genealogists, and other interested people can now once again obtain millions of historic land title records from the thirty Public Land States (those States not included in the original 13 Colonies), East and West, dating back to the 1780s. These fascinating and valuable records include homesteads, patents, military warrants, and railroad grants. To date more than 4.2 million records have been scanned and imaged since the project began in 1989. This Web site provides a wealth of historical data and literally tells the story of the settlement of the West.

"The GLO Records Web site is one of the most popular Web sites at the Department of the Interior. The Web site offers customers the ability to easily research and query the GLO database by name, land description, and county, and view and print these historic documents from their homes or offices, saving them time and money," said BLM-Eastern States Director Mike Nedd.

As the BLM completes its first round of Web site reconnections of State-specific information sites, the following other BLM State Office Web sites are also once again available on the Internet: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. In addition, the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Information site is also now available. The Bureau originally disconnected these sites so that site security could be improved.

"We at BLM recognize the impact that

this disconnection has had on our customers, and we thank them for their patience and understanding during this period. The last six months have posed challenges, but making sure that all constituents receive timely information about the agency's actions has been a priority for the entire agency," said Mike Nedd.

The BLM is now concentrating on reconnecting sites that provide interactive non-Indian Trust data and services. Unfortunately, sites of this kind are more complex and time consuming to reconnect. Additional announcements will be made as other sites are reconnected.