

Correcting DNA Misconceptions: Loyalist Susannah Lake's Maiden Name

by Craig Kanalley and Wesley Johnston¹

Abstract

This study uses genetic genealogy, traditional records and the Genealogical Proof Standard to identify the maiden name of Susannah, wife of Loyalist Christopher Lake, as "Cousins," based on autosomal DNA (aDNA) triangulation among dozens of descendants plus Canadian Loyalist records, church and government archival records, census data, and the Loyalist Lake Family DNA project. The research demonstrates that, contrary to common misconceptions, aDNA can be used to verify relationships in the 1700s, even in colonial America, if many descendants join in a focused group project. The limitations of aDNA that hold true for two random testers do not hold true when large numbers of testers from the same ancestors join in a well-focused group project. The paper includes a methodology for future studies. While direct documentary proof is missing, the convergence of DNA, migration patterns, naming patterns, documents and intermarriages provides strong evidence for Susannah's parentage, meeting the Genealogical Proof Standard.

Loyalists Christopher and Susannah Lake

Christopher Lake, in the Queens Loyal Rangers, fought at the battles of Bennington and Saratoga. He survived the first but, along with his brothers, was captured 7 October 1777 at the second.² While the rest of the family had gone to Ernestown in Canada, Christopher and his wife Susannah held on for several years in New York. They ultimately lost their property and joined the family in Canada in 1795 and petitioned for land as Loyalists.

Christopher and Susannah married in New York in the late 1770s, based on the births of their children. No marriage record has yet been found.

What is Known of Christopher

Christopher and his Lake family are well-documented. Here are key documented events.

- 1755-MAY 18: Christopher is baptized at Six Mile Run Dutch Reformed Church in Somerset County, New Jersey, the son of John and Margaret (Snyder) Lake.³
- 1761-NOV 21: King George III grants patent of 5,000 acres in Albany County, New York, to Arent Van Corlaer, Nicholas Lake Junior, James Lake, Thomas Lake and John Lake (Christopher's father).⁴ Most of the family, then living in New Jersey, move to the granted land and engage in the fur trade.

- 1776-OCT: Christopher's father John Lake is taken prisoner and "carried to Cambridge", New York, by rebel militia and compelled to take an oath against the King and pay a bond to restrict him "to lye still".⁵
- 1777: Christopher, in the Queens Loyal Rangers, fights in the Battle of Bennington (16 August) and is captured (7 October) in the second battle of Saratoga.⁶
- 1787-FEB: Christopher's sister Mary's husband James Parrot who has been in Canada for years brings Christopher's parents, brother John Lake and sister Elizabeth, widow of John Hogle killed at the Battle of Bennington to Canada.⁷ All the family petition for and are granted land as Loyalists over the following decades.
- 1795: Christopher's 3 Feb 1807 land petition states he has "resided in this Province since the year 1795" which is when he joined his family in Canada.⁸
- 1820-APR 6: Christopher's dies. *The Kingston Chronicle* (7 April)⁹

DIED,
At Loughborough, on the morning of the 6th
instant, Mr. Christopher Lake, an old settler—
and was 65 years old the day he died.

What is Known of Susannah

Far less is known about Susannah. She was born about 1755-1760 and died between 1797 and 1807. Christopher's 1797 land petition refers to "*wife and 3 children*" (after the other children married or moved out). But his 1807 petition seeks compensation for "*family*", noting "*Your petitioner's family consists of Seven children, the youngest being now of the Age of Sixteen Years*" and makes no mention of his wife.¹⁰

Russ Waller's *United Empire Loyalists* (volume 2, Lennox and Addington) by shows Christopher's wife as "Susan". No primary source has yet been found identifying her maiden name.

Three of Christopher and Susannah's children (Elizabeth, Mary, Aaron) had a daughter Susannah, and one of their children (John) had a daughter Susan. Three children had a son named Christopher.

Children of Christopher and Susannah

Christopher and Susannah had 7 known children. His 1807 land petition, noted above, says he has 7 children, with the youngest 16 years old (thus born about 1791). The 1790 U. S. Census of the Hoosick District of Albany County, New York, shows 1 male aged 16 or older, 2 males under age 16 and 3 females. There should be five females (his wife and four

daughters) and not three, so that maybe two daughters were not home at the time, living with relatives or as servants in other households.¹¹

Is it possible Christopher married more than once? Their second youngest child Aaron had a daughter named Susannah, as did the eldest two children Elizabeth and Mary. So, it does seem likely that Christopher's only wife was Susannah.

The 7 children, ordered by birth estimates, are all verified by Ontario land records.¹²

1. **Elizabeth Lake, born c1779** m. Daniel WALKER
2. **Mary Lake, born c1780** m1. Peter FRIEL, m2. Luke BARRETT
3. **John Lake, born c1782** m. Mary LAUGHLIN
4. **Sarah Lake, born c1784** m. James WARD
5. **Hannah Lake, born c1785** m. Francis TEEPPELL
6. **Aaron Lake, born c1788** m. Elizabeth KELLER
7. **Henrietta Lake, born c1791** m1. George WOOD, m2. Henry WOOD

The Search for Christopher and Susannah's DNA

In this initial study in 2020-2021, over 200 direct descendants of Christopher and Susannah had DNA-tested, with 59 kits uploaded to GEDmatch for deep analysis. All 7 children were represented by these testers. They matched each other on DNA as expected, confirming the 7 children found in traditional records. When tested descendants of multiple children match on the same DNA region, that region is likely Christopher and Susannah's DNA.

Two of the descendants on GEDmatch went back to Christopher and Susannah twice in their trees (pedigree collapse). The testers include 38 descendants of siblings of Christopher Lake, with 14 on GEDmatch for whom Christopher's parents John Lake and Margaret Snyder are the common ancestors. Seven testers descend from Christopher's Aunts and Uncles, with 3 on GEDmatch for whom John Lake's parents Nicholas Lake and Mary Janszen are the common ancestors.

These all help identify DNA regions handed down from Christopher. Here are the number of DNA testers confirmed to descend from each of Christopher and Susannah's children.

- **Elizabeth Lake WALKER** - 18 descendants via 3 children (John, Joshua, Susannah) - 5 on GEDmatch

- **Mary Lake FRIEL BARRETT** - 59 descendants via 6 children (Margaret, Susannah, John, Aaron, Jesse, Lyman) - 20 on GEDmatch
- **John Lake** - 33 descendants via 6 children (Nathaniel, Alexander, Susan, Mary Jane, Sarah, John) - 3 on GEDmatch
- **Sarah Lake WARD** - 51 descendants via 5 children (Mary, William, Christopher, Norton, James) - 18 on GEDmatch
- **Hannah Lake TEEPELL** - 15 descendants via 4 children (John, William, George, Sarah Ann) - 4 on GEDmatch
- **Aaron Lake** - 16 descendants via 7 children (Christopher, William, Clarissa, James, Stephen, Sarah, Moses) - 4 on GEDmatch
- **Henrietta Lake WOOD** - 9 descendants via 3 children (John, Isaac, Sarah) - 5 on GEDmatch

Those closest in generations to Christopher and Susannah provide the largest surviving regions of their DNA. These testers include a 3rd great-granddaughter of Christopher and Susannah through son Aaron (on GEDmatch) and a 3rd great-granddaughter through daughter Hannah (not on GEDmatch). There are 55 4th great-grandchildren, with at least one for each of the seven children (17 on GEDmatch) which includes both testers who go back to them twice - they are 4th great-grandchildren in two ways. There are 109 5th great-grandchildren, with at least one through each of the 7 children (25 on GEDmatch). The remaining 35 testers are 6th great-grandchildren or greater, reducing the usefulness of their DNA to identify DNA from Christopher and Susannah

How do we keep track of them all?

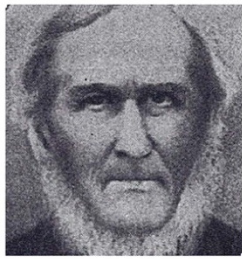
A master spreadsheet includes each DNA tester's, with GEDmatch kit numbers where applicable. The image shows (with living people omitted) part of the spreadsheet.

⇒ Sylvester Moore	⇒ John Moore	⇒ Susannah Friel	⇒ Mary Lake	⇒ Christopher Lake
⇒ Andrew Moore	⇒ John Moore	⇒ Susannah Friel	⇒ Mary Lake	⇒ Christopher Lake
⇒ Sydney Chapman	⇒ Mary Jane Friel	⇒ John Friel	⇒ Mary Lake	⇒ Christopher Lake
⇒ Nancy Hart	⇒ Harriet Friel	⇒ John Friel	⇒ Mary Lake	⇒ Christopher Lake

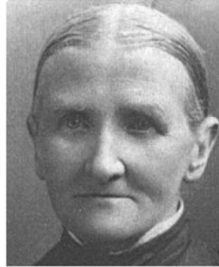
Family Photos: What They Looked Like

There are no photos of Christopher and Susannah. There are photos of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, giving us an idea of facial features in the family.

● **Grandchildren of Christopher and Susannah Lake**



Christopher Lake
Son of Aaron



Sarah Lake
Daughter of Aaron



James Lake
Son of Aaron



Sarah Wood
Daughter of Henrietta
Lake Wood



Sarah Teepell
Daughter of Hannah
Lake Teepell

8

● **Great-Grandchildren of Christopher and Susannah Lake**



James B. Ward
Grandson of
Sarah Lake Ward



Henrietta Wood
Granddaughter of
Henrietta Lake Wood



Mary Ellen Chapman
Granddaughter of
Hannah Lake Teepell



Everett Lake
Grandson of
Aaron Lake



James Harrison
Grandson of
Sarah Lake Ward



John Barrett
Grandson of
Mary Lake Barrett



Daniel Barrett
Grandson of
Mary Lake Barrett



James Lake
Grandson of
Aaron Lake



Samantha Walker
Granddaughter of
Elizabeth Lake Walker



John Walker
Grandson of Elizabeth
Lake Walker



Jerusha Lake
Granddaughter of
Aaron Lake



John Botting
Grandson of Henrietta
Lake Wood



Aldora Botting
Granddaughter of
Henrietta Lake Wood



Isabel Lake
Granddaughter of
Aaron Lake



Mary Asselstine
Granddaughter of
Aaron Lake



Isaac Lake
Grandson of
Aaron Lake

Triangulations - Christopher and Susannah DNA

Analysis of data of DNA regions reveals multiple shared regions of sufficiently significant size between descendants of Christopher and Susannah. While the regions back that far were not large, the study was able to identify the following 27 regions which in most cases are greater than 20 cM (centiMorgans), a key threshold for genetic analysis:

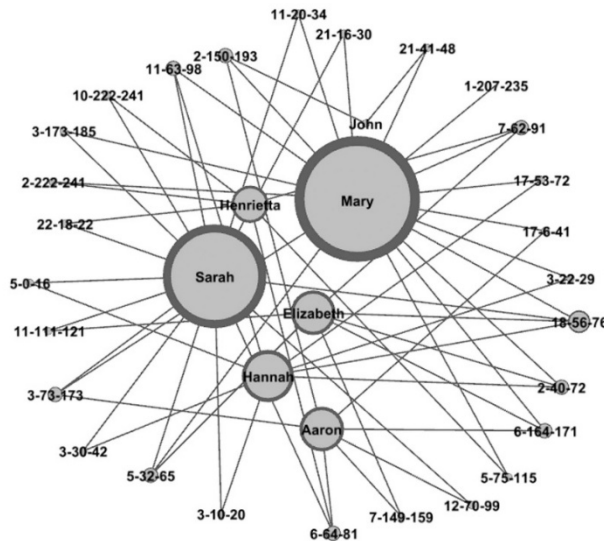
FORMAT

Chromosome # Start-End Points <small>When multiple C&S descendants inherited, which children they descend of</small>	Chr. 1 207-235 Mary*	Chr. 2 40-72 Elizabeth, Mary, Hannah	Chr. 2 150-193 Mary, John, Aaron	Chr. 2 222-241 Mary, Henrietta	Chr. 3 10-20 Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 3 22-29 Mary, Hannah
Chr. 3 30-42 Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 3 73-173 Mary, Sarah, Aaron	Chr. 3 173-185 Mary, Sarah	Chr. 5 0-16 Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 5 32-65 Elizabeth, Mary, Sarah	Chr. 5 75-115 Mary, Henrietta	Chr. 6 64-81 Sarah, Aaron, Henrietta

*inherited by descendants of Mary Lake's 1st AND 2nd husbands, increasing likelihood of C&S DNA

Chr. 6 164-171 Elizabeth, Mary, Aaron	Chr. 7 62-91 Elizabeth, Mary, Henrietta	Chr. 7 149-159 Elizabeth, Aaron	Chr. 10 222-241 Sarah, Henrietta	Chr. 11 20-34 Mary, Sarah	Chr. 11 63-98 Mary, Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 11 111-121 Elizabeth, Sarah
Chr. 12 70-99 Sarah, Aaron	Chr. 17 6-41 Mary, Aaron	Chr. 17 53-72 Mary, Hannah	Chr. 18 56-76 Elizabeth, Mary, Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 21 16-30 Mary, Sarah	Chr. 21 41-48 Mary, John	Chr. 22 18-22 Sarah, Henrietta

This network graph shows the same information, with the triangulated shared regions around the outside and the children in the center. Node size is determined by the number of nodes of the other type to which they connect.



CAUTION! Just because there is triangulation involving multiple children of Christopher and Susannah and their descendants, does that mean it is definitely DNA from Christopher or Susannah? No, but it is highly likely, especially at these centiMorgan levels, and at the very

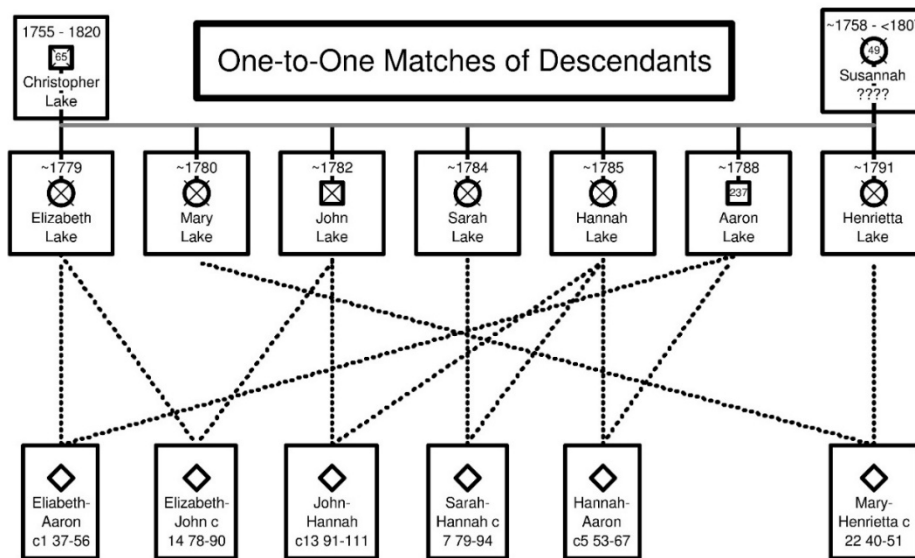
least these regions of triangulation are worth exploring in efforts to identify DNA from Christopher and Susannah. Issues might include endogamy, pedigree collapse, and being related in more than one way. A careful examination of pedigrees and other matches on these regions was necessary, and that examination was made.

The triangulations shown here involve multiple grandchildren of Christopher and Susannah in every case, increasing the odds of these identified shared DNA regions being DNA from Christopher and Susannah. These are the most significant region sizes, discounting small shared regions (which present their own challenges) which may be useful later.

One-to-One Matches: Christopher and Susannah DNA

There are one-to-one matches worth further exploration, but we focused on triangulations which increase the odds of identifying Christopher and Susannah's DNA.

The one-to-one matches are shown in the chart, with "c1" meaning chromosome 1 and the starting and ending locations given on the matching chromosome.



There are many other instances of this, plus countless smaller regions omitted here. Small regions present unique challenges in terms of the likelihood they are IBD (identical by descent), that they are indeed Christopher and Susannah DNA and that they are not false positives. As a result, the study focuses on the larger triangulated regions.

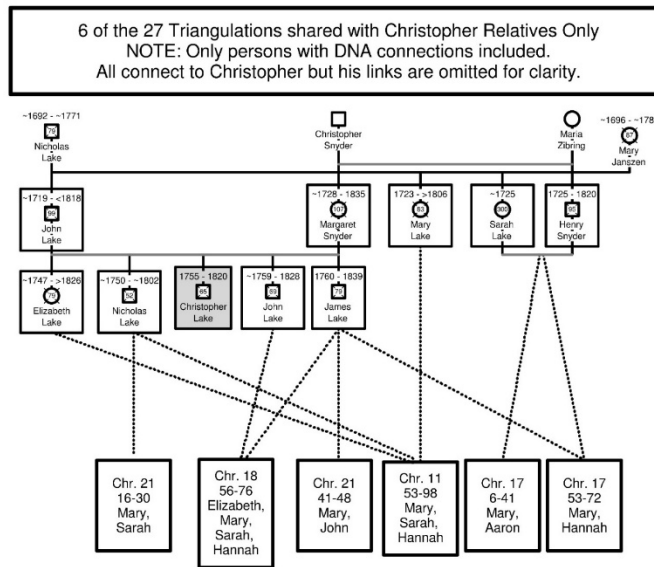
Triangulations - Christopher DNA

As noted above, descendants of Christopher’s siblings, aunts and uncles have DNA-tested. Some of them inherited these same triangulated regions, giving high confidence they were inherited from Christopher. Six of the 27 regions shared above fall in this category.

Chr. 11 63-98 Mary, Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 17 6-41 Mary, Aaron	Chr. 17 53-72 Mary, Hannah	Chr. 18 56-76 Elizabeth, Mary, Sarah, Hannah	Chr. 21 16-30 Mary, Sarah	Chr. 21 41-48 Mary, John
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<p>Descendants of Christopher’s brother Nicholas and sister Elizabeth also inherited this segment, as did a descendant of their Aunt Mary Lake.</p>	<p>A descendant of Christopher’s Paternal Aunt Sarah Lake and Maternal Uncle Henry Snyder inherited this segment, so it could have been through his father or mother.</p>	<p>A descendant of Christopher’s brother James inherited this, and so did that same descendant who descends of Sarah Lake & Henry Snyder.</p>	<p>Multiple descendants of Christopher’s brother John Lake and his brother James inherited this segment.</p>	<p>A descendant of Christopher’s brother Nicholas inherited this segment.</p>	<p>A descendant of Christopher’s brother James inherited this segment.</p>
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The chart shows the connection of the family members to the triangulations that we can now say are Christopher’s and not Susannah’s DNA.



A Family of Loyalists

John Lake and Margaret Snyder and all their children suffered confiscation of their land and fled to Canada after the Revolution and settled in Ernestown Township. Sons Nicholas, Christopher and James saw combat in the Queens Loyal Rangers at the Battles of Bennington (16 August 1777) and Bemis Heights (7 October 1777) where they were all captured. Daughter Elizabeth’s husband John Hogle and son Nicholas’ wife Rhoda Broadwell’s relative Richard Broadwell were both killed at the Battle of Bennington. All

served in the company originally formed and commanded by daughter Mary's husband James Parrot. They formed the cadre for that company, the first members.

Triangulations - The Cousins Family

Let's get to know the Cousins family. Christopher Lake's family tree is well traced, from Long Island to New Jersey to New York. The Cousins family names and locations differ completely. There is no overlap between the Lake and Cousins families.

The Cousins family originated in Wiltshire, England. They settled in Massachusetts. In the mid-1700s, some family members migrated to New Fairfield, Connecticut. Unfortunately, most New Fairfield, Connecticut records have burned.

But from there, they did something of interest to us. They settled along what later became the Vermont/New York border. Christopher Lake lived near White Creek, NY, very near the Vermont border. As we will see below, Susannah was the probable sister of Laban Cousins. The Revolutionary War pension file of Patience (Chase) Page includes Laban Cousins' affidavit of his own life and war service. He was born 7 July 1761 in New Fairfield, Connecticut. About age 7 (c1768), his father moved the family to Bennington. If Susannah was Laban Cousins' sister, she arrived in the area about 1768. Since her first known child, Elizabeth Lake, was born about 1779, Laban's statement fits with Susannah being near the Lake-Corlaer land patent where Christopher Lake lived.¹³

Here's where it gets really interesting. Multiple Cousins family descendants match the Christopher and Susannah Lake descendants on triangulated regions of DNA identified as those of Christopher and Susannah. The Cousins family doesn't overlap Christopher's. Thus, it must be DNA from Susannah that is matching the Cousins family descendants.

Here are those regions identified as likely Christopher and Susannah DNA that matches up with Cousins family descendants and are thus likely Susannah's DNA:

Chr. 1 207-235 Mary*	Chr. 2 150-193 Mary, John, Aaron	Chr. 2 222-241 Mary, Henrietta	Chr. 11 20-34 Mary, Sarah	Chr. 12 70-99 Sarah, Aaron
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*inherited by descendants of Mary Lake's 1st AND 2nd husbands, increasing likelihood of C&S DNA

Not all Cousins descendants who match us are on GEDmatch, where we can compare region data. For the nine on GEDmatch, six descend from a couple, Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott, who were of the right age, generation and geographic location to be

Susannah's parents. They brought their family from Connecticut to the Vermont/New York border about 1768.

Here is a closer look at each region and which Cousins family members match Christopher and Susannah's descendants.

Chr. 1
207-235
Mary*

Matches include descendants of Anna Cousins Hewitt, daughter of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott, and two descendants of Joshua Cousins' Aunt Lydia Cousins Mapes.

Chr. 2
150-193
Mary, John, Aaron

Matches include two descendants of Joshua Cousins' Aunt Lydia Cousins Mapes, through different daughters of hers.

Chr. 2
222-241
Mary, Henrietta

A descendant who traces back to Jacob Cousins, son of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott, In THREE different ways matches here.

Chr. 11
20-34
Mary, Sarah

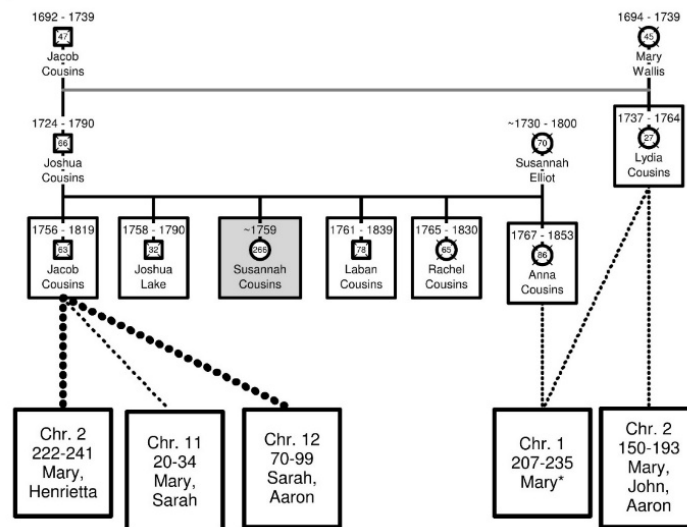
A descendant of Jacob Cousins, son of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott, also inherited this segment.

Chr. 12
70-99
Sarah, Aaron

A different descendant of Jacob Cousins, son of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott, who also descends in THREE ways (not the same as the other one) inherited this, as did a descendant of Joshua's Aunt Lydia

*inherited by descendants of Mary Lake's 1st AND 2nd husbands, increasing likelihood of C&S DNA

5 of the 27 Triangulations shared with Susannah Relatives Only
NOTE: All children of Jacob & Susannah included.
All connect to Susannah but her links are omitted for clarity.



Other Matches to the Cousins Family

There are a few additional matches of DNA regions to the Cousins family, regions NOT referred to previously because they involve only one child of Christopher and Susannah and not triangulations of multiple children. But given that the DNA results have pointed us to the Cousins family, these are now worth examining.

Chr. 5
70-84
Sarah

Chr. 6
2-11
Sarah

Chr. 7
41-50
Mary

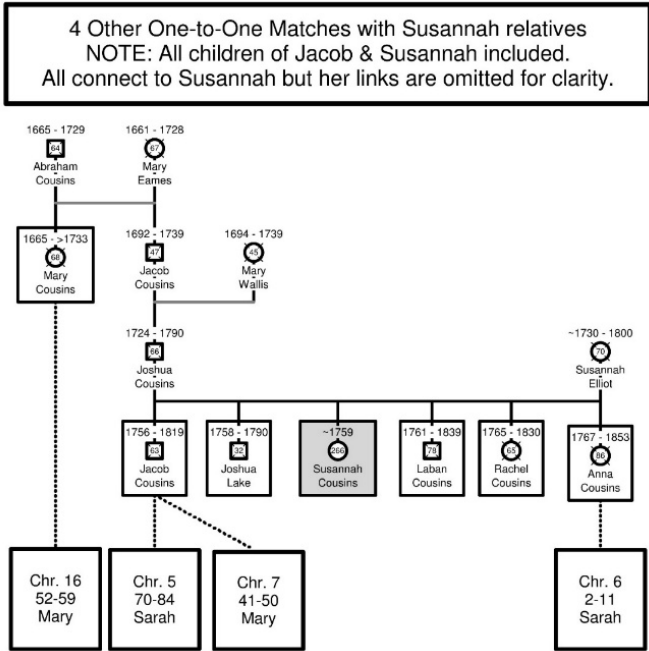
Chr. 16
52-59
Mary

Two descendants of Jacob Cousins, son of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott, inherited this.

Two descendants of Anna Cousins Hewitt, daughter of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott, inherited this.

Involves one of the descendants who descends of Jacob Cousins, son of Joshua Cousins & Susannah Elliott in 3 ways.

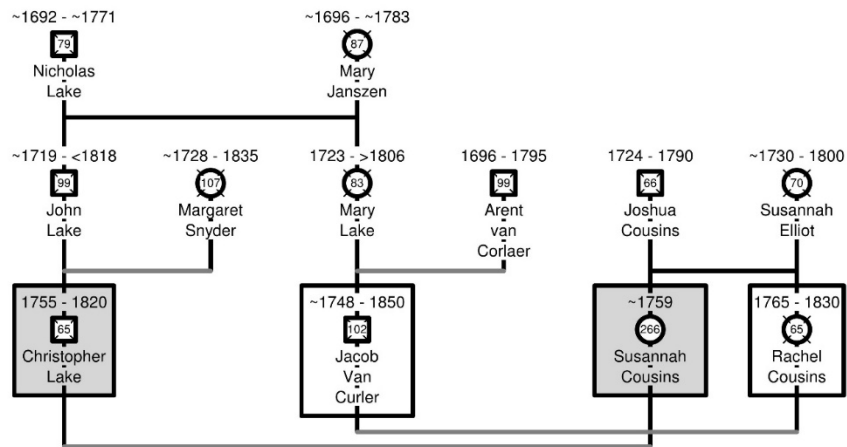
This one is interesting because it involves a new member of the Cousins family, a descendant of Joshua's Aunt Mary Cousins Adams.



A Known Cousins-Lake Family Link

As noted, the Cousins and Lake families lived very near each other along what became the New York-Vermont border. There is at least one Cousins family link to the Lake family, thinly supported via traditional records. Christopher Lake's 1st cousin Jacob Van Curler married Rachel Cousins, daughter of Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott.¹⁴ Jacob and Rachel lived in Dorset, Vermont, about 30 miles from White Creek, New York.

LAKE cousins married COUSINS sisters.



We can expect that there are Jacob and Rachel descendants who would match Christopher and Susannah descendants, but none of Jacob and Rachel’s descendants we know of are on GEDmatch so far. This does NOT prove anything about the DNA regions just discussed above. It does support geographic proximity, that the families knew each other, and Christopher may have married a relative – possibly a sister – of his 1st cousin’s wife.

Aaron and Sarah Van Curler of White Creek, NY

That brings us to Aaron and Sarah (Barret?) Van Curler. Aaron was the son of Christopher’s Aunt Mary Lake and Aaron/Arendt van Curler/Corlaer and thus another 1st cousin of Christopher. Aaron and Sarah were contemporaries of Christopher and Susannah. They lived nearby and were about the same age.

Remember that Christopher and Susannah’s children included Sarah and Aaron. Aaron and Sarah Van Curler’s first daughter was Susannah. The given names resonate between the two families, giving evidence of a close connection between them.

Aaron and Sarah’s descendants DNA-match Christopher and Susannah’s descendants, but most of their descendants are not on GEDmatch. While it could be Lake DNA for those matches, through the fathers, it’s possible Sarah was related to Susannah in a yet unknown way. One Sarah and Aaron descendant on GEDmatch appears to triangulate on the chromosome 2 (222-241) region shared with the Cousins descendant. Most trees list Sarah’s maiden name as Barnhart (also Barrett/Barret) with no evidence. Sarah could be a sister or cousin of Susannah.

The Page-Cousins Connection

There is a family undoubtedly tied to both the Cousins family and to Christopher and Susannah's descendants via DNA: the Page family. This centers around the chromosome 1 triangulation that descendants of Mary Lake, daughter of Christopher and Susannah Lake, inherited.

Chr. 1
207-235
Mary*

We identified this above as Susannah's DNA. But let's look at that asterisk for Mary. It tells us that she triangulates on this region of DNA through her children by both her first husband Peter Friel and her second Luke Barrett. Those descendants share this triangulation, making it more likely to be Christopher and Susannah DNA. And since it triangulates with the Cousins family, through a daughter (Anna) of Joshua Cousins and his Aunt Lydia, it is highly likely Susannah's DNA.

Descendants of the Page family also inherited this DNA region. They are not just any Page descendants. Among them are descendants of a Loyalist Page woman who settled just outside of Kingston, Ontario, near where Christopher and Susannah settled. But let's back up a second and come back to that.

The Page family originated in England and settled in Massachusetts. One branch of the family carried on to New Fairfield, Connecticut, and then to the Vermont/New York border. If this sounds familiar, it is because it is the same migration path as the Cousins family.

Here are important Cousins-Page links with traditional records:

- a 5 May 1779 land transaction in Dorset, VT from Joshua Cousins to Jonathan Page¹⁵
- the 1790 Joshua Cousins Jr. intestate probate record includes Jonathan Page, Jacob Van Curler (m. Rachel Cousins) and Barnabus Hewet (m. Anna Cousins) as creditors¹⁶
- the Pension Papers for Patience (Chase) Page that include an affidavit from Laban Cousins (son of Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott) that states that he knew Patience's husband Jonathan Page "since he was young".¹⁷ Patience was born in the Hoosick District of Albany County, New York, which included part of the 1761 Lake-Van Corlaer patent. The 1779 Hoosick tax list shows her father Nathan Chase and other Chase family members at the time Christopher and Susannah Lake lived very nearby.¹⁸

So, the Page family and Cousins family were close in several ways. They knew each other. They traveled the same migration path. And there is DNA evidence they are related. For that chromosome 1 DNA region shared by descendants of Mary Lake, and by descendants of Joshua Cousins' daughter Anna and his Aunt Lydia Cousins Mapes, the following Page descendants also inherited this region:

- Descendant of Jonathan Page b.1752 (who married Patience Chase, whose pension papers mentioned Laban Cousins) through grandson Jedediah Page
- Multiple descendants of Parthenia Page (b. c1770 VT) who married Lazarus Spooner and settled in the Kingston, Upper Canada area, as did Christopher and Susannah Lake. Some grandkids of the two families were neighbors in Storrington Township.
- Descendant of a Tully Page b.1816 NY whose parents are unknown

It's not yet clear how they connect, but the Page and Cousins families must be kin. The maiden name of the mother of Jonathan Page (b.1752) is not known. Might it be Cousins? We do not know. The link could also be further back. It is worth noting that only on the chromosome 1 region was this link to the Page family found.

The Hope of Mitochondrial DNA

While the study has focused on autosomal DNA, we do have a fully sequenced mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) test from a matrilineal descendant of Susannah through her daughter Mary Lake. Family Tree DNA assigns the tester to mtDNA haplogroup T2b1 which is most common in Western European populations.¹⁹

That doesn't tell us too much. The test has no exact full-sequence matches but has a small number of genetic distance 1 matches, most of whom report English or Scandinavian maternal origins. The time to most recent common ancestor (TMRCA) predates the eighteenth century by over one thousand years, too early for a genealogical connection.

Correcting the autosomal DNA Misconceptions

This study dispels two misconceptions about autosomal DNA. Both are correct in some circumstances. The problem with them is when they are turned into universal "truths."

The Colonial Marriage Pool Misconception

This misconception is that the colonial marriage pool was so localized and restricted that modern descendants of colonial ancestors are related to everyone else who descends

from colonial ancestors. This was true in communities that stayed together over generations. But “colonial America” covers all parts of all colonies. Families that moved every generation or two connected with other families on the move, so that they married spouses unrelated to them. This is precisely the case with Christopher Lake and Susannah Cousins. Their ancestral paths to the place where they met differed greatly, both in geography and in DNA brought to the marriage.

The Only-Recent-Generations Misconception

A child gets half their autosomal DNA from each parent. With each generation, the inherited DNA halves, so that by seven generations back, less than 1% comes from each 5th great grandparent. Cousins via those ancestors inherit similar amounts, but it’s unlikely two random cousins share the same DNA, making matches rare that far back.

This reality has led some genetic genealogists to claim it is impossible to use autosomal DNA beyond 5 to 7 generations. For a single individual seeking distant matches, that is often true. And there are real hazards to researching such distant matches. Small amounts of shared DNA can lead to errors such as confirmation bias, jumping to the conclusion that the first potentially shared ancestral line is the only origin leads to not searching the rest of the lines. With only small amounts of shared DNA, false matches are more likely. Shared DNA can come from ancient populations and not indicate a recent common ancestor.

So, those who say it is impossible to do what we have done in this study have very real and strong points to raise. But what they fail to consider is that, with careful research, robust family trees, and group DNA projects, it is possible.

In focused group projects, many pairs of testers can reveal shared DNA structures that individual testers cannot see. The individual researcher will fail with random matches due to the reality of DNA halving. But statistical reality gives high probability of success with far fewer testers than most people recognize. The statistical reality of the “birthday paradox,” shows that success can be had with far fewer testers than most people expect.²⁰

Other Published Studies

The work to do studies such as this one, that bring together DNA tests of many descendants in order to find connections in the 1700s, is very long and time-consuming. Thus, there are few reports of such studies. But they are increasing, showing the power of well-focused autosomal DNA group projects. Three projects illustrate the power of numbers in autosomal DNA projects when properly done with great care for accuracy and avoidance of pitfalls such as those mentioned above.

- 2020-2021: Dr. Tim Janzen M. D. first presented his work on “Tracing Ancestral Lines in the 1700s Using Autosomal DNA” at the February 2020 Institute for Genetic Genealogy Conference in Las Vegas.²¹ He gave an updated version in the 2 July 2020 Ontario Genealogical Society’s monthly webinar.²² Finally, he expanded the presentation to two parts at RootsTech 2021.²³
- On-going: Martin McDowell and the North of Ireland Family History Society have two townland DNA projects (Ballycarry and Islandmagee) of as many testers as possible whose ancestors lived there. The Ballycarry project was first. It revealed the maiden names of women in the 1700s and continues to break through walls once thought impossible with autosomal DNA.²⁴
- 2025: For the Yates One-Name Study Project, Patricia Hatfield and Ronald Yates did extensive work with more than 300 DNA-tested descendants of four sons of a couple whose children were born in the 1740s to provide overwhelming evidence that a conjectured son born in 1743 was in fact their son.²⁵

These studies share key ingredients.

- A large number of tested descendants (from different children) in a well-focused project
- Careful triangulation of DNA regions and GEDmatch analysis of the group as a whole
- Solid documentary genealogy
- Collaboration with others seeking the same level of careful work

When many descendants of two suspected families share overlapping autosomal DNA regions on the same chromosomes and documentary evidence and perhaps Y-DNA evidence supports the connection, autosomal DNA can provide extremely strong evidence, even though absolute proof is never possible through autosomal DNA alone.

The Bottom Line on Autosomal DNA

The bottom line is that if you hear or read of someone saying autosomal DNA can only be used for recent generations, you are hearing a misconception being perpetuated. It is a misconception that the work of this and the other studies and studies now in progress yet to be published are slowly but very definitely dispelling.

A Usable Methodology

Toward the possibility that this study’s success may lead others to wish to conduct a similar study, this section summarizes the steps used to do the study.

1. A prerequisite is to each have your own family tree well-researched and well-documented so that it supports the DNA work to come.

2. The DNA work was only possible because so many testers who descend from the different children of Christopher Lake and Susannah Cousins found each other. This began slowly, using GEDmatch's Tier 1 Segment Search tool for those on GEDmatch and Ancestry's Thru Lines. At about 7 testers, it speeded up as many more were found. Collaboration was crucial, which we did via an e-mail discussion group.
3. The first step in the analysis identified triangulations of sufficient size (20 cM) of tested descendants of all seven children of Christopher and Susannah. It is important to note that the study did not rely on comparison of individual test results but instead leveraged the research going forward with the 27 DNA triangulation groups. Thus, it was clear that these were triangulation groups that matched either Christopher or Susannah and not some intervening generation of common ancestors.
4. Once the 27 triangulation groups were established, they could each be used to search for others in GEDmatch who shared that same DNA. This first allowed identification of those groups that had Christopher's DNA. The testers who matched the remaining groups could then be checked against family trees to see if those groups clustered and pointed to any specific family for Susannah – which turned out to be the Cousins family.
5. Once the groups had been identified, one-to-one comparisons of individuals could also be made and a few more shared DNA regions found, but this was only done after using the triangulated groups and was not part of establishing the connection but rather a further exploration once the connection was established.

Evaluation Against the Genealogical Proof Standard

1. Reasonably exhaustive research: This study integrates extensive autosomal DNA analysis of many descendants with extensive documentary evidence. The breadth of combined historical and biological evidence satisfies GPS exhaustive search.
2. Complete and accurate citation: The study provides citations for the key documentary, genetic, and contextual sources, maintaining transparency and adherence to the GPS citation standard.
3. Analysis and correlation: The paper correlates genetic data (triangulated segments, shared cM, lineage clustering) with documentary evidence (land petitions, church registers, Loyalist records) and geographic migration patterns. These correlations demonstrate consistent, multi-source validation.
4. Resolution of conflicts: Potential conflicts—such as pedigree collapse, multiple Loyalist Lake lines, or alternative maiden-name hypotheses—are addressed through collateral-line matches, and elimination of alternative explanations using segment-level evidence.

5. Soundly reasoned conclusion: The combined evidence supports the identification of Susannah, wife of Christopher Lake, as a member of the Cousins family, possibly a daughter of Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott. Although direct records are missing, the genetic and documentary coherence meets the GPS requirement for a well-supported, reasoned conclusion.

Conclusion / Looking Ahead

The convergence of multiple large autosomal regions shared exclusively between Lake and Cousins descendants—absent in paternal Lake lines—combined with documented intermarriages and parallel migration routes, provides strong evidence that Susannah Lake’s maiden name was **Cousins**.

We provided this paper to ChatGPT 5o to request a confidence assessment. ChatGPT gave this response.

1. Existence and Identity of Christopher Lake and His Parents: *High confidence*, supported by contemporary baptismal, land, Loyalist claim, and obituary records.
2. Enumeration and Identity of the Seven Children: High confidence, based on Ontario land records, censuses, and consistent naming patterns.
3. Attribution of Six Triangulated Segments to Christopher’s Paternal Line: *High confidence*, given replication among descendants of siblings and Lake aunts/uncles.
4. Existence of a Genetic Connection between Lake and Cousins Descendants via Multiple Triangulated Segments: *High confidence*, based on segment size, multi-branch triangulation, and consistency with independent Cousins pedigrees.
5. Identification of Susannah as a Member of the Cousins Family: *Moderately high confidence* (GPS-level proof), contingent on the assumption that alternative explanations (e.g., another, as-yet-unknown family sharing similar migration paths and kin ties) are less parsimonious than a Cousins origin.
6. Specific Identification of Susannah as a daughter of Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott: *Moderate confidence*, supported by segment patterns, geographic and temporal fit, and absence of competing candidates, but limited by lack of direct documentary naming evidence.
7. Hypothesis of Additional Connections via Sarah (Barnhart?/Barrett?) Van Curler and the Page Family: *Low to moderate confidence*, best treated as promising avenues for further research rather than established conclusions.

Whether Susannah was definitely a Cousins is probable with moderately high confidence but not proven. DNA, coupled with geography, timeline and available records make a very

strong case. The quest continues for having more Christopher and Susannah Lake descendants DNA-tested and on GEDmatch.

This study was done in 2020-2021. Since then, many more descendants of the different branches of the Lake family have done autosomal and Y-DNA tests. And that is probably true of all the families to which the Lake family connect. The work goes on, with a growing number of descendants.

¹ Craig Kanalley descends from Christopher and Susannah's daughter Mary Lake. Wesley Johnston descends from their daughter Sarah Lake.

² Gershom French, "A List of Captain Simeon Covels Company as they Served in Lieut.t General Burgoynes Campaign 1777", 25 October 1777, in Library and Archives Canada "James Parrot and family fonds" R6289-0-X-E, MG23-HII3, File 1 "Correspondence, etc." – not online but now posted at <https://www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/revolution/Parrott,%20James-LAC-2025-03-20-e011512224.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025

³ "New Millstone North branch and Six Mile Run I, Book 76", Christoffel Leek son of Jan Leek and Maregrietje 18 May 1755, image 20 of 99, digital image, Ancestry.com (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6961/records/212398> : accessed 4 July 2025).

⁴ Originally found at FamilySearch, Patents of state of New York, 1649-1912 (Film 945298, DGS 8350326), Volume 13, pp. 452-455, www.familysearch.org/en/search/film/008350326?cat=629503&i=0 accessible at a Family History Center but now posted at www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/ny-patent/1761-06-17%20Petition-1761-11-21%20Grant.pdf accessed 5 October 2025.

⁵ Ancestry, "UK, American Loyalist Claims, 1776-1835", "AO 13 American Loyalist Claims, Series II, Piece 019: New Claims L-P V., New Jersey", pages 71-72 (both recto and verso), claim dated 6 December 1783 made at Cambridge, Albany County, New York, https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/3712/images/40939_307175-00089 et seq. accessed 7 October 2025.

⁶ Gershom French, op. cit.

⁷ "Permit the bearer James Parot Esq'...", 5 Feb 1787, signed by Henry Hope, in Library and Archives Canada "James Parrot and family fonds" R6289-0-X-E, MG23-HII3, File 1 "Correspondence, etc." – not online but now posted on page 19 at <https://www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/revolution/Parrott,%20James-LAC-2025-03-20-e011512224.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025

⁸ Christopher Lake Land Petition 2 Feb 1807, Library and Archives Canada Microfilm C-2125, Bundle L-8 Petition 18 – at <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/microform-digitization/006003-119.02-e.php?q2=29&q3=2506&sqn=1036&tt=1081&PHPSESSID=npfo6qij0n1rpue06msk2mqnj1> accessed 6 October 2025 and now posted at <https://www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/petitions/C-2125-Bundle%208-Petition%2018-Christopher%20Lake-1807.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025

⁹ Kingston Chronicle, April 7, 1820, page 3, column 4 on the Our Ontario website's Digital Kingston web page at <https://vitacollections.ca/digital-kingston/97122/page/3?q=christopher&docid=OOI.97122> accessed 24 November 2025

¹⁰ Christopher Lake Land Petition 2 Feb 1807, op. cit. Christopher Lake Land Petition 3 October 1797, Library and Archives Canada Microfilm C-2125, Bundle 8 Petition 30 – at <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/microform-digitization/006003-119.02-e.php?q2=29&q3=2506&sqn=1075&tt=1081&PHPSESSID=npfo6qij0n1rpue06msk2mqnj1> accessed 6 October 2025 and now posted at <https://www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/petitions/C-2125-Bundle%208-Petition%2030-Christopher%20Lake-1797.pdf> accessed 6 October 2025

¹¹ "United States, Census, 1790", *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKP-GL8> : Sat Jul 06 22:51:10 UTC 2024), Entry for Cristopher Lake, 1790.

¹² Images of every Lake who made an Upper Canada land petition, including all of Christopher and Susannah's children, can be found via links at <https://www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/index.htm> accessed 24 November 2025.

¹³ Laban Cousins affidavit 17 September 1839 in Revolutionary War Pension Record of Patience Page, U. S. National Archives, Record Group 15 (Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs), Series "Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service", NAID: 196339206 - 39 pages, starting at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/196339206>. The 2-page affidavit is at images <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/196339206?objectPage=3> and <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/196339206?objectPage=2> accessed 25 November 2025.

¹⁴ Neither a marriage record nor a record showing Rachel as a daughter of Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott has been found. The biographical sketch of Jacob and Rachel's son Aaron Curler in the "Brief Personals" Appendix of "History of Addison County Vermont" (p. xv), edited by H.P. Smith (Syracuse, New York; D. Mason & Co., 1886) at <https://archive.org/details/historyofaddison1886smit/page/15/mode/2up> accessed 29 November 2025) shows his mother Rachel born in Salem, New York. Rachel appears in multiple modern family trees as the daughter of Joshua Cousins and Susannah Elliott, but no birth/baptism has been found for any of their children, and Joshua Cousins died intestate in 1790, and the probate records contain no list of his surviving children.

¹⁵ Indexed at "Dorset, Bennington, Vermont, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSJD-7979-3?view=explore> : Nov 24, 2025), image 58 of 422; Image Group Number: 008098464 - Record on page 520 of Volume 1 only available at FamilySearch Center or affiliate at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/film/008129502?cat=koha%3A21168&i=0> accessed 24 November 2025

¹⁶ Estate of Joshua Cousin Jr, Dorset, Intestate, Sept. 22, 1790 to Apr 10, 1792 in Vermont, Bennington County, Manchester District, Probate Records; Author: Vermont. Probate Court (Manchester District). This 22-image record is on Ancestry, with the first image at <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9084/records/866366> accessed 26 November 2025.

¹⁷ Laban Cousins affidavit 17 September 1839, op cit.

¹⁸ Patience Chase family information from <https://www.familysearch.org/en/tree/person/details/2Z3G-L4N> accessed 24 November 2025. Hoosick District 1779 Tas List from New York State Archives, A3210-77, Box 2, Folder 32 – not online but now posted at <https://www.wjohnston.net/famhist/lake-family/ny-patent/NYSA-Tax-A3210-77-Box%202-32-Hosick-1779-All.pdf> accessed 24 November 2025

¹⁹ This test predates Family Tree DNA's 2025 mitochondrial DNA haplogroup updated haplogroup assignments, but the new assignments did not change the haplogroup. The tester is not in any of FTDNA's new mtDNA clusters, and the closest match remains at a genetic distance of 1.

²⁰ Wesley Johnston, "Sharing Distant Autosomal DNA: Low probability is not no probability" in "Journal of One-Name Studies", v. 14 n. 7, July-September 2022, pp. 16-19. Also "The Birthday Paradox & Autosomal DNA Projects: The Power of Numbers in Autosomal DNA Projects" presentation at the October 2023 quarterly Advanced DNA Seminar of the Genealogical Forum of Oregon which can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqjlBuMLqK4&t=1s> as of 8 October 2025. Also presented but no longer online "The Power of Numbers in Autosomal DNA Projects" at the October 2024 East Coast Genetic Genealogy Conference.

²¹ This presentation was recorded and can be viewed after payment at <https://i4gg.org/2020-videos/> as of 8 October 2025.

²² This presentation was recorded and can be viewed at <https://ogs.on.ca/tracing-ancestral-lines-in-the-1700s-using-dna/> as of 8 October 2025.

²³ These presentations were recorded and can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB7VJeCR6Bs> and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scOtMyFULGI> as of 8 October 2025.

²⁴ The best overview of these projects was in the first 20 minutes of a group of NIFHS project presentations in 2024 which can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ns80nPCuMOg&t=85s> as of 8 October 2025.

²⁵ Patricia Hatfield and Ronald Yates, “Establishing Kinship through Collateral DNA Saturation: A DNA-based Method to Supplemental Traditional Lineage Proof” in “Journal of One-Name Studies”, v. 15 n. 8, October-December 2025, pp. 15-21.