

USING THE GENEALOGICAL PROOF STANDARD AND DNA AS POWER TOOLS AND PROBLEM SOLVERS

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Genealogical Proof Standard (©Board for Certification of Genealogists)

1. Conduct “reasonably exhaustive research.”
2. Provide complete and accurate citations for all records and sources.
3. Test through a process of evaluation, analysis, and correlation, all sources of information.
4. Resolve any conflicts of evidence.
5. Write a coherently-reasoned conclusion based on all of the evidence.

“Reasonably Exhaustive Research”

1. Basic – look for quality original records from multiple sources created independently and not derivative of others, and place those records into proper context.
2. Research family and friends, associates, and neighbors.
3. Look exhaustively through all records for the area and time period of interest (even those unindexed).
4. Explore all relevant sources in other jurisdictions that had authority over the area where the ancestor lived.
5. Repeat steps 1 through 4 for all of the places where the ancestor lived.
6. Reconstruct the entire extended family of the problem ancestor – children, grandchildren, siblings, cousins, and other persons of their surname in the area of their residence. Look for patterns and connections, and use DNA where applicable.

Some Definitions

1. Direct evidence – Sources that address directly the matter at hand and provide an answer. It may be drawn from original or derivative records. It may not be complete or even accurate.
2. Indirect evidence – Sources that do not provide a direct answer to the problem, but may support or refute direct evidence. When accumulated, it may offer convincing proof in the absence of direct evidence or may refute direct evidence.
3. Negative evidence – The absence of a record that should exist.

1. Original source – a record made at the time of an event and is thus the closest record to it. (Some genealogists argue that digital or microfilmed records of original sources are almost as good as the originals).
2. Derivative source – a record that is made later and draws upon other records (original, derivative, or unknown) for its source.

Types of DNA

1. Y-Line DNA – passed from male to male via the Y chromosome.
2. X-Chromosomal DNA – males have one, inherited from their mother, a mixture from her parents. Women have two, one from father’s mother and the other from the mother’s mother, sharing portions of three grandparents.
3. Autosomal DNA – Compares genetic sequences in the 22 pairs of inherited chromosomes.
4. Mitochondrial DNA- Passed from mother to daughter. Sons inherit but don’t pass it down.

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