

# SCSH GENEALOGY CLUB



## 2022 View Articles

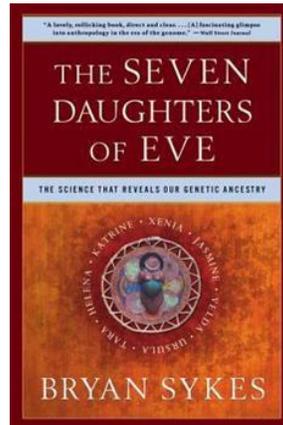
These articles were written by our member, Ron Gilmore, and published in 2022 in the View, Sun City Shadow Hills’ monthly publication. They show the variety of issues that might arise doing research as well as some examples of the resources that are out there for you to use.

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## Book Reviews

### The Seven Daughters of Eve



Author: Bryan Sykes, a professor of genetics at Oxford University in London

Publisher: Norton & Company

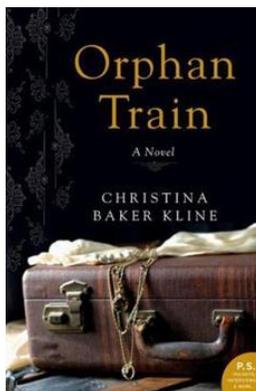
ISBN: 0-393-02018-5

This book was a National Bestseller in 2001. A great read for genealogists, it covers such topics as:

- How they determined the DNA of the famous Iceman and found a living relative
- Discussion of DNA (what the initials actually mean) and the special characteristics of Mitochondrial DNA – very slow evolution (or mutation) and passed down only from mother to daughter
- DNA determination of the bones of the Russian Tsar and his family murdered in the 1917 Russian Revolution
- Ocean voyagers and how humanity spread across the Pacific
- Early Europeans
- Demise of the Neanderthals
- Shifting from a hunting culture to farming
- The seven daughters who, as clan mothers, bequeathed us the nations of Europe - with a short, fictional description of their lives and environments.

A fun romp through history and the evolution of genetic testing. Sykes makes it all readily understandable and interesting. Track this book down for sure. You will enjoy it.

## Orphan Train - a Novel



Author: Christina Baker Kline

Publisher: Harper Collins, 2012, 290 pages paperback

ISBN: 978-0-06-195072-8

Although this is a work of fiction, genealogists will find solid value in it. The author plays with the perspective of an aging widow, living alone in a huge Maine mansion with her lifetime collection of belongings stored in the attic. Alternating, she takes us back to a shocked young 7-year-old girl, all alone, loaded on a train heading west from New York City.

The woman, one of the Orphan Train survivors, hires a young local indigenous girl to help her sort through the attic loaded with boxes and trunks. As she works through the collection, the stories spill out about her life which began in County Galway in Ireland, emigrating to New York where her family is wiped out in a fire, leaving her an orphan.

This story takes its inspiration from what happened at the beginning of the Great Depression, when aid agencies were hard pressed to deal with the 10,000 orphans left on the streets of New York City. A scheme was developed to put these children on trains heading west where they might be adopted by farm families along the way. Stopping at each station along the way to the West Coast, the children were often lined up on the station platform and people could examine and select what they wanted. In most cases, farmers wanted free farm labor or housekeeping assistants. Some children were lucky but many were abused and mistreated. Paperwork was minimal and oversight also sparing, if at all. The children's names were changed and many simply disappeared from record. In all cases, they were looked down upon as the detritus of society.

While this story is fictional, the characterizations are more than real. The book does supply several important references for researchers and a collection of photographs of some of the children and the times.

## 1950 American Census – Coming April 2022!

Heck, some of us were alive in 1950 so when the 1950 Census is released in April 2022, we might be able to see our own names in the data. Census records are an absolute treasure trove for genealogists and a primary tool for family history research. Census records in the USA are kept locked up for 72 years. These new census records are already causing excitement among the genealogy crowd.

Census questions include street and house number, name of each person in the household, relation of each person to the head of household, sex, color or race, age, marital status. Some questions are only asked on a sampling basis. For example: Is the property a farm? Is the respondent a veteran? How many marriages? How many live births? Are any occupants in school? Highest grade completed? This was the last census wherein folks were asked if they were US citizens!

These critical records will be available through most major family history websites like Ancestry, Family Search, Find My Past, My Heritage, etc. New Artificial Intelligence engines will enhance the process for researchers. Get ready! Find your Enumeration District now!

## Newly Discovered Distant DNA Connections

Wow! Your DNA results have finally arrived and identified some interesting information about your ancestry. Also, the DNA website folks have been sending notices about your “cousins” that match your DNA. Dozens of people are now listed but you do not recognize most of the names that you see.

What to do? Well, the first suggestion is to see if your newfound cousins have a family tree listed. Hopefully, their family tree is “public” as you can then view it. Search through their tree for a shared surname (one that also exists in your family tree). Next, send the person a note to verify your possible connection. These communications can often prove to be a major boost to your genealogy research. You might possibly build on the hard research work of others.

What not to do? Probably not a good idea just to fire out messages to every cousin asking them how you might be related. Better to do some preliminary research to identify possible connections. Happy hunting. You might find someone in the DNA database that has researched your ancestors back to Charlemagne with all the source documents to prove your royal lineage!

## What's in a Name?

We take our names for granted. They are assigned to us by our parents at birth. In fact, parents and their newborn are typically not allowed to leave the hospital until they have provided a name.

But, sometimes, the name parents choose may not fit the rules of the jurisdiction in which they live. Take for example, what happened to the name Kakeka Thundersky, who lives in Winnipeg, chose for her daughter.

The rule that applies to the naming of children in Winnipeg can be found on the website of the Manitoba Department of Vital Statistics (they keep track of births, deaths and marriages – stuff of keen interest to genealogists). It states that "the given name and the surname must consist only of the letters 'a' to 'z' and accents from the English or French languages but may include hyphens and apostrophes."

When Thundersky's daughter was born last year, she named her Tokala Wači Wiŋ, a traditional Lakota name translating to "Dancing Kit Fox Woman."

Tokala Wači Wiŋ was supposed to be written together as a first name. Instead, Manitoba's Vital Statistics Branch made Tokala the first name, turned Wači Wiŋ into two middle names, and didn't include the accents.

The parents said nurses alerted them that the colon symbol and accented "e" may not be accepted.

Manitoba and many other jurisdictions are now actively working to find ways to adjust their legislation to accommodate those whose heritage our various segments of population that have unique naming considerations.

## Skills of a Genealogist

The following skills are very helpful in doing genealogical research:

**Map Reading** – the “where” of your ancestors’ lives is a crucial element of their stories. You may need to correlate an old hand-drawn map with a satellite view. Jurisdictions often change; check the neighboring counties for the address you seek.

**Language** – those old archive records might be in a different language. Thankfully, there are modern tools that can help translate the text (ex: Google Translate) and asking for a volunteer on Facebook often will help.

**Handwriting** – cursive on the verge of extinction? There are university courses and online experts and tools that can help untangle even with the most ancient script.

**Detective** – examining all the details found in those old records and correlating them just might provide the breakthrough. Keep a keen eye and never give up!

**DNA** – with DNA a part of everyone’s research, we may become scientists beyond high school biology. DNA might appear as a huge elephant, but you can gobble the elephant, one bite at a time.

Support is always available from your local library, local genealogical society, Google, Facebook, Pinterest and a host of genealogical websites. After all, genealogy is America’s second most popular hobby.

## Hidden Family Secrets

We all have family secrets. Why does no one ever mention Uncle George? Who was Sarah’s father? Some secrets may be absolutely horrifying or merely slight embarrassments. Are they new or ancient stories?

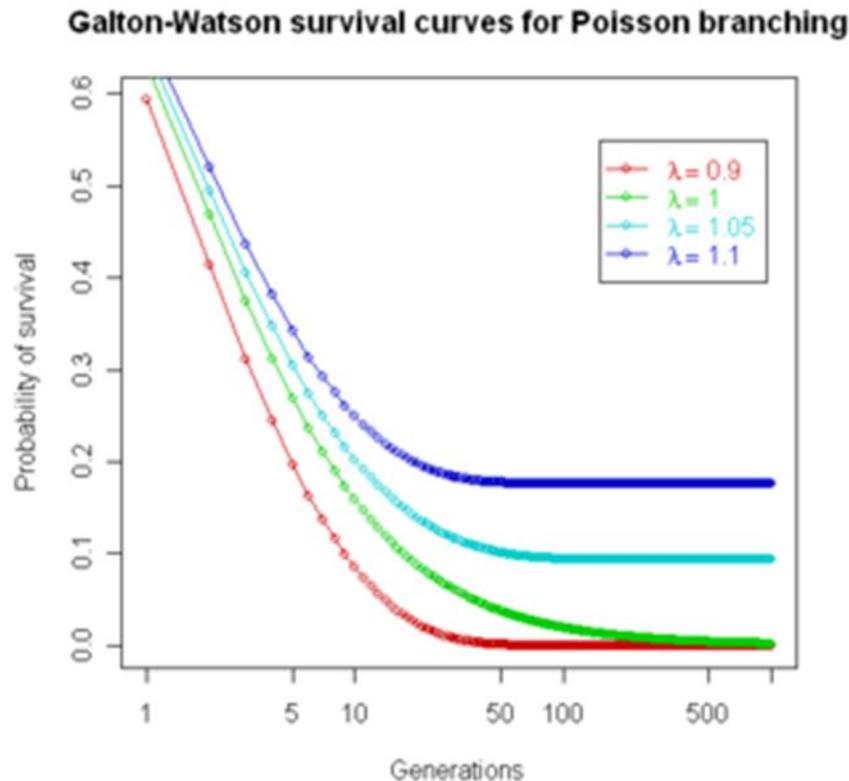
If the saga is documented (for example, court records, newspaper articles, etc.), you may be certain that someday, someone else will find the story. It is important to keep track of the sources of your information to ensure you are not merely repeating rumor.

Should you share the story?

It depends. Are the players still alive? Would the revelation possibly injure reputations? DNA has opened a whole new world of revelations. DNA does not lie and sometimes illustrates relationships we never knew. And some of these findings are not necessarily welcome news. You might choose to share the story with family and friends, or you might choose merely to document what you have found for your own personal files. Think carefully about the sharing aspect. With today’s online society, it is all too easy to “spill the beans” broadly in corners you may never have imagined.

## Survival of a Last Name

There was concern among many English Victorians in the mid-1800s that aristocratic surnames were becoming extinct. Heaven forbid! Francis Galton, a British polymath originally posed a mathematical question regarding the passage of surnames circa 1873. The Reverend Henry William Watson replied with a solution. Together, they prescribed the process.



You do not have to be a mathematician to see from the chart the decreasing survival rate of a surname as the number of generations increases. The process models family names as patrilineal (passed from father to son), while offspring are randomly either male or female, and names become extinct if the family name line dies out (i.e., holders of the family name die without male descendants).

However, the formula is of limited usefulness in understanding actual family name distributions. In practice, family names change for many other reasons – the dying out of a name line is only one factor. People, especially immigrants, have their surnames changed for them. People are adopted into new families, inheriting a new surname. Sometimes folks change their surname just because they do not like the original.

## Genealogy and Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) might seem a bit scary to some folks but it has proven to be a boon to genealogists. We find this technology buried in many of the tools we use in our family history research.

Google's chess playing AI software, Alpha Zero, is so good that it can now beat any human at the game. It does this by using several layers of neural networks (not unlike our own human brain), an objective (i.e., win the game), the rules of the game and thousands and thousands of games (playing against itself, over 4 million times in less than 9 hours) other software and even humans) while it learns how to win. MIT also used AI to discover the new antibiotic Halicin using a similar approach. Check the name – after “Hal” - the super spaceship computer in the novel *2001 – A Space Odyssey*. The military is using AI to assist fighter pilots in difficult maneuvers.

This same technology can be applied to help genealogists. Family Search uses AI to read mountains of hand-written records (e.g., census records) to produce an index. AI can search podcasts for specific words. For example, we know that the second most popular search request to Google search is genealogy related (number one popular search is pornography related!). Google's search engine also uses AI to quickly return relevant links for you to follow on any topic.

Family Search and Ancestry.com also use AI to assist you in your family history detective work. My Heritage uses AI to improve your old photographs adding life to the world of your ancestors.

Hence, you can not only use your own brain for the detective work of genealogy, you can enlist some powerful AI to help you along the way.