

Genealogy Do-Over – Step 10

Topics: 1) Reviewing DNA Testing Options and 2) Organizing Research Materials – Digital

Reviewing DNA Testing Options

One of my biggest research challenges has been to connect two different lines of ancestors: the MacEntees of Gardiner, Ulster County, New York with the more famous McEntees of Kingston, also in Ulster County. The only way I'll likely prove one of my long-held theories is through DNA testing.

Which DNA Test is Best? One Way to Start . . .

. . . is to read! That means studying various articles available online and in print. I've learned so much over the past five years from these great blogs that feature DNA and genealogy:

- **DNA Bargains – Which Test Should I Use?**
<https://dnabargains.com/dna-test-use/>
- **DNAeXplained – Genetic Genealogy**
<http://dna-explained.com/>
- **Kitty Cooper's Blog**
<http://blog.kittycooper.com/>
- **The Genetic Genealogist**
<http://www.thegeneticgenealogist.com/>
- **The Legal Genealogists – DNA**
<http://www.legalgenealogist.com/blog/category/dna/>
- **Your Genetic Genealogist**
<http://www.yourgeneticgenealogist.com/>

DNA Genealogy Toolkit

Another great read – and FREE – is the [**Jump into Genetic Genealogy: Use Genealogical DNA Testing to Solve Family Mysteries**](#) e-book from Family Tree University. This guide will help you learn the terminology involved with DNA genealogy and you'll be able to differentiate between the various tests.

How about a wiki, like Wikipedia, but for DNA genealogy? That's what you'll find at the **ISOGG Wiki** (http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Wiki_Welcome_Page) created and maintained by the **International Society of Genetic Genealogy**. This site makes it easy to search for terminology, DNA test vendors, and more.

Interpreting DNA Testing Results

One tool I need to use more is **GEDMatch** (<https://gedmatch.com/>) which allows you to upload your testing results from various tests and run reports as well as connect with other genealogists using DNA testing.

Organizing Research Materials – Digital

While computers and the Internet have been a boon to genealogy researchers, with more data come more headaches including how to keep it all organized!

Danger Ahead: The Digital Dark Ages

Which of these two items do you think is more in peril of being lost: An original photograph from 1950 OR a digital scan of that same photograph? While the printed version might be lost, or consumed in a fire or damaged in a flood, consider all these calamities that could befall your digital version:

- Hard drive failure
- Accidental deletion of file
- Conversion from high-res TIFF file format to lower-res JPEG format
- File corruption
- File format becomes obsolete
- Storage on outdated media such as floppy disks
- Over-correction of color and features using photo editing software

The truth is that there is no guarantee that TIFF or other file formats will even be around in 20 years. I'm sure that even with glasses, my eyes will always be able to see that 1950 photo! See [Google's Vint Cerf warns of 'digital Dark Age'](#) for an overview of this pressing issue.

Pick a File Naming Convention and Stick With It!

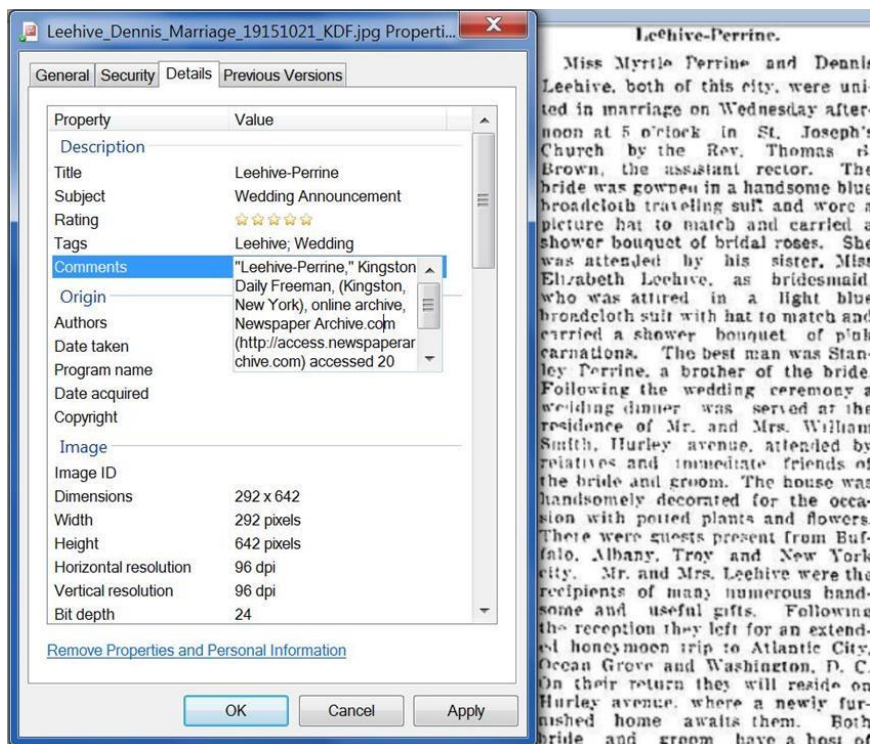
There are many different ways to name your digital files used in genealogy research. Some prefer a numbering scheme while others begin with the surname. What about married female ancestors? (I ALWAYS use the surname with which they were born . . .)

My method right now, and one that works for me is as follows: **SLATTERY John Vincent b1888 WWI Draft Reg Card** tells me, at first glance, that the file is a World War I draft registration card for John Vincent Slattery who was born in 1888. I add the “b_____” segment since I have many ancestors with the same name, such as John Austin.

This method is loosely based on one developed by a current Genealogy Do-Over participant, Diana Ritchie. Click [here](#) to read Diana's original post in The Genealogy Do-Over Group on Facebook outlining her file naming convention.

Metadata Is Your Friend

What is metadata? It is “data about data” but there is an easier way to get genealogists interested. What if I told you that there was a way for you to add information about a digital image to the file – such as the subject, data, location and even a source citation – to the file so that it is always part of the file structure? That is what metadata can do.



In the example above, I have entered my own text in the Title and Subject fields, added Tags and also placed my source citation in the Comments field (which holds 9,999 characters!)

You may not realize that metadata is already added to many of your digital files, especially when they are created. One example is a photo created with a digital camera or a smartphone. If you examine the metadata it will tell you the type of camera used to create the file, the file creation date, the resolution and sometimes even the GPS location of the photo.

So what about files that you've created, can you add and edit that metadata? Sure you can. An easier way to explain it is to watch a video recording of a webinar I presented called **Metadata for Digital Images**. Click [HERE](#) to watch now. Also check out the FREE Metadata for Digital Images Cheat Sheet [HERE](#) at Abundant Genealogy.

Once you've mastered the metadata concepts, consider adding important metadata to each of your genealogy research files!

Organize AND Backup Digital Materials

What good is spending hours organizing digital files if you don't ensure their future accessibility? Every genealogist should have a data backup plan and also perform backups on a regular basis.

Try employing the **3-2-1 Rule**:

- **3 copies of each file.** This means one primary copy, likely your hard drive, and then two other copies such as in the cloud and on an external hard drive.
- **2 different media formats.** Don't store all copies on different hard drives or in different cloud platforms. Use different media such as hard drive, cloud, USB flash drive etc.
- **1 offsite copy.** This means do not copy files to a USB drive that you keep near your computer. Place it in a fire safe. Better yet, make sure one of your file copies is in the cloud which means it is not physically stored near the hard drive version.

Don't forget that backing up on a regular schedule is important as well. In the genealogy community, the 1st day of each month is promoted as **Data Backup Day** and is a reminder to all genealogists to future proof their research data!

Step 10 To Do List – Full Do-Over Participants

- **New to DNA Genealogy:** If you have not yet spent time learning about DNA genealogy, use some of the resources listed above and familiarize yourself with the various tests and terminology. Also, consider attending a DNA genealogy lecture at the next genealogy conference you attend.
- **Organizing Research Materials – Digital:** Map out a file naming convention and also rename folders if necessary. In addition, don't forget to have at least two forms of file backup! Most genealogists use a cloud platform such as Dropbox paired with an external hard drive or an automated backup site.

Step 10 To Do List – Review or “Go-Over” Participants

- **Currently Familiar with DNA Genealogy:** If you have already completed one or more DNA test, make sure you are using all the possible tools at your disposal for interpreting results and connecting with others.
- **Organizing Research Materials – Digital:** If you have not set aside your original research files and are still working with them, you will likely have the most work to do in terms of getting organized. Decide on a file naming convention and start using folders to group and sort items.

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