Melungeons and DNA - 2009

At the first Melungeon Historical Society Conference held in Rogersville, Tn. in June 2009, the Melungeon Core DNA project was honored to provide several speakers and to have 4 of our 5 administrators present for the conference. Kathy James, Jack Goins, Roberta Estes and Penny Ferguson were present and answered a lot of questions, and Janet Crain was sorely missed.

Kathy and Jack both spoke about their various projects, surnames and experiences, and I spoke about Melungeons and DNA as a broader topic. In this article, I am recapping that presentation for our membership. I wish to state unequivocally that while the DNA presentation is mine, the work that went into the research, both historical and genealogical is that of the group, and I am using the information provided by participants and researchers as well as others in this presentation. DNA without history and genealogy is incomplete, like a 3 legged stool with a leg missing. It can't stand.

When the Melungeon Core DNA project was formed in July of 2005 www.familytreedna.com/public/coremelungeon, the administrators agreed that they needed to define who needed to be tested, who was defined as a Melungeon and to set forth a set of goals. In that vein, the administrators defined Melungeons for this project as a clan of intermarried families who were individually referenced as Melungeons. They are typically found in Hawkins and surrounding counties from about 1800 to about 1900. Jack Goins found the earliest actual reference to them as a group in 1813 in the Stony Creek Church minutes, but no specific individuals or surnames were mentioned in that document. Our goal was to use DNA and genealogy to reconstruct these families to determine as best we could their heritage.

A scientific project must have definition and boundaries, and for us, these were the boundaries that we felt would include those who were defined as Melungeons and exclude those who were not. Of course, Melungeons were not "created" on Newman's Ridge, but their ancestors were not identified as Melungeons, or if they were, we have not yet found those references. Therefore, there is also a group of people identified as "Melungeon Ancestors" that we are interested in as well and then of course those who descend from the Melungeon families are referenced as "Melungeon Descendants".

Who were the Melungeons? Lewis Jarvis writes the following:

"Much has been said and written about the inhabitants of Newman Ridge and Blackwater in Hancock County, Tennessee. They have been derisively dubbed, with the name "Melungeon" by the local white people who lived here with them. It's not a traditional name or a tribe of Indians. Some have said these people were here when this country was first explored by the white people and others that they are a lost tribe of Indians and have no date of their existence here. All of

this is erroneous and cannot be sustained. They had land grants in places where they formerly lived. These people not any of them were here when the first white hunting party came from Virginia and North Carolina in the year 1761."

Jarvis goes on to describe them as the friendly Indians who came with the white immigrants who came to the New River and Fort Blackmore.

This definition combined with historical research gives us a clean list of surnames to work with.

Racial Identification

There are a few terms that I'd like to discuss that one sees used repeatedly when referring to individuals on the early tax lists and census records. In some cases, it's important to look at the entire record for context. For example, if there are only three options, white, black and mulatto, one would never find an Indian listed. On the other hand, on tax lists, if one is listed as an Indian, even if the surname in question today is not proven Native by DNA testing, there is no reason to believe that the family in question did not have Native heritage. It simply came from another source other than the ancestral paternal line.

Mulatto today is taken to mean mixed black and white, but historically, that wasn't always true. In many cases it meant not negro and not white, so mixed, and it could have been mixed black/white, Indian/white, black/Indian or a combination of all 3.

Mixed meant the same thing, basically, not black and not white.

Negro typically meant black and not looking or known to be admixed. If you looked admixed, you were called mulatto or mixed.

Mustee is a term no longer widely in use, and when it us used today typically means something akin to "half-breed". The historical usage of the word typically meant mixed with Indian blood. The mixture could have been Indian/white, Indian/Spanish in Mexico or the Southwest or could possibly also mean Indian/black. Again, the context of usage would be important but any individual so referenced in historical documents could be suspected of having Native heritage that was admixed at that point in time.

White was white. One could not be white if one had any minority ancestry "to the third or fourth generation inclusive" depending on when and where the record was created. At one point, this law was extended to include even "one drop" of non-white ancestry.

By the time an individual had less than 25% minority heritage (second generation), the identifying physical traits disappear, but an individual who no

longer looked anything but white was still classified as “mulatto” or “mixed” because everyone in the area where they lived knew about their ancestry. One minority ancestor in the third generation contributes 12.5% of our gene pool and in the 4th generation contributes only 6.25%. This is why we find many families “turned white” on their way to a new location, being recorded where they left as “other than white” and in their new location as “white”.

How individuals were defined varied widely. Often how they were identified had more to do with the person doing the identification than the heritage of the individual. It’s not uncommon to find someone defined as mulatto in one location, white in the next, mixed in the next, mulatto again, then white. Census takers generally looked at people and decided, or knew their family and history and wrote what they thought to be true. Census classifications for individuals who never moved can vary from census to census.

Given the social, economic and civic discrimination of historical times, it goes without saying that “white” was the race that provided educational opportunity, removed repression, assured civic equality such as the right to vote and fostered financial success. It was advantageous to become “white” if at all possible, and as quickly as possible.

Keep in mind though that finding even one record where your ancestors are recorded as something other than white is an important finding that may indicate admixed heritage. In colonial America Indians were enslaved as well as Africans, and admixed heritage can never be assumed to be specifically either African or Indian without further research including historical, genealogical and via DNA testing.

Families tended to live in nuclear groups. They suffered discrimination and repression equally throughout the group. Survival often depended on having the assistance of your “kinship group”. In other words, people established clans. When it came time to consider moving further west for land, opportunity or just a fresh start, they didn’t migrate alone. They went in groups with their children, parents, brothers, cousins and in-laws. In some cases, none stayed behind. It’s important to look at family groupings when we track family migration. Finding the same surnames and individuals in the new location that match those of the old imply a kinship group. There was safety in numbers, and while the landscape might be new, the adventures were shared with close friends and family.

Looking at our core Melungeon families, we find just this settlement and migration pattern emerging.

The Core Melungeon Families

Each surname on our core list is “proven” by a particular piece of data, but additional collaborative evidence is included. The surnames listed below are

included in the core group of families, with the specific “Melungeon identifying” piece of information bolded. Other corroborating and supportive data that also points to the same conclusion is included, but alone that data does not necessarily mean they were a Melungeon family. For example, many of those who are identified as free persons of color (fpc) in the Hawkins County 1830 census were also identified as Melungeon, BUT, being identified as fpc in the Hawkins County 1830 census alone does not identify a family AS Melungeon.

- **Bolin (Bowling, Bolling)** - Orange Co. NC Indian record, **Jarvis said full blooded**, 1830 Hawkins fpc, Stony Creek, Blackwater, Hillsboro NC, Orange Co NC New River, on Plecker’s list of those with one drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”
- **Bolton** - **Shepherd Case**
- **Breedlove** - **Shepherd Case**
- **Bunch** - referenced as "King of Melungeons " (Jack Goins’ book “Melungeons and Pioneer Families”), **Jarvis identified**, 1755 Orange Co. NC mulatto, New River Orange Co. NC, on Plecker’s list of those with one drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”
- **Collins** - Orange Co. Indian record, Jarvis said full blooded**,** 1830 Hawkins fpc, Wilkes Co., Dromgoole identifies as Cherokee and Portuguese who stole identity from white settlers, 1846 voting trial, 1773 Fincastle living on Indian land, Louisa Co, 1755 Orange Co. NC tax list as mulatto, New River Orange Co. NC, Dromgoole identified Vardy Collins and Shep Gibson as “head and source” of Melungeons, on Plecker’s list of those with one drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”, **1890 census report identifies Collins as one of the original Melungeons who was an Indian**
- **Denham –** Dromgoole: The Portuguese branch was for a long time a riddle, the existence of it being stoutly denied. It has at last, however, been traced to one "Denham", a Portuguese who married a Collins woman. Denham, it is supposed, came from one of the Spanish settlements lying further to the south. He settled on Mulberry Creek, and married a sister of Old Sol Collins. There is another story, however, about Denham. It is said that the first Denham came as did the first Collins from North Carolina, and that he (or his ancestors) had been left upon the Carolina coast by some Portuguese pirate vessel plying along the shore. **1890 census report identifies Denham as one of the original Melungeons, a Portuguese who was put ashore by a pirate ship for being troublesome or insubordinate.**
- **Gibson -** 1830 Hawkins fpc, Dromgoole identifies as Cherokee and Portuguese who stole indentify from white settlers, Wilkes Co., **Jarvis identified**, Louisa Co, 1755 Orange Co. NC tax list as mulatto, Blackwater, New River Orange Co. NC, Dromgoole identifies Shep Gibson and Vardy Collins as head and source, on Plecker’s list of those with one

drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”, **1890 census report identifies Gibson as one of the original Melungeons who was an Indian**

- **Goins - Shepherd case**, 1858 Claiborne slander suit, 1846 election case, Blackwater member, 1830 Hawkins fpc, 1880 census as Portuguese, on Plecker’s list of those with one drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”, **1890 census report identifies Goins as one of the original Melungeons who was of negro blood**
- **Goodman -** 1830 Hawkins Co fpc, **Jarvis identified**, named in Plecker letter in 1942 as Melungeon
- **Mallett - convicted on voting charge**
- **Minor -** 1852 marriage (Bloomer) issue, Hawkins and Claiborne, fpc, 1846 voting trial, Portuguese on 1880 census, Cherokee Indian application, **Dromgoole "head and source” of Melungeons**, Blackwater, Henry Co. Va. married a Goins, Plecker letter identifies Minor as Melungeon
- **Moore - Jarvis record**, 1830 Hawkins fpc, on Plecker’s list of those with one drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”
- **Menley - Shepherd case**
- **Morning - Shepherd case**
- **Mullins -** 1830 Hawkins fpc, on Plecker’s list of those with one drop of negro blood for Lee and Smyth Co., Va. designated as “mostly Tennessee Melungeons”, **1890 census report identifies Mullins as one of the original Melungeons who was a white trader**
- **Perkins - Shepherd case**, Johnson Co., Tn. 1857 biracial marriage
- **Shumake** - **Shepherd Case**
- **Sullivan** – **Jarvis identified**
- **Williams** - 1830 Hawkins Co fpc, in Wilkes Co., NC, in 1789 **Lela Williams declared on oath that Verdie Collins is the father of her child and likewise Mary Williams declared on oath that Jordan Gibson is the father of her child.**

Lewis Jarvis noted the families as indicated (by “Jarvis”) above, and then added, “and others not remembered”. Jarvis was born in 1799 and died in Hancock County in 1885. He knew these people personally and was speaking from his personal knowledge.

Walter Plecker (1861–1947) was a physician and public health advocate who served as first registrar of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics, from 1912 to 1946. Plecker believed that the state's Native Americans had been "mongrelized" with its African American population and helped implement "The Racial Integrity Act," which recognized only two races, "white" and "colored" thus eliminating Virginia's Indians with the stroke of a pen. Further information can be found here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Ashby_Plecker.

Will Allen Dromgoole (female) (1860-1934) was a reporter who visited several Melungeon families and stayed for a few days. She later wrote a series of articles that portrayed the Melungeons in an unfavorable and derogatory light.

The 1890 census, although lost, was transmitted with a series of letters from the census enumerators and contained reports about the Indians in every state. Carroll D. Wright included information about the Melungeons in the 1890 census in a letter to the Hon. Hoke Smith., Secretary of the Interior. More information can be found here http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1890a_v10-28.pdf.

Other families are of interest to the Melungeon project because of their intertwined history and connection to the Melungeons as ancestors.

Two families in particular who are identified as such are:

- **Sizemore** – ancestor to Melungeon families, Y-line DNA proven Native American (2 individual lines)
- **Riddle/Ridley** – ancestor to Melungeon families, listed as Indian on Virginia tax list, Y-line DNA is European

Other families who are of interest to the Melungeon DNA project include a group who are known to be closely associated with Melungeon families, but are not specifically identified as Melungeon. Some information exists which might indicate they are Melungeon, and having said that, they may fall into the group that Jarvis mentioned as “others not remembered”.

- **Herd/Hurd** – descendant of Melungeon family (grandson of Zachariah Minor)
- **Moseley** – 1830 Hawkins fpc
- **Nichols** – 1830 Hawkins fpc, William Nichols who was the fpc may be the same William who married the sister of William Riddle, the Tory hung on the “hanging tree” in Wilkes Co., NC
- **Hopkins** – about 1840 required to leave the county as fpc not allowed to stay more than 21 days, he stayed and was later charged with illegal voting

For those interested in the specific references, most of the information can be found on Jack Goins website at www.jgoins.com or in his book previously mentioned.

One item in particular needs further mention here because it seems to include names not known for being Melungeon in the Hawkins/Hancock County core region. The Shepherd Case was an 1873 court case where the inheritance of a young woman was dependent on a racial classification of her Melungeon family. The court determined that the family was not of mixed African blood, which would

have caused her to lose her inheritance per the laws of Tennessee at the time. Testimony in the case indicated that they were Portuguese. This case also includes testimony about a migration path from South Carolina to Hawkins County then on to Hamilton County, Tn.

Subsequent research revealed a 1794 South Carolina petition from individuals who fell under the "Act for Imposing a Pole Tax on All Free Negroes, Mustees and Mulatoes". This tax list includes the name of the woman's ancestor in question, Solomon Bolton. Interestingly enough, this list also includes the surnames of Gibson, Collins and others including Oxendine which is exclusively a Lumbee surname. Specific information about this case including depositions can be found at http://jgoins.com/Hamilton_case.htm.

Clearly this venue needs much further research and could prove to be a connecting link between different groups of people who perhaps have their earliest links in Virginia and/or among the region's Native Tribes. In the late 1800s there is documentation that indicates that the Lumbee also referenced themselves as Melungeon. Portuguese self-identification is also reported among the Lumbee in some cases. Further research is clearly indicated.

The Melungeons and Physical Traits

As project administrators, we receive daily inquiries from individuals who want to join the Melungeon DNA project because they have one of a list of physical traits they have found someplace in a book or on the internet identified as a "Melungeon trait". These traits include the infamous Anatolian lump on the back of the head, shovel teeth, six fingers, an exotic "Melungeon disease", and others.

Some traits such as shovel teeth and the epicanthal eye fold that is identified with "Asian eyes" are found in Native American groups. Given that we know that some of the Melungeon families have Native heritage and others have the (as yet unproven) oral history of Native heritage, it's not surprising to find these traits among the Melungeon descendants of today. However, many people who are clearly, unquestionably, not Melungeon descendants have these same traits. These traits are not unique to Melungeons and cannot be used to identify someone with Melungeon heritage. Neither is dark skin or a photo of an ancestor that has dark skin or looks "Native" or of mixed race, at least not without additional evidence.

Other traits, such as the Anatolian lump, six fingers or the diseases some have identified as "Melungeon" have never been proven to exist within any core Melungeon descendant, let alone in enough descendants that they would be considered a potential identifier of Melungeon heritage.

In an effort to better understand the occurrence levels of diseases that have been associated on various internet sites with Melungeon heritage, Kathy James

called Dr. Dunn at the Department of Health and Environmental Control in Nashville, TN and inquired about statistics on sarcoidosis, a disease that some have suggested is a “Melungeon disease”. He advised that this was not a reportable or recordable disease in the state of Tennessee and they were not keeping records on it and had never kept records on it.

Kathy further searched and found one study on the internet in 10 centers in the United States known to have patients with sarcoidosis and none were in the state of Tennessee.

She then called a long-time physician in Hancock County, now retired and inquired as to how many cases he had seen in his career and he said, "two or three".

If Hancock County’s own physician has only seen 2 or 3 cases in his entire career practicing in Hancock County, sarcoidosis is clearly not of epidemic proportions in Melungeon descendants.

Melungeon Heritage Trail

Jack Goins’ research has shown that the ancestors of some Melungeon families are found in early Louisa County, Virginia circa 1665 on the Pamunkey River and began migrating about 1747. They then migrated into the lower Virginia Counties, such as Halifax, Patrick and Henry and on into the Flat River area, then into the western North Carolina counties, such as Orange and Wilkes. The next stop on their journey is in the New River area beginning about 1765, then on into early Lee and Hawkins County about 1800. By the mid 1800s we find them in Hawkins, Hancock and Eastern Claiborne County in Tennessee and in Lee County in Virginia. Other family members had moved on to other locations and states, in particular Kentucky and western counties of Tennessee, but other than in Hamilton County, Tn., we find no record of those individuals being referenced as Melungeon in their new locations.

DNA Testing

In an earlier newsletter, we covered the basics of DNA testing. An introduction can be found here http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~molcgdrg/faqs/faq10.htm.

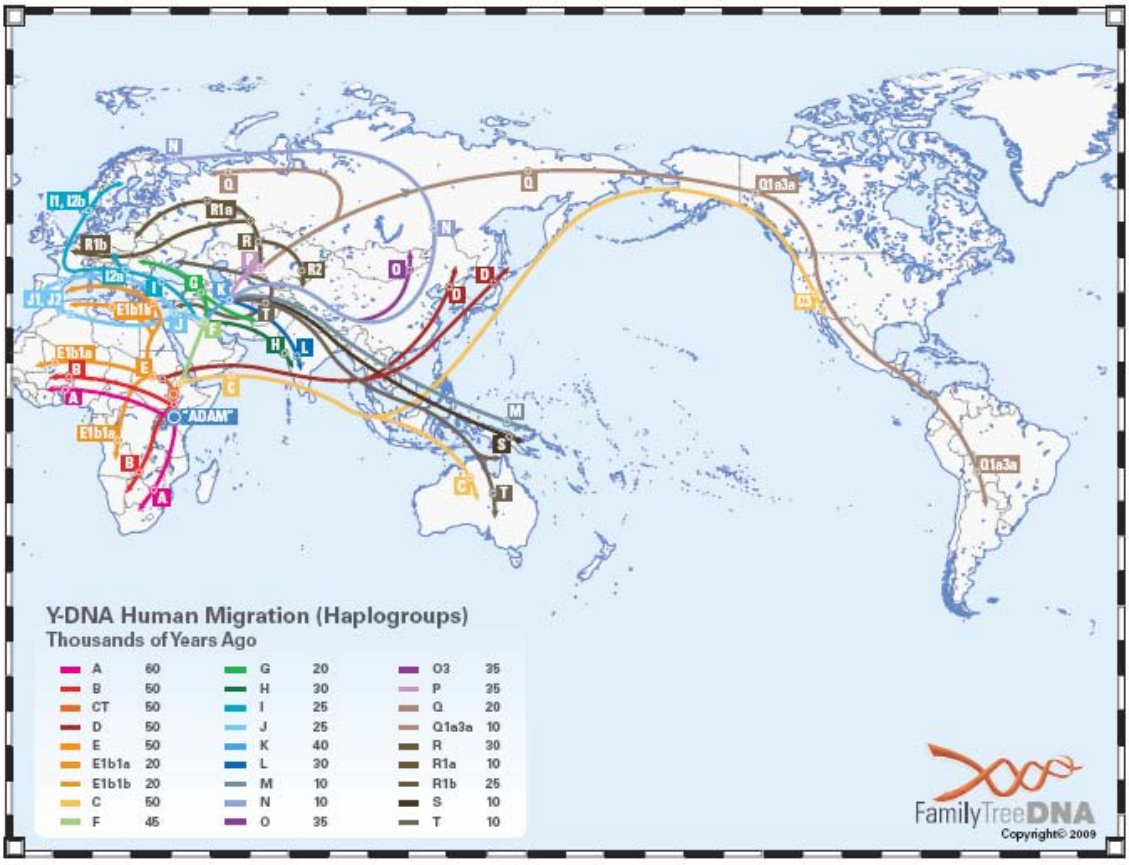
A quick review of the available kinds of tests today for genetic genealogy reveals 3 types of tests.

Y-Line DNA – This is the most common genealogy test, testing the Y chromosome whose inheritance path is from father to son, along with the surname. The Y chromosome is not admixed with the DNA from the mother as the mother does not have a Y chromosome. The Y chromosome makes males male.

Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) – This type of testing tests the mitochondria which is passed from mothers to all of their children. However, only women pass it on to their offspring. The mitochondrial DNA of the mother is not mixed with any DNA of the father. The inheritance path of the mitochondrial DNA is the maternal line, meaning whether male or female, your mother, her mother, and on up the maternal line of your family tree.

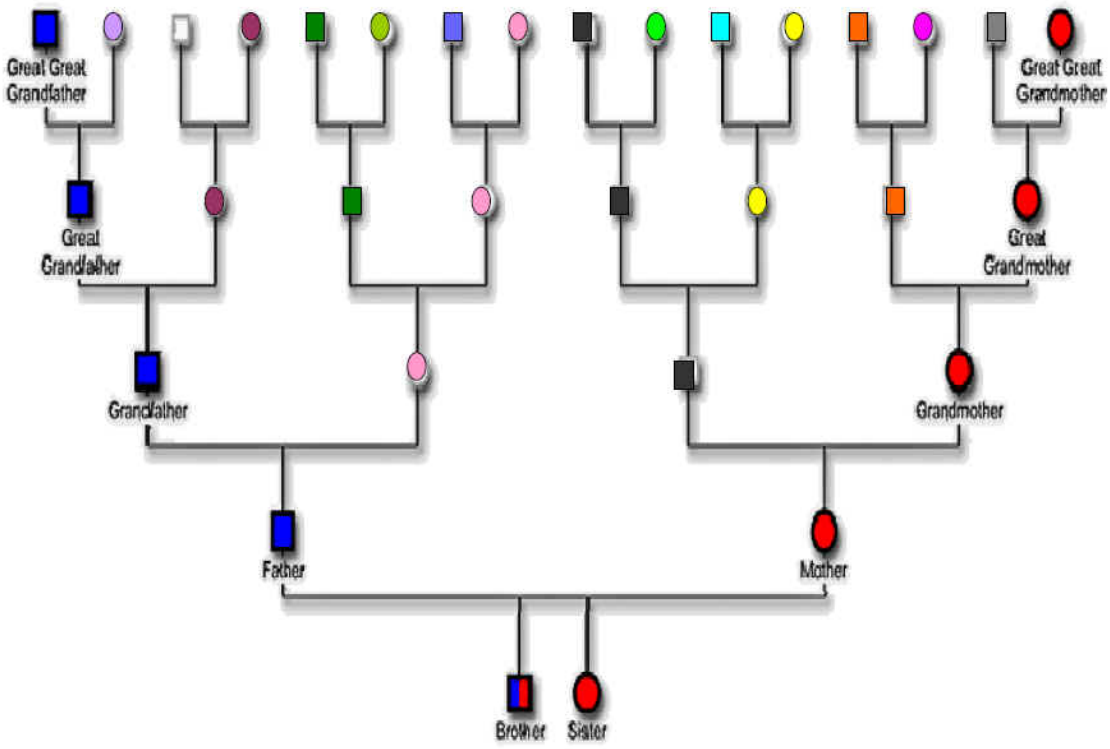
Both Y-line and mitochondrial DNA provide you with genealogical information in terms of who you match. More important to the study of groups of people is the deep ancestry information provided by the haplogroups identified during testing. African, Native American, Asian and Indo-European groups for both Y-line and mtDNA all have distinctive haplogroups. A haplogroup can be thought of as an ancient clan.

An example of the male haplogroups and where they are found is shown below, compliments of Family Tree DNA. You'll note that only two male haplogroups are found in Native American populations, C and Q. In reality, only certain subgroups of both haplogroups are found in Native populations, but in general terms, if you're not within haplogroup C or Q then your ancestors were not of original Native ancestry, among those who crossed the Bering land bridge 15,000 or so years ago.



Today, the only reliable way to determine which of these categories your paternal or maternal ancestor fell within is the Y-line or the mtDNA test. However, looking at your family tree, it becomes immediately evident that this testing only represents two lines and leaves out the majority of your tree. This is why genealogists are always searching for cousins to test to represent those other lines in the tree. This process is called creating a DNA Pedigree Chart. A paper that describes how to do this is available at http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~molcgdrg/pubs/p3.htm.

The example below shows your Y-line (if you are a male) as blue squares up the left hand side of the chart, your mitochondrial DNA as red ovals up the right hand side of your chart. The rest of the families on your pedigree chart are shown by colored "family lines" and can be determined by finding the right cousin to test.



Autosomal Testing

A third kind of testing is called Autosomal testing and tests portions of the rest of your DNA that is contributed by both of your parents.

Because of the frustration of attempting to find cousins to represent ancestors in each of the slots on your family tree, and sometimes the impossibility of that task, scientists and hobbyists alike have been trying to find other answers within our DNA. Several autosomal test products have been introduced into the genetic genealogy marketspace. Unfortunately, each of these products is plagued with sets of issues and while they provide us with interesting pieces of data, none are

truly reliable. Unfortunately, many of these products actually give us different results from the same set of data. The difference is in the tools each product uses, the analysis given to the results (and by whom), the difficulty of dealing with the statistics, the inheritance of the DNA itself and the populations involved.

I have detailed the specifics about each of these tests in a document titled "Proving your Native American Heritage: Successfully Using Y-Line, Mitochondrial and Autosomal DNA Results" available at http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~molcgdrg/pubs/nah.htm, so I will not duplicate this information here. I will however summarize the autosomal testing landscape as of June 2009.

The products and services offered in this space claim to tell you about your mixed heritage. How this information is delivered differs. One company who is now bankrupt and defunct provided this information as percentages of 4 different ethnic groups; Sub-Saharan African, East Asian, Indo-European and Native American. However, this company was plagued with what consistently looked like "false positives". Their margin of error in their documentation was as high as 15%, meaning your results could be 15% more or less than the amount of ancestry they had provided. When you're dealing with minority ancestry as small as 5 or 10%, a 15% margin of error could mean you have none or you have 20 or 25%. That's the difference between no Native heritage and a full-blooded grandparent (25%), a range that's not particularly useful or helpful.

Another way other companies deliver these results are as matches to populations in different locations. These products all use the same Codis markers, but their output, being your match locations, can vary widely. For example, comparing three different results for the same individual using the same Codis data, one from Onmipop and two from DNATribes, one in 2006 and one in 2009 showed only one location in common, Italy. This individual's mother was from German, Dutch and Acadian stock and her father's family lines had been in America since colonial times on all lines. Obviously she was a well-mixed cocktail of European DNA (plus a little Native and African thrown in for good measure) and the Italian "best match" had no basis in reality nor did any of the other locations given in the 3 test results match each other.

This differentiation is due to four separate issues; population normalization, ethnic identification, inheritance patterns and statistical noise.

The first issue is that of population normalization. In layman's terms, this means that taking 50 samples from Detroit is not necessarily representative of the balance of the population of Michigan. Depending on which neighborhood you take the 50 samples from, it may not even be representative of Detroit as a city.

A second issue is identification of ethnicity of the individuals who are being used as a baseline for comparison. The baseline is taken from medical and forensic

published papers and journals. The individuals are anonymous, which begs the question of who identified them as "Lumbee", for example. Was it the individual, was it an arresting officer, who said they were Lumbee? And since a Lumbee tribe doesn't yet officially (federally) exist, what exactly does that designation mean? As you can see, if your baseline data has issues, then comparing others to that data also has issues.

In the case of these autosomal products, the satisfaction of the consumer seems to be directly related to the delivery of the hoped for finding.

Unfortunately, more recent research on thousands of DNA locations still provides ambiguous results. For example, an individual from Norway matches the same large DNA block of an individual in California with Aboriginal Canadian heritage and both of them match someone in Mongolia and also a Pima. The man in Norway clearly does not have Native American ancestry. If this individual tested and was from Virginia instead of Norway, the tendency would be to interpret this block of DNA as ancestral to Native Americans, which is clearly not always true.

The third issue is that of "the shuffle" of genetic inheritance. "The shuffle" is the series of events that determine which of Mom's and Dad's chromosomes and genes each child gets. Think of two decks of cards, a pink and a blue deck. Each child gets a full deck from each parent after they are shuffled, but there won't be the same amount of pink and blue cards nor the same face cards from each parent, nor do we know how those cards were shuffled. It is really a random event or are some genes passed in bundles? We really don't know how these "cards" are selected for, how they are passed, or how to measure something that isn't passed in equal percentages.

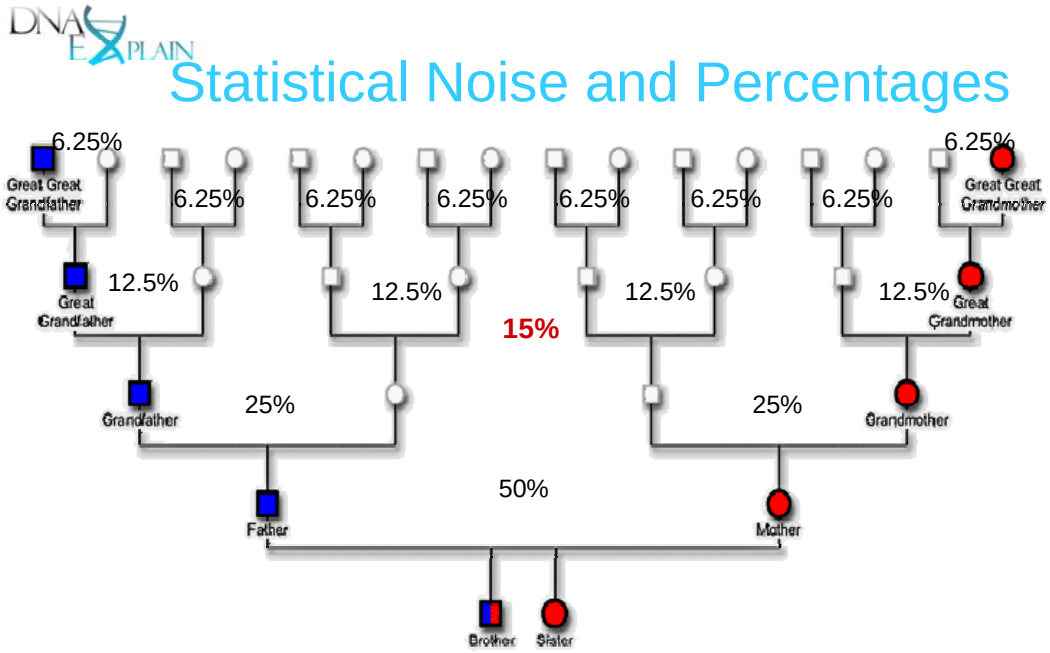
The fourth issue is statistical noise. In autosomal testing, we are trying to measure values that appear with more or less frequency in various populations without knowing how those population values were derived, if they are relevant for the entire population as listed, who identified the individual's with a particular ethnic or population group, and what criteria they used. Because of these unknown factors, the term statistical noise comes into play. In essence, statistical noise is the "slop factor" that allows for what we don't know.

However, when dealing with high amounts of statistical noise and genealogy, it's very difficult to use the information with accuracy.

The following graph shows the amount of DNA inherited, on average (remember we don't really know how DNA is passed, but we know it isn't passed in even amounts), from each generation.

I've also shown the location on a pedigree chart where a statistical noise level of 15% falls.

Basically it falls between your grandmother and great-grandmother. Most of us knew our grandmother, so if she was 15% anything, we could have discovered it easily. Everything above the 15% level on our pedigree chart, including our great-grandmother, could indeed be statistical noise in the numbers reported from autosomal testing. Typically, what we're looking for in minority admixture to confirm our family's oral history, and that means usually 4 or 5 generations or more up the family tree. In 4 generations, each ancestor only contributes, on the average, 6.25% of our genetic makeup, so less than the amount of statistical noise.



Statistical Noise is as High as 15% - Is it Real or is it Noise?

In summary, autosomal DNA testing technology in general simply isn't "there yet". It doesn't prove anything but it can provide you with interesting data. Just be aware of its limits.

As with most things, there is one exception to the rule.

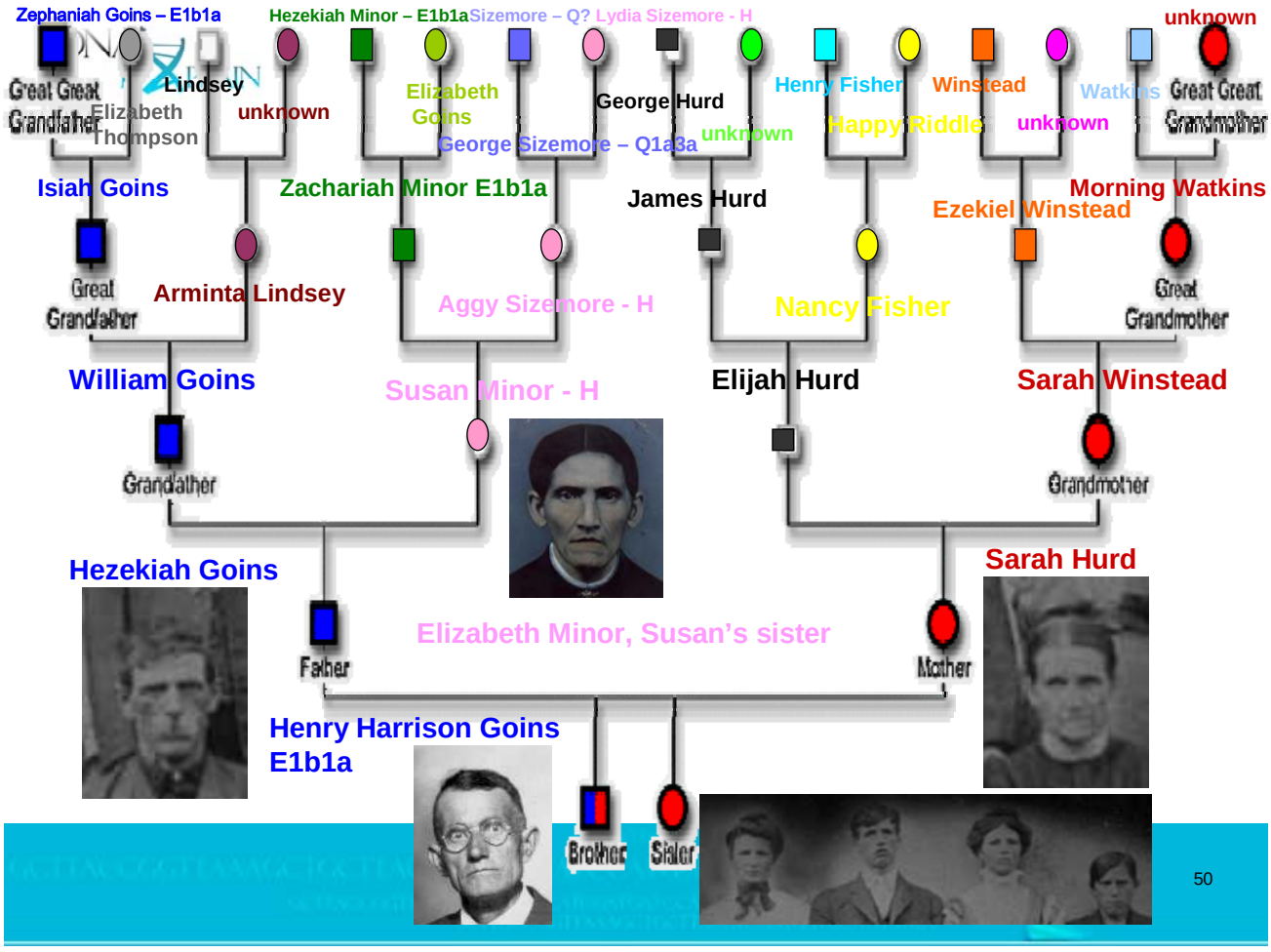
There is one reliable test that can provide individuals with confirmation as to the existence of Native Heritage. It is called the D9S919 test available from Family Tree DNA. The values of 9 or 10 exist in about 30% of the Native American population today. Having these values confirms that you do have Native heritage, so keep looking for that ancestor using mtDNA and Y-line for where they live on your family tree. Having a value of anything other than 9-10 does NOT disprove Native Heritage.

Why is this important to Melungeon research? As administrators, we receive regular correspondence from people who feel they should join the Melungeon

Core project because they are “proven” to be Native or Lumbee or something else using one of these tests. These tests aren’t proof positive of anything, nor do they qualify an individual to join the Melungeon project. We’re still trying to build the Core Melungeon families using Y-line and mtDNA to determine the ethnicity of the core Melungeon families.

Example Melungeon Pedigree Chart

Jack Goins was gracious enough to allow us to use his family as an example of building a DNA Pedigree chart as a tool to determine whose DNA is needed to complete a family. In the case of Melungeon families, there was a great deal of intermarriage, so using this tool on a larger scale as a group will help immensely to document these various families and their heritage. On Jack’s chart below, I begin with his grandfather, Henry Harrison Goins. In each line that has been DNA tested, I include the haplogroup in the “tree”, so by looking at the top of each branch, you can easily see who has tested and which lines still need to be tested.



From the chart above, to complete Jack's Melungeon heritage lines, we need Elizabeth Thompson's mitochondrial DNA, the Lindsey Y DNA, Arminta Lindsay's mitochondrial DNA and Elizabeth Goins mitochondrial DNA. Moving to the wife's side, the Hurd surname is certainly of interest, so obtaining the Hurd DNA would be an added benefit, even though it might prove to not be Melungeon in nature, it would still be useful to have the information and would be another step to completing Jack's DNA Pedigree chart.

How to pursue the Y DNA is obvious, just follow the surname. Pursuing the mtDNA is more challenging. Tracking down people to contribute the mitochondrial DNA must be done through the females' lines, tracing them to current where in the current generation, males or females can test.

The Melungeons as a Group

What have we determined using DNA and genealogy together about the Melungeons as a population? We know based on their history that they were an intermarried clan of people who appear to have been associated early in Virginia and North Carolina and migrated together to the Hawkins County area of Tennessee about 1800. This is true for at least some of the families, in particular Goins, Bunch, Collins, Gibson, Minor and Sizemore although we have little information on others, in particular, the Shepherd Case families. This same migration scenario may not apply to all families identified as Melungeon. The table below includes both Sizemore and Riddle who are ancestral to Melungeon families.

Surname	Haplogroup	Ancestral Haplogroup Location
Bolin, Bunch, Collins, Gibson, Goodman, Moore, Minor, Riddle, Sizemore, Williams	R1b	European
Bunch, Collins, Goins, Minor, Gibson	E1b1a	Sub-Saharan African
Goins	L	Indian Subcontinent, South Asia
Collins	R1a	European
Collins, Hopkins	I2	European
Gibson, Moore, Mullins, Sizemore	I1	European
Williams	G	European
Sizemore	Q1a3a	Native American (2 separate lines)

Obviously, there was a great deal of admixture within surnames, meaning several surnames have different paternal ancestors. This may suggest a matrilineal culture where women had multiple male partners in their normal social arrangements and children would have taken their mother's last name. Maternal

cultures were the norm in both Native American and African families. In some cases, the various partners could have been of Native, European and African heritage, and children of the same mother might not carry the same paternal ancestral heritage.

Looking at individual family groups, we find the following within our project:

The Goins surname has 4 groups of matches and 4 individuals with no matches. Only one group is proven genealogically to the Melungeons, although others appear to be proven to the ancestral family of the Melungeons.

Gibson has 2 groups and 3 singletons (meaning a person with DNA results that no one else in the project matches). Both groups are proven to Melungeon families and one singleton appears to be but confirming research is ongoing.

Williams has 1 group and 4 singletons. None are genealogically proven to be Melungeon and one is a known adoption.

Collins has 4 groups and a singleton who are all proven genealogically Melungeon or connected to Melungeon families.

Some individuals with different Melungeon surnames have DNA that matches, which introduces confusion and interesting possibilities. Genealogists who specialize in each family are working on resolving these situations.

Each individual family is different. Depending on who they married, their admixture amount will differ significantly. While we can make some general statements about the Melungeon population as a whole, that can only be after studying families individually.

For example, we know today that any family who descends from one of the families that includes the male Sizemores who carry the Native American haplogroup Q1a3a positively have Native American ancestry.

We can say with equal certainly that those who descend from the Bunch, Collins, Goins or Minor families who carry haplogroup E1b1a have Sub-Saharan African ancestors. Research into the Gibson E1b1a line is ongoing as most of the Gibson lines to date carry European Y DNA. The Gibson E1b1a line may be an undocumented adoption in more recent times and not a historical ancestral haplogroup. The other surnames have multiple participants that confirm early ancestry of descent from a common ancestor.

We have to rely on genealogical and historical research to show us when that African ancestry was introduced. The balance of the families that have been tested and genealogically connected to the Melungeon families carry paternal European ancestry.

Because of situations in the Native culture in colonial times relating to Native males, their numbers were decimated by disease and warfare, leaving an unequal number of females in the villages. Tribes adopted non-Native males regularly. Other social situations arose as well relating to Native traditions of hospitality and visitors that caused non-Native DNA to be introduced into the tribe, but the "mixed" offspring was always considered Native by both the tribal members and European/American society as well. Eventually that designation would simply become mulatto or free person of color, both meaning in essence "not white" or "mixed".

Given the above scenario, we are today much more likely to discover Native haplogroups in mitochondrial DNA than in Y-line DNA. Unfortunately, because of the name changes every generation, the task of tracking those descendants forward in time and the ancestors backward in time are both very difficult. We lack good tools to track and find those who have already tested as well, unlike the situation with paternal surnames where by finding the surname project it's relatively easy to discover whether someone from your line has previously tested.

Melungeon Mitochondrial DNA

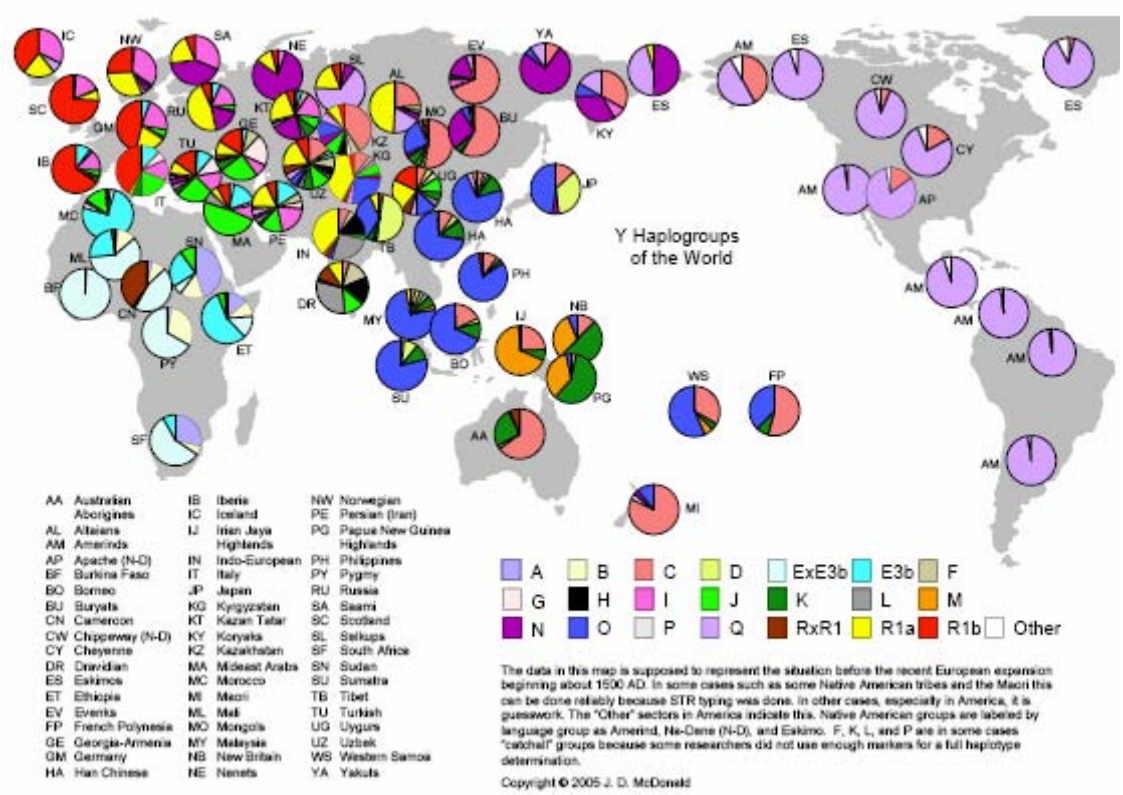
Despite the challenges in identifying and obtaining relevant mitochondrial DNA, we have succeeded in obtaining the mtDNA of three Melungeon maternal lines.

All of the following women fall into haplogroup H, a clearly European haplogroup.

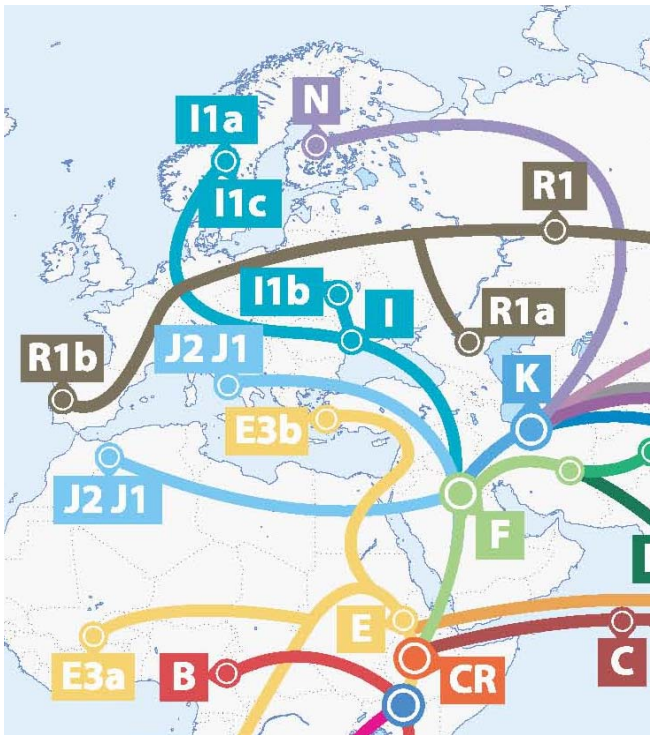
- **Mahala Collins** – wife of John Mullins (R1b), daughter of Solomon Collins and Gincie Goins
- **Jemina Simmes** – wife of Thomas Goins (E1b1a) born in VA abt 1750, Jemima's parents are unknown
- **Aggy Sizemore** – wife of Zachariah Minor (E1b1a), Aggy's parents are George Sizemore (Q1a3a) and Lydia Sizemore
- **Rachel Reed** – wife of Allen Collins (R1a1)
- **Elizabeth Collins** – wife of Martin Collins, daughter of Edmund (R1b1b2) Collins, mother unknown

Were the Melungeons Middle Eastern?

Another myth involving Melungeon heritage is that they were of Middle Eastern origin. In one way this is true. All people who migrated from Africa came through the Middle East on their way to their final destination, so yes at some point in time, all Europeans were from the Middle East, including the families who would become Melungeons who carry Europeans haplogroups. The question is, when did they leave the Middle East? The European haplogroups that are identified as such all were found in Europe 10,000 years ago or before. Haplogroup R arrived in Europe about 30,000 years ago.



Some haplogroups are found more predominantly in Eastern Europe and Southwest Asia, as you can see from the map above courtesy of John McDonald, but those haplogroups, such as Y chromosome J and G are not absent from Europe, just less prevalent there. They have been in Europe for thousands of years, and finding a haplogroup with a higher Middle Eastern frequency does not mean that the descendants of this line are recently from the Middle East. The map below shows the migration path of the European haplogroups out of African and subsequently through the Middle East.



We have no Y-line haplogroup J in the project and the one G we have is not proven to be Melungeon, so discussing the history of those haplogroups is irrelevant to the Melungeon DNA project at this point. The balance of the haplogroups are unquestionably European, Native American or African.

Relative to the Melungeons, we know that many of their ancestral lines have been in America since the mid-1600s, at least, both European and African based on the records discovered to date. (Obviously the Native lines were already here.) This equates to about 360 years, or just short of 15 generations. At 15 generations, an individual living today would carry only three thousands of 1% (00.003052%) of the DNA of an ancestor who was "pure" anything 15 generations ago. So even if one ancestor was indeed Mediterranean 15 generations ago, unless they continuously intermarried within a pure Mediterranean population, the amount would drop by 50% with each generation to the miniscule amount that would be found in today's current generation. With today's technology, this is simply untraceable in DNA. Based on the autosomal discussion earlier, the 5 generation barrier is nearly impossible to break with reliable data. Fifteen generations is a dream.

So to answer the original question, the Melungeons' ancestors did NOT descend from Mediterranean ancestry in any timeframe that is traceable using DNA technology, not in thousands of years, and certainly not after the mid 1600s when we find these core families living in close proximity in Louisa County, Va. Most of the Louisa County groups have at least 1 line with African paternal ancestry and some have several.

When the European families did migrate to Europe from the Middle East is a function of their haplogroup history and ancient ancestry, and those dates range from 5000 years ago to about 30,000 years ago, and they were in the company of everyone else who went to Europe.

The Earliest Records

Some of these core Melungeon families' ancestors were documented to have been in what would become the United States very early, and some were also noted as mulatto or mixed at that time as well.

Hanover County, Virginia was formed from New Kent in 1723 and Louisa from Hanover in 1742. The earliest records for some of these families are found in these counties. In 1724 and 1728 we find records in Hanover for both Bunch and Gibson. Collins is found there even earlier, in 1710.

In 1724, the ancestors of the Goins/Going family were listed as mulatto in a land dispute in Stafford County. These men were born circa 1665 and their descendants were still listed as free people of color as late as the 1830 census.

The Sizemore family was found in Henrico family in 1643, the area that later became Chesterfield and by the 1740s, they would be in the Brunswick, Lunenburg area that became Halifax and Mecklenburg Counties in Virginia.

By the 1740s, we find the Gibson, Collins, Bunch and Goins families in Louisa County interacting together. The Minor's are also there, but it has yet to be proven that it is the same Minor family as later married into the Melungeon families and migrated to Hawkins County. It's interesting to note that all 5 families, Collins, Bunch. Minor, Goins and Gibson, have at least one paternal line of African origin. As stated previously, investigation into the Gibson E1b1a line is ongoing to determine if it is a more recent introduction.

While all but one Gibson line has tested with European Y-line DNA, judging from the following court record, Gideon Gibson as well as his father were both "mixed", even if the admixture did not stem from their paternal line. This reference also connects these two families, Bunch and Gibson, from the early Louisa County, Virginia families together.

Paul Bunch and Gideon Gibson moved from the Louisa County area to South Carolina in the 1720s which caused a disturbance in Craven County, South Carolina. The Governor summoned them to ask about their presence and after meeting with them reported "I have had them before me in council and upon examination find that they are not negroes nor slaves but free people, that the father of them here is named Gideon Gibson and his father was also free. I have been informed by a person who lived in Virginia that this Gibson has lived there or several years in good repute and by his papers that he has produced before

me that his transactions there have been very regular. That he has for several years paid taxes for two tracks of land and has 7 negroes of his own. That he is a carpenter by trade and is come hither for the support of his family. I have in consideration of his wife being a white woman and several white women capable of working and being servicable in the country permitted him to settle in this country."

These early records and others documented in Jack Goins' book, website and elsewhere indicate that these early families were related, were not "white" and had been free for at least two generations, which could put the birth of the older "free" Gibson mentioned as early as pre-1650. They also show us unquestionably that these families continued to "mix" as the wives were contrasted to their husbands and classified as "white women". Unfortunately, they don't tell us the nature of the minority admixture or the degree, how the men became free, assuming they were slaves or indentured servants. Many questions remain.

Beginning in 1705 in Virginia and 1715 in North Carolina, marriage between anyone considered to be a "person of color" to the third or fourth generation (depending on the location and the timeframe) was prohibited from marrying a white person. Large fines, prison terms and/or public whippings were the penalty for breaking this law and any minister performing the marriage was subject to punishment as well.

These early Virginia records are interesting in that they provide an early connection between the Virginia lines that were the ancestors of the Melungeons of Tennessee and South Carolina, a location that was later connected to the Melungeons in the Shepherd suit in Tennessee in 1873. Both Collins and Gibson are on the 1794 South Carolina tax list of individuals of color which can be seen here http://jgoins.com/sc_petition.htm.

What Do We Need?

We need every person who has Melungeon heritage to work to complete their DNA Pedigree Chart for their Melungeon family lines. By working together, we can share resources. You may not have a "cousin" to test for a particular line, but someone else may be or can find that cousin you need. In particular, we need people to focus on the mitochondrial DNA lines as they are neglected resources and hold a great deal of promise relative to documenting those elusive oral histories of Native heritage. Remember, Jarvis said the Melungeons were the "friendly Indians". It's somehow ironic that we have only one surname with proven Native Heritage and that surname has two different Native ancestral lines.

We need research into the names associated with the Shepherd case and the South Carolina connection, both early in the 1720s and later relating to the 1794 tax list that includes Solomon Bolton, Collins, Gibson and others.

Lastly, we are still missing descendants of some families from the Hawkins county area, in particular:

- Bolin, Bolling, Bowling
- Denham
- Goodman
- Herd/Hurd
- Hopkins
- Mallet
- Moore
- Mosely/Moseley
- Nichols
- Sullivan
- Williams

By working together to find descendants, we can reassemble the Melungeon families and learn about our heritage.