

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISMATCHED yDNA

***THE yDNA TOOL IS SUPPOSED TO SOLVE MYSTERIES, NOT CREATE THEM.
SOMETIMES IT DOES BOTH***

By Ronald N. Wall

For two hundred years a family secret lay hidden, eluding those of us trying to put together the story of the descendants of Samuel and Maggie Whitsitt of Mt. Sterling in Montgomery County, Kentucky. It is not that it was a closely guarded secret to the family of Samuel and Maggie. I am certain that the children and grandchildren of the couple were aware of it; but it was something that you would not talk about with strangers, or make a point of it when discussing family matters. Over time, and probably by the time the third generation became adults, it was forgotten and thus ultimately became the mystery.

Perhaps I should start at the beginning. Not the beginning of the story, but the beginning of the mystery. There would not have been a mystery if it had not been for the yDNA project of the Whiteside Family Association. There would not be a mystery, but the genealogy and history for this family would be wrong. Warren E. Whiteside, President of the WFA, manages the yDNA project. To date, some sixty members of the WFA have participated in the project and the number continues to grow. It soon became evident, as the number of participants grew, that the large majority of those bearing the name "Whitsitt" and its several variants were descended from the same ancestor as many of those bearing the name Whiteside and its variants. The mystery may have remained hidden for a while, but eventually someone would have used the technology and discovered the mistake. Warren, our chief expert in the yDNA technology and our interpreter of the results, immediately noticed the discrepancy when the results for one of our Whitsitt subjects from Missouri came back from the lab. It was his difficult duty to inform the subject that according to the yDNA, the subject was not a direct descendant of Samuel and Maggie Whitsitt as our subject and his family believed. I imagine this news was a shock for them. Perhaps he would have preferred to remain ignorant of this fact, but now the cat was out of the bag.

We only have to look at the first twelve markers of the yDNA chain to see the problem. As result after result came back to Warren, from the tests of members of all variants of the surname, a "baseline" appeared that we could use to tell at a glance if the subject is descended from the Whiteside clan of northern England, southern Scotland and Northern Ireland. Below is the chart of those twelve markers. If two or more markers are different from the baseline, the subject is not directly descended through the male line from the common Whiteside ancestor. As you probably know, yDNA can be used for genealogical purposes (and for very little else) because it is only passed from father to son. The more markers that match on the Y chromosome, the more recent the common ancestor. For now we test up to sixty-seven of those markers, more than enough to bring us very close to the modern day. We begin by analyzing the first twelve. These first twelve will tell us that we are or are not descended from the earliest common Whiteside ancestor. If we are, then the tests can go on to analyze the next group of twelve up to marker twenty-five, then up to thirty-seven and finally the total sixty-seven. The chart below shows an example of the first twelve markers, or locations, in our Whiteside yDNA sample.

DYS ID	39 3	39 0	394 -19	39 1	385 a	385 b	42 6	38 8	43 9	389 -1	39 2	389 -2
MARKER NO. (loci)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6	9	10	11	12
WHITESIDE MARKER VALUES	13	24	14	11	11	14	12	12	12	14	14	31

To help you understand these numbers, I will try to explain some of the basic terminology. Please, try to stay awake in class.

The **DYS** (DNA Y-Chromosome Segment) ID is a code assigned by a scientific panel for each yDNA marker as each marker was discovered. I have no idea what those numbers mean specifically, but they relate directly to the much simpler marker numbers that I have added to the chart.

The **MARKER NO** (loci) indicates the locations (the Latin term “loci”) of the markers. DNA markers consist of just four chemicals: Adenine (A); Guanine (G); Cytosine (C); Thymine (T). Our DNA is made up of just those four “letters” of the alphabet, “AGCT” and the way those chemicals pair up determines who and what we are (“A” and “G” always form a pair, and “C” and “T” are also always a pair). Does it surprise you that four simple letters could account for the billions of species that ever lived on earth and every variation of those species, from bacteria to dinosaurs to humans? Consider the fact that every computer program in the world (maybe the universe) consists of strings of just two numbers: zero and one. Strings of “0” and “1” (basically meaning “on” or “off”) arranged together in groups of four (0110 1100 0100, etc.) give us practically an infinite number of possibilities and thus can be used as a basis to write computer code in any language. This is basically the same situation as we find with DNA sequences.

The **VALUE** (or, as scientist like to call it, the “allele”) in the last row of the chart is the is the “Short Tandem Repeat” (STR) of the marker, which simply means the number of times the particular pattern of chemicals repeat, like rungs in a ladder, in that marker. In our Whiteside example above, one of those pairs repeats 13 times in the first marker, 24 times in the second, 14 times in the third, and so on. I don’t know which chemical pairs those represent - but that is no concern to us for our purposes here.

One term I have not mentioned is “HAPLOTYPE” or “HAPLOGROUP.” This is a code assigned by another committee of scientist to represent the geographical location where our ancestor originated. For Whiteside and Whitsett’s that code is 1R1b, which means the Atlantic coastal regions of Western Europe including the British Isles, Scandinavia, Belgium, France, Spain and Portugal. Our haplotype is further defined as 1R1b 1b2, which points to northern England and the southern Scottish lowlands on the English border.

Our mystery began as soon as Warren saw the results of our subject’s yDNA sample. The chart below shows both the expected Whiteside values (third row) and our subject’s results (bottom row). The green boxes mark the differences or mismatches. Two or more mismatches in these markers mean the two subjects are not descended from a common ancestor.

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OUR WHITSITT SUBJECT	13	25	14	11	11	14	12	12	13	13	13	29

The **WHITESIDE VALUES** in the chart above include the results from another Whitsitt member who also had a family tree showing he descended from Samuel and Maggie of Montgomery County,

Kentucky. Obviously, both men could not be direct descendants of good old Sam Whitsitt. The results show that our subject is not descended from the ancient Whiteside ancestor. What we have is an entirely new baseline for a previously unknown branch of the Whitsitt clan.

I have been researching the Whitsett (and Whitsitt) family tree for more than thirty years now. Back in the early 1980's I corresponded with several researchers of the Missouri Whitsitt clans who descended from Samuel Whitsitt of Kentucky. During those years I was sent several family trees and source documents that were used to make this determination. Since others were doing so much work at the time on this branch of the family, and I had not yet completed my own research of my wife's Whitsett family, I never got around to looking closely at the data from my Missouri correspondents. I was aware of some conflicts between different researchers, but those amounted to common things like dates, and occasionally, assigning a child to the wrong set of parents. Other than that, I was not aware of anything that could explain the strange results of our yDNA study. When Warren pointed out to me the differences in the yDNA results, my interest was sparked, and I was determined to see if I could find the reason for the discrepancy. Unlike the 1980's, I now have easy access via the Internet to all the existing U. S. census returns, indexed and completely searchable. There are also many other types of records accessible on the Web to varying degrees and more constantly coming on-line. No longer must I waste hours sitting in front of a microfilm viewer, turning the crank through thousands of names and hundreds of pages in the hopes of finding one particular family. The advances in technology and available information not only makes research easier, it also makes it more important that it be done if you are interested in your genealogy.

Why do I feel this is important? Well, the families of our subject now carry the name Whitsitt and their male descendants will continue to carry the name in the future. The Whiteside Family Association started as an organization to help preserve the research of Dr. Donald Whiteside into the genealogy of the Whiteside and Whitsett families. Today it is dedicated to finding and preserving the history of all families with the Whiteside name. At some point, someone will want and need an explanation for why this family is different from other Whitsitt families. This means someone must try to follow the paper trail and document the difference.

At first I expected to discover the reason for the discrepancy to be something similar to what I have found several times when researching my own family. I have examples of a stepson taking on the name of his stepfather. Then there is a granddaughter who was widowed at a young age, after bearing a male child, who left the boy with her parents when she remarried; that young man later took on the surname of his maternal grandfather. Finally, there is an example of an adoptee who was informally adopted without the benefit of the court system, and thus left no paper trail when he changed his surname. Any of these situations could give us an yDNA result that was at odds with the assumption that the sons and grandsons of these individuals were directly descended from the surname ancestor. If the circumstances described above were not clearly documented in court records or family histories, no one would ever know what actually happened.

I started my research with the ancestor in question, Samuel Whitsitt who died in Montgomery County, Kentucky in August 1815. Fortunately for those of us who are looking for the paper trail, the names of his heirs and their wives when the estate was settled are listed in two Montgomery County official records. These two documents, along with Samuel's will give us the name of his surviving children and even where they were living at the time at the time his estate was settled.

I was determined to look at every scrap of evidence I could find that referred to Samuel's sons and grandsons. The eldest son was William Whitsitt who was born in either York or Cumberland County, Pennsylvania in 1767. William was married four times and had children by three of the four wives before he died in 1854 at the age of 87 in Jefferson County, Indiana. William seemed like a good suspect for the circumstances I mentioned above. He had thirteen children by three of his wives, plus at least one stepchild. Of the thirteen children I was only interested in the sons, since I was looking for an "out-of-place" male descendant. Of the thirteen children we know of, ten are boys. Documentation for William is very good. Lucky for us, some of his descendants preserved letters written to relatives proudly telling the story of William and his offspring. Finding nothing suspicious, and confident that I had a good picture of this family, I moved on to Samuel's next older son John.

John Whitsett was the first of the family to go to Missouri. We know he was in Lillard County of the Louisiana (Missouri) territory as early as 1818 when he and his son James D. Whitsett, signed a petition to the territorial governor complaining of the actions of the acting registrar of the U. S.

territorial land office. Two years later the governor appointed John Whitesides, Sr. as a justice of the peace of Lillard County, which soon after became Lafayette County. John was a respected citizen of Lafayette County and one of its earliest settlers. He is the subject of several mini-biographies in various histories written of Lafayette County. Some of his sons were also subjects of these histories and the combination of these short biographies gives us a reliable list of John's sons. I now had a pretty good picture of two branches of Samuel's descendants, but nothing to explain our mystery. While searching for records of John and his family I began to see why researchers have had such a hard time sorting out the different branches of this family. I was beginning to believe that the entire Whitsitt family of Kentucky decided to invade Missouri. And they all had a preference for the same set of given names for their male children, a genealogist's nightmare because between 1820 and 1840 we had men whose ages differed by only a year or two with the same given name. In a couple of instances even the middle names were the same.

After John Whitsett invaded Missouri, several members of the family of Joseph Whitsitt, Samuel's third oldest son, also began arriving in Lafayette County. Their story begins with Joseph Whitesides who married Rebecca Stewart in Clark County, Kentucky on December 20, 1794. Joseph's name is listed as "James" in the index for Clark County marriages, and James is the name of Joseph's next younger brother. I don't have a photocopy of this record but I suspect the mistake stems from the similarity of the abbreviations "Jos." and "Jas." That mistake was simple to explain and easy to ignore.

We can document that before 1803 Joseph and Rebecca had at least five children, three sons and two daughters. In 1803 Joseph published a notice in the Lexington, Kentucky newspaper stating that his wife Rebecca had left him and he would not be responsible for her debts. A few weeks later Joseph signed an indenture apprenticing his sons James and Levi to Samuel Whitsitt (probably Joseph's father). Samuel agreed to teach the young boys, four and six years old at the time, the art of farming, and give them a basic education. I can find no official record of a divorce, but in about 1805 Joseph married a young widow, Mary Lemasters. When Joseph and Mary were married, she had a young son about five years of age named Simeon Lemasters. After their marriage the couple remained in Kentucky and appears on the 1810 census and tax lists for that year. In 1817, Joseph obtained a certificate of ownership from the United States Land Office for land in Gibson County, Indiana. Joseph and Mary apparently moved to Indiana shortly after the death of Joseph's father. Joseph lived the remainder of his life in Gibson County. He died there in 1824. His wife Mary lived in Gibson County until she died in August 1839. Both Joseph and Mary made wills, which were probated shortly after their deaths. I have not yet been able to obtain copies of those documents.

Back in Kentucky, Rebecca Whitsitt is listed on the 1810 and 1820 U. S. Census in Montgomery County. These census returns list by name only the head of the household. Individuals in the household, including the head of the household, are shown simply by gender and age group. On the 1810 census, in Rebecca's household are two young males under the age of nine and a young female also under the age of nine. The 1820 census shows two young males and one older female (Rebecca) in the household. Next door to Rebecca is Caleb Summers. The census shows that he, his wife and a young female child were living in the Summers household.

In March 1825 Rebecca made a deathbed will listing by name her two sons, Isaac and Stewart Whitsitt and daughter Polly Summers, wife of Caleb Summers. Witnesses to her will were Will Bannan and Jacob Summers. Her will was probated in Montgomery County in the July court of 1825.

By 1840, from the family of Joseph and his wives Rebecca and Mary, John, Levi, James, Isaac and Stewart Whitsitt had all moved to Missouri, as had daughter Polly and her husband Caleb Summers. Isaac married Cynthia Noland in Kentucky. He first purchased land in Lafayette County, but settled in Jackson County, next door to Lafayette. All of the others settled in Washington Township of Lafayette County. This family group settled several miles south of the family of their uncle John Whitsett. The properties of John's family lay closer to the town of Lexington and in Johnson County to the south of Lafayette. Several members of both families obtained their lands from the United States Land Office and those records are today preserved in the archives of the Bureau of Land Management and accessible via several Internet websites.

A couple of local histories of Lafayette County included short biographies of James Stewart Whitsitt, apparently the first in the family of Joseph Whitsitt to come to Missouri. Those records, plus the BLM records, pension records for the War of 1812, census records up to and including the census of

1860 and other records of Lafayette County and Missouri gives us a good picture of James and his family. James was a veteran of the War of 1812. Apparently, he first volunteered in 1814 with the Kentucky Mounted Volunteers and then with Sholtz's Indiana Rangers. After the war ended in 1815 James returned home to Gibson County, Indiana. Not long after the war, he returned to Kentucky and married Sidney Noland, perhaps a childhood sweetheart. There seems to have been a friendly connection between the Whitsitt and Noland families in Kentucky. Sometime during the decade between 1820 and 1830 James and Sidney came to Missouri and settled in Washington Township. It appears that they arrived in Missouri closer to the year 1820 than to 1830. Their son, Joseph Anderson Whitsitt, seems to be the first child born in Missouri, probably about 1826. One source states that James and Sidney had fourteen children. I can only account for twelve. In 1834 and 1835 James paid off two parcels of land and received a certificate of ownership from the U. S. Land Office for each of the two parcels.

James Stewart Whitsitt died on November 10, 1860 in Lafayette County. When his brother Samuel of Gibson County, Indiana heard the news of James' death, he wrote a letter of condolence to his sister-in-law and nephews and nieces in Missouri. This is an extract of the important parts of that letter, which was preserved by the family and descendants of James' son Joseph Anderson Whitsitt. A photocopy of the letter was sent to me by one of my correspondents who obtained it from the great granddaughter of Joseph Anderson, Venita L. (Whitsitt) Bumgarner. Mrs. Bumgarner was approaching ninety years of age when she sent a copy of the letter to my correspondent.

Samuel Whitsitt Letter, Gibson Co., IN. to Lafayette Co., MO; envelope postmark Nov. 26 Princeton Ia (Indiana) to Joseph A. Whitsitt, Rennick Mills, Layfayette [sic] County, Missouri.

“Dear Nephews, Sisters & Nieces:

*I have received the sad tidings of the death of brother James a hard trial is to us to loose our nearest friend I was in great hopes when I sent that medicine that he would recover although I knew he was in a dangerous condition when I visited him. The way I came to hear of his death was by your letter the postman having heard of his death before starting the letter. I was sorry to hear of sister Polly's sickness also. Your letter was only about 8 days on the way from date. We received it on Wednesday. We are all well at the present time and all relatives as far as I know and I hope that you will have better health in future than you have had. ... I see an account of Montgomery being in there killing up the people. I want you to write and give me a straight account of it. There has been considerable said about Lincoln election. I feel sure that Lincoln will do justice by all. You need not fear I think we ought to submit to the majority of the people. Tell Arin Shaw to write to me. Tell Rev Nance & wife to write to me. John says for Joe to write to him and tell Beny to write and tell Beny to take Doctor Williams medicine if he wants to get well and tell **Sister Polly Summers** to write to me and we will answer all letters. Write in your next letter and tell me what Brother James said about dying. I hope that our loss is his gain and we ought to all try and prepare to meet him in better world. **There was eight brothers of us and there is seven dead. I am the only one left out of eight. Brother Simeon Lemasters is still alive and well he was a half brother. Sister Margaret is living and well all the connection is well as far as I know my relations are nearly all dead in this country. ... No more but write soon and tell me all the news and please answer all my questions from your affectionate Uncle***

Samuel Whitsitt”

Something about this letter bothered me in 1982 when I first saw it. I wrote a note to myself on the papers that came with it that there was a problem with it, but I was not sure exactly what it was. Clearly, there is enough information in the letter to identify beyond a doubt who this family is. “Sister Polly Summers” was, of course, the daughter of Joseph and Rebecca Stewart Whitsitt. The 1850 and 1860 censuses show Caleb and Polly Summers living in Washington Township. “Joe” and “Joseph A. Whitsitt” was Joseph Anderson Whitsitt who is listed on the 1860 census (I have not been able to locate James and Sidney and their family on the 1850 census). The identity of “Beny” is a bit uncertain but I believe him to be Benjamin F. Whitsitt, son of brother John who died in Lafayette County in 1849 (according to family sources) and Benjamin is listed on the 1850 and 1860 censuses in Lafayette County.

I am not certain who exactly “Arin Shaw” was, but James’ and Sidney’s daughter Nancy married Samuel S. Shaw before 1845 and that family is also in Washington Township for those two census years. So, what was bothering me about this letter?

For one thing, I knew that Isaac and Stewart Whitsitt are listed on the 1860 census, yet Samuel states that all seven of his brothers were dead. Isaac was living in Jackson County and Stewart was living in Washington Township apparently very close to where James and Sidney lived. Could all three of these brothers, James, Isaac and Stewart have died between June 1st, the census day in 1860, and November 1860 when Samuel wrote his letter? If that were so, it seems strange he did not mention that fact. I then checked the 1870 census, and behold, both Isaac and Stewart were living in Lafayette County in 1870.

It suddenly dawned on me to check the birth dates for Isaac and Stewart. The census records consistently gave a year of birth of 1804 for Isaac and 1805-1806 for Stewart. These dates were from one to three years after Joseph Whitsitt made notice that his wife Rebecca had left him and he was no longer responsible for her debts. This is the point where I slap my forehead and sing, “Eureka!” Joseph Whitsitt was not the father of Isaac and Stewart.

Both Isaac and Stewart were half brothers to James Stewart Whitsitt as they all had the same mother. Samuel of Indiana was in fact no relation at all to Isaac and Stewart because his mother was Mary Lemasters.

How could this situation have gone unnoticed by all of our Whitsitt researchers (including myself)? The answer is simple. Without the yDNA project, this was an anomaly that could have any number of causes, so it was disregarded in favor of the documentary evidence. It is a perfect example of why the new yDNA tool is such a valuable asset when used along with the old fashion document search. If you really want to know the historical truth, you need both.

Rebecca (Stewart) Whitsitt’s son Isaac was born about 1804, a year after she and Joseph separated. I suspect that his descendants will also appear to be a mismatch with our baseline Whiteside profile. It may even differ from Stewart Whitsitt’s twelve-marker profile, meaning that Isaac had a different father than Stewart. I do not have results (that I know of) for any descendants of Isaac, so we cannot draw any conclusions about it at this time. We do have another Whitsett mismatch. Unfortunately, we do not have a document-based family tree for this other individual. See the chart below, which shows this other Whitsett mismatch.

<i>DYS ID</i>	39 3	39 0	394 -19	39 1	385 a	385 b	42 6	38 8	43 9	389 -1	39 2	389 -2
<i>MARKER NO. (loci)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6	9	10	11	12
<i>SAMUEL WHITSITT DESCENDAN T</i>	13	24	14	11	11	14	12	12	12	14	14	31
<i>Kit 90420 WHITSETT</i>	13	23	14	10	11	14	12	12	12	13	13	30
<i>STEWART WHITSITT DESCENDAN T</i>	13	25	14	11	11	14	12	12	13	13	13	29

I welcome any information on suspected ancestors of our expanding Whiteside family, including but not limited to descendants of Samuel of Kentucky. The combination of documented evidence and the yDNA project of the Whiteside Family Association will help others to find their true ancestors. You can contact me at: ronwall@whitsett-wall.com I will be grateful for your support. The link to the Whiteside Family Association: <http://www.whitesideancestry.org>