

Pamunkey Davenport DNA

Davenport Surname DNA Project

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The Davenport Surname DNA Project was established in January, 2003, to create a database of DNA profiles of male Davenport descendants to aid in genealogical research. We collect this DNA via a simple swab of the cheek and ship the sample to our testing lab. The lab then processes the sample and reports back the values of 12, 25, 37, or 67 markers, depending on what was ordered. The more markers tested, the more precise we can be.

The DNA we test is on the Y-chromosome, which only males have. This Y-DNA is passed down from father to son, generation after generation, virtually unchanged. So the Y-DNA of a male Davenport living today should be essentially the same as his male ancestor 10 generations ago. By comparing this Y-DNA between Davenports, we can determine whether they share a common ancestor.

So far we have discovered about a dozen different Davenport lines in North America. We have also found that four of those lines are related, prior to the 1600s, to the ancient Davenport lines in Cheshire, England. Of the dozen North American lines, the Pamunkey Davenports — descendants of Davis — are by far the most “popular” in the DNA project, and they do not match any other Davenport line.

How do we know what Davis Davenport’s Y-DNA looks like? We find Davenports with good documentation tracing their male line back to Davis, and we test them. By testing descendants of different sons of Davis, we can determine what his, or our Pamunkey “modal”, Y-DNA looks like. Then when a new Davenport participant joins the project, if he has a match or near match to the Pamunkey modal, we know he is a descendent of Davis.

On rare occasions, as the Y-DNA is passed down through the generations, there is a “mistake” in the copying mechanism – a “mutation”. A marker that formerly would have been reported as a 13 might now be a 12. These mutations are neither good nor bad. They are just rare random changes in the Y-DNA. However, mutations can be very helpful in genealogy since once a mutation occurs; it is

passed on to all future generations of male Davenports. If we find two Pamunkey Davenports with the same mutation, then the odds are good they are a little closer related to each other than to the others.

Thus far, we have not been able to discover any patterns of mutations in any of the Pamunkey branches, even at 67 markers. Any mutations appear to be randomly scattered between the various branches.

The values on the Pamunkey Davenport modal for the first 12 markers match what is called the Western Atlantic Modal Haplotype (WAMH). This is the most common Y-DNA signature of males in Western Europe. So, for the Pamunkeys we need to test at least to 37 markers so all the “false positives” will be filtered out. Being WAMH also eliminates the possibility of Native American origin; however it says nothing about the female sides of the family.

The Pamunkey Davenports are not related to other Davenport lines in the South – Tidewater Davenports, Newberrys, Albemarle, etc.

We have discovered that the descendants of two sons of John Davenport (c1717-c1779) (Davis > Martin > John) do not match the other Pamunkey Davenports. Not only do descendants of both William and Richard not match descendants of their brother John Jr. and the rest of the Pamunkeys, they match a branch of Woodruffs and two other non-Pamunkey Davenports. This research is ongoing. (See Supplement 4 – Davenports in DNA Limbo.)

DNA could be useful as well in determining the ancestry of Davis himself. One theory is that Richard Davis and Ann Davenport were the parents of Davis. We have not yet found a descendent of Richard Davis for comparison but remain hopeful.

Over the years we have had several Davenports of “unknown ancestry” test out as Pamunkeys. Their genealogies have helped add onto the growing database of Pamunkey knowledge, plus they have found a place they can call home. As the DNA project continues to grow, hopefully we will continue to find a variety of new Pamunkey participants. We can never have too many. By testing additional branches, we may yet find signature mutations that help define these branches. Since 67 markers don't seem to be enough, our next step will be to test several additional “faster mutating” markers that have only recently become available, and then try comparing the branches again.

We will also persist in the search for any matches that could lead to Davis Davenport's ancestors. The quest continues.

The DNA Results table that is set out in ***The Pamunkey Davenport Papers*** displays the Y-DNA results for the Pamunkey Davenports as of June, 2009. The gray row at the top represents the “modal” 67 marker results. This is what we believe Davis Davenport’s Y-DNA looks like. The four colored sections below it show how descendents of four sons of Davis compare to the modal.

The Relationships Chart set out in ***The Pamunkey Davenport Papers*** displays genealogically how the individual participants fit in to the Pamunkey family.

More information can be found at <http://www.DavenportDNA.com>