Working With DNA Matches

Encore Genealogy
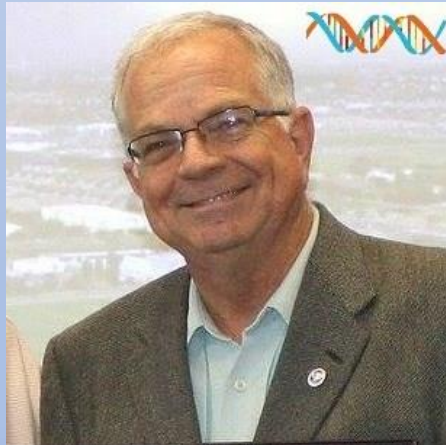
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http://familytreeaz.com/presentations

November 2023

All slides and handouts can be found at:
http://www.familytreeaz.com/Presentations/

QR Code: take photo to open to presentations

Before We Start

- What is a "DNA match"?

    - Someone who shares DNA with the test taker

    - There are 5 DNA testing companies: Ancestry, My Heritage, Family Tree DNA, Living DNA, and 23andMe

    - Close relatives share more DNA than more distant relatives

    - All 5 testing companies will show your DNA matches with the closest relatives at the top

Before We Start -- centiMorgans

- "Closeness" is measured in centiMorgans

- Match strength can be anything from 0 centiMorgans up to 3500

- Most useful range for working your tree is 30 to 300 cMs

- Below 30 might be more distant and may be more likely to be possible multiple cousin (related in 2+ ways)

- Above 300 should be in your "already known" list of close relatives
  - Of course----that is not ALWAYS the case!

| 4C | 3C | | 2C | 1C | G-Parents | Parents |

| 0 | 7 | 30 | | | 300 | | 3500 |
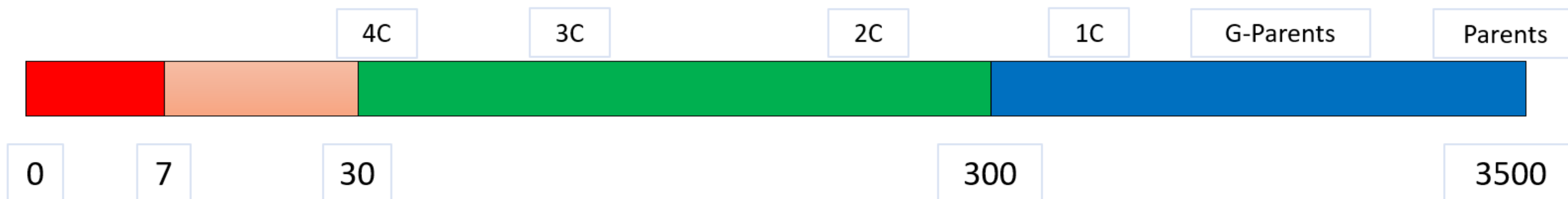
5 Steps: Goals Working With Matches

- STEP 1: Identify common ancestral line

- STEP 2: Identify the match

- STEP 3: [OPTIONAL] Build a tree for the match

- STEP 4: Add the match to your primary DNA tree

- STEP 5: [OPTIONAL] Contact the match

Before We Start

- What sort of information is provided about a match?
  - Name, initials, or identifying alias
  - Strength (closeness) of the match measured in centiMorgans
  - Estimated relationship

  - In some cases:
    - Family tree (linked or unlinked)
    - User-provided metadata for the test-taker (city/state, age range)

Joan Anita Craddock

Mother
3,474 cM | 50% shared DNA
Maternal side

Public linked tree
2,687 People
Common ancestor

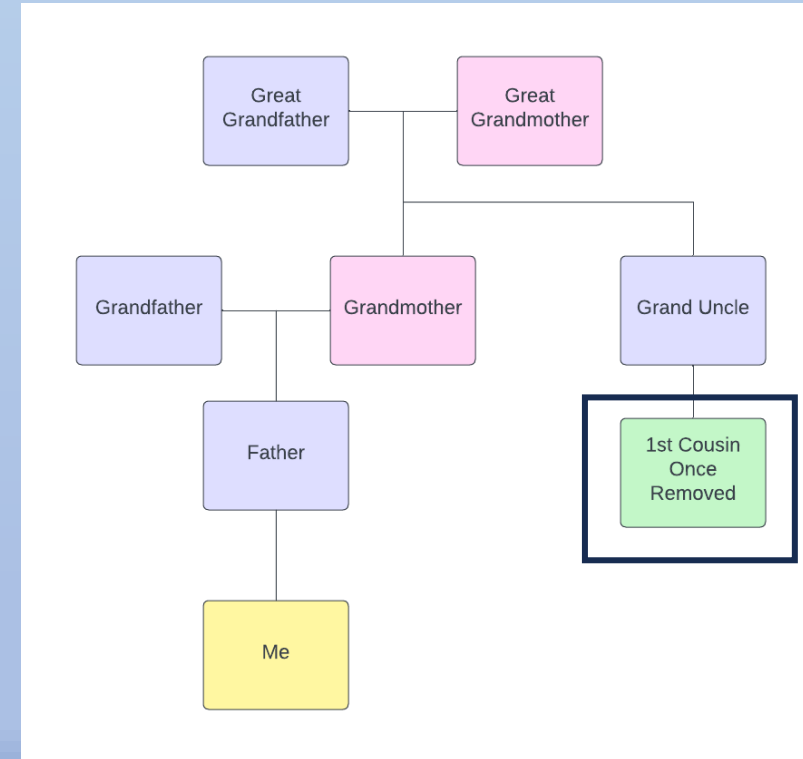View match

Mother, 3474/46.
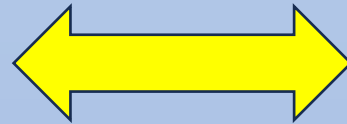
Some Relationship Basics

What's a 1ˢᵗ cousin?
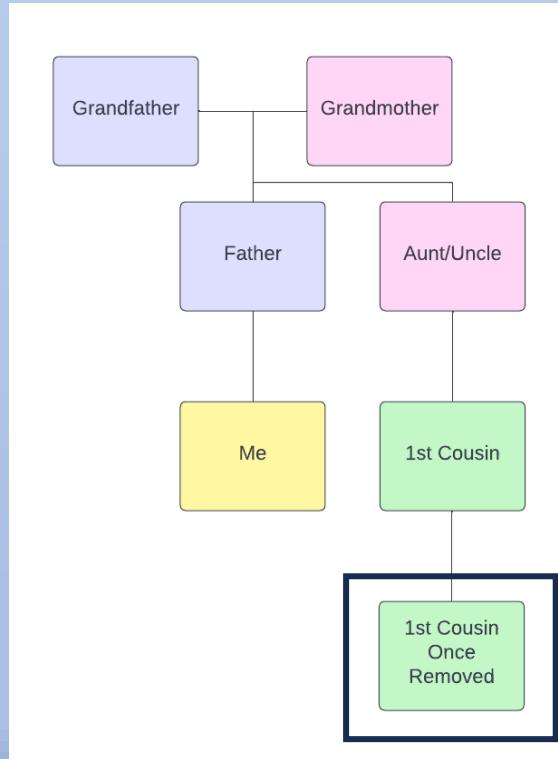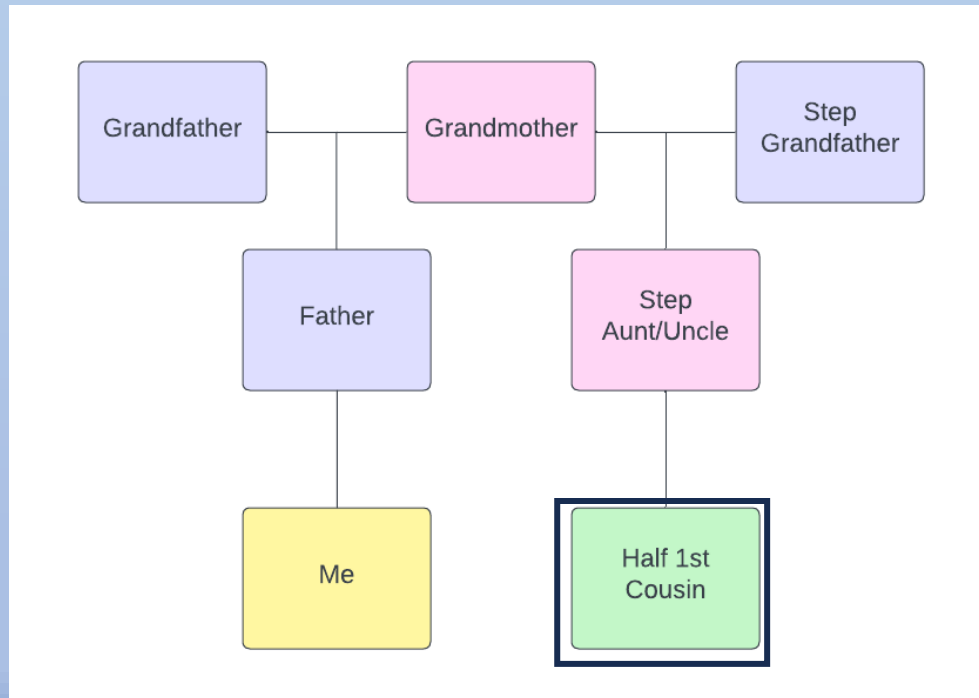
- Someone who shares grandparents with you
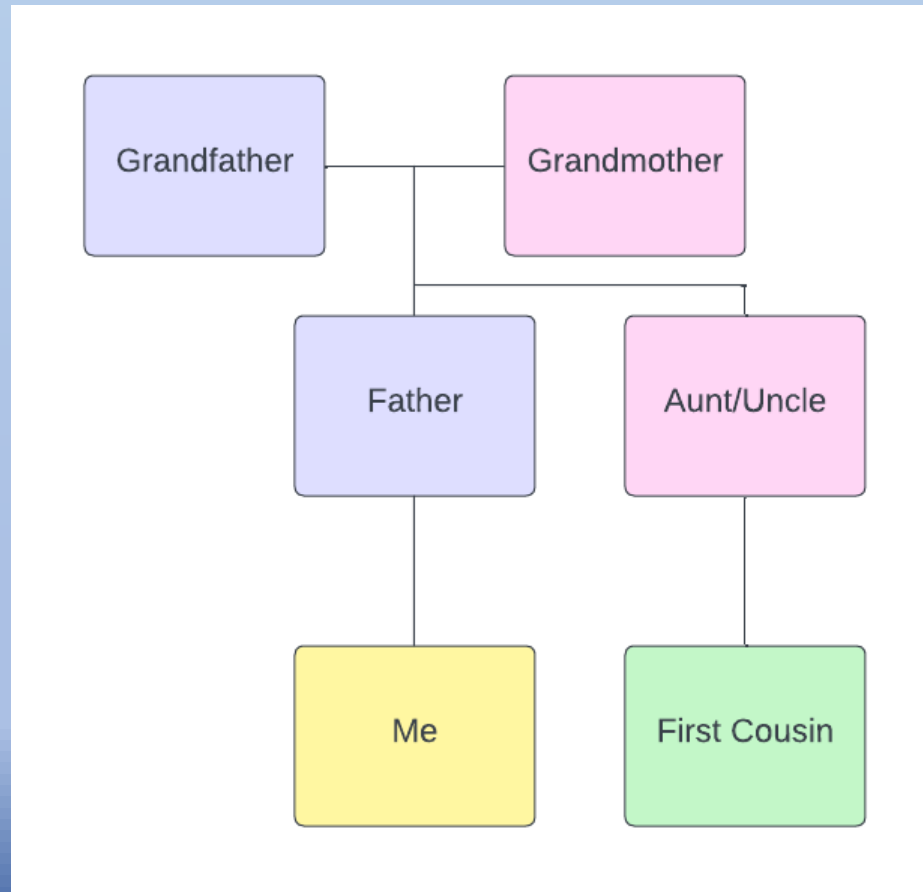
What is a 1st cousin once removed?

- 1st cousin sharing grandparents but one generation removed
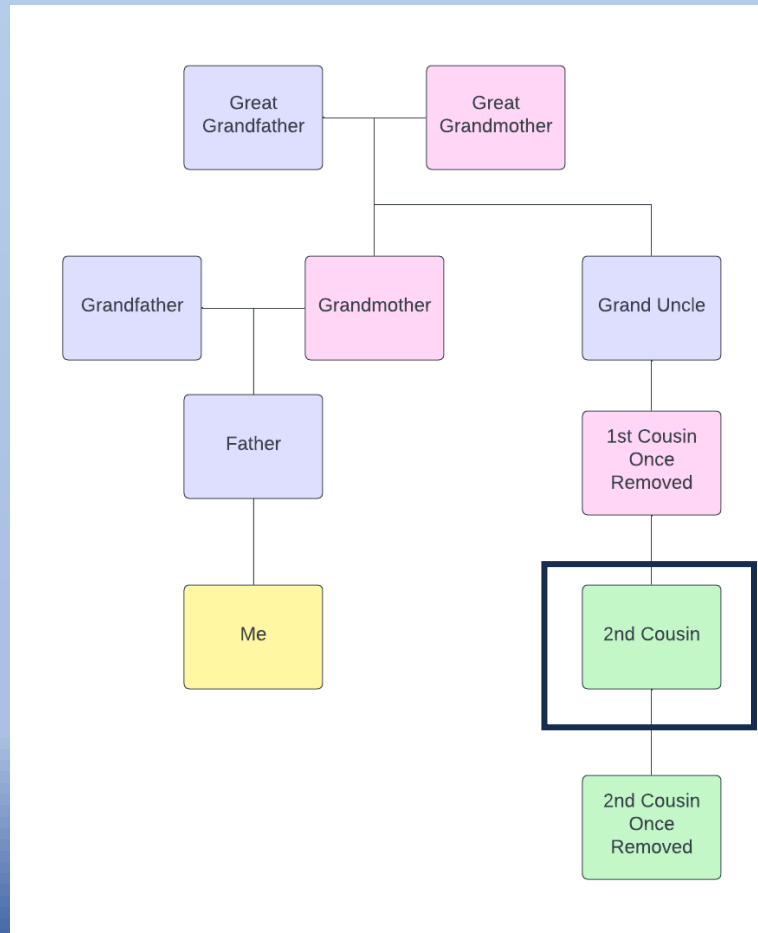
What is a half-1ˢᵗ cousin?
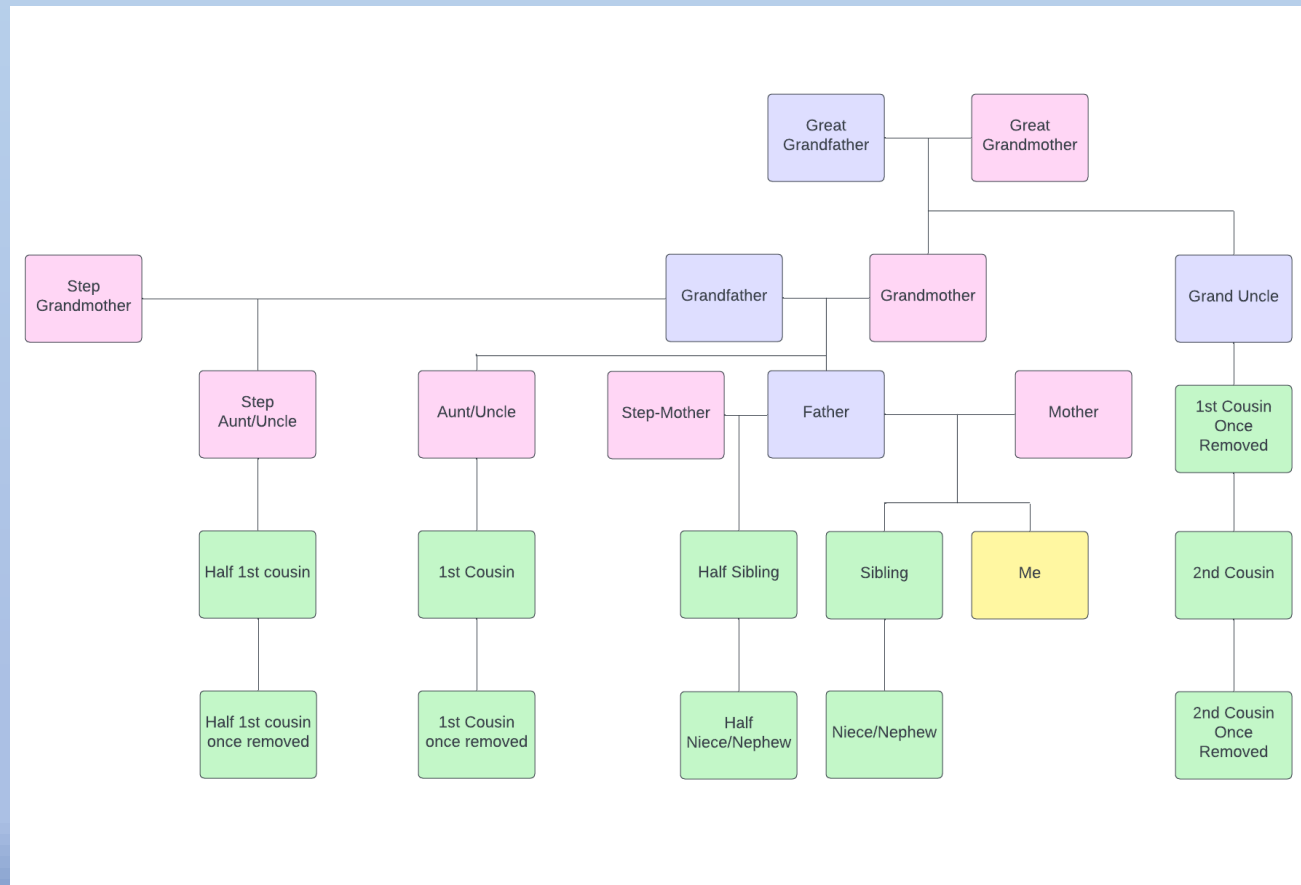
- Someone who shares only one grandparent with you

Since only one grandparent is shared a ½ 1ˢᵗ cousin will share less DNA than a full 1ˢᵗ cousin would, typically about half as measured in centiMorgans

What is a 2nd cousin?

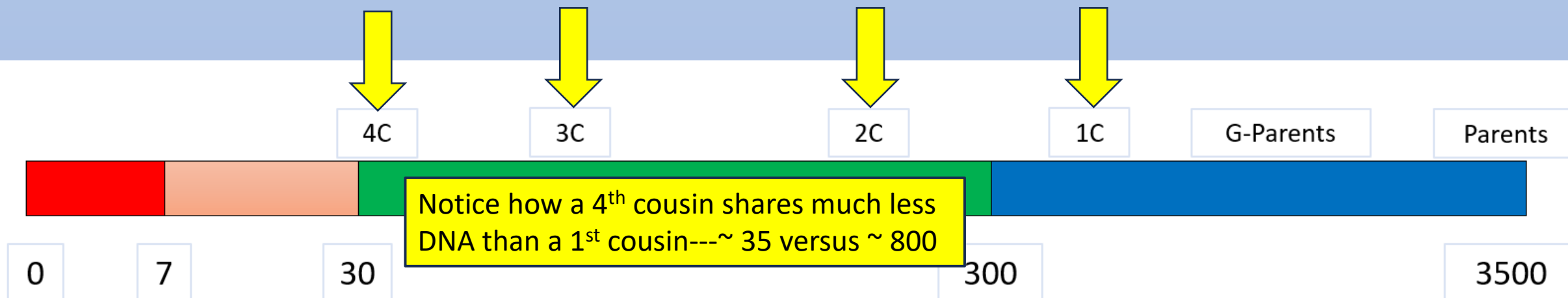- Someone who shares a set of great grandparents with you

Putting it all together

Why is all this important??

- Relatedness is tied to the centiMorgan (cM) values
- For instance, 1st cousins typically are in a range from 400 to 1400 cMs
- A half-1st cousin is "generally" about half that range or 150 to 600 cMs
- Similarly, a 1st cousin once removed is also in the range of 150 to 600 cMs

| 4C | 3C | 2C | 1C | G-Parents | Parents |

Notice how a 4th cousin shares much less DNA than a 1st cousin---~ 35 versus ~ 800

| 0 | 7 | 30 | | 300 | 3500 |

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

- One invaluable tool: SHARED MATCHES

  - These are other matches who match both you and the other match

    - Often these can be used to hypothesize a common ancestral line

Trees   Ethnicity   **Shared Matches**

ME
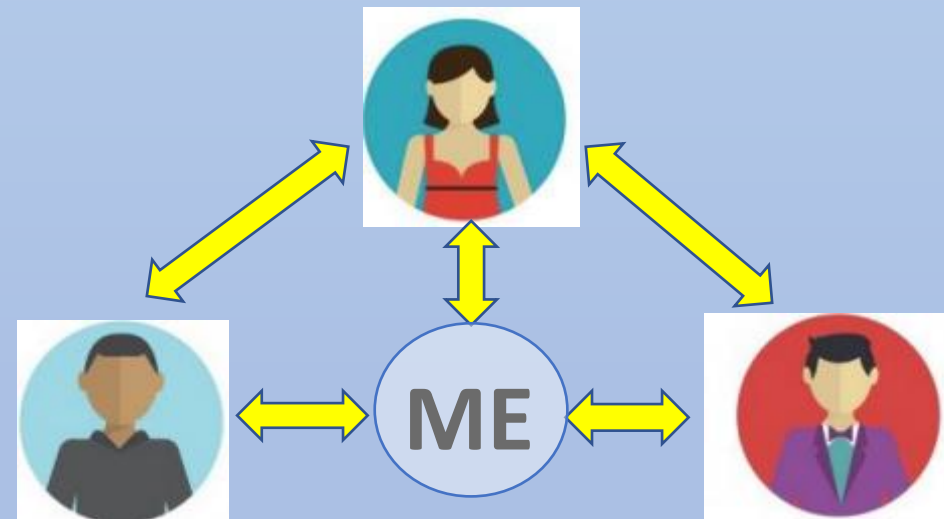
CAUTION: there can be times when the shared DNA is not common to all---in other words, two matches common to you might not actually be related to each other

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

- All 5 testing companies will show you shared matches

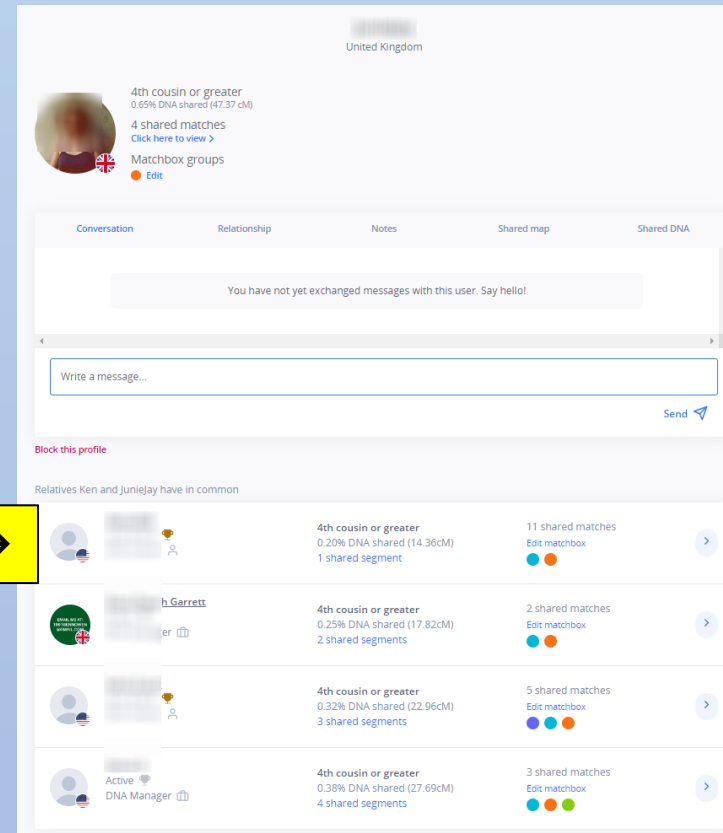Special Note: at this time [Nov 2023], 23andMe is not showing shared matches due to security issues

This is an example from My Heritage showing the shared matches I have with my Uncle's kit

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line
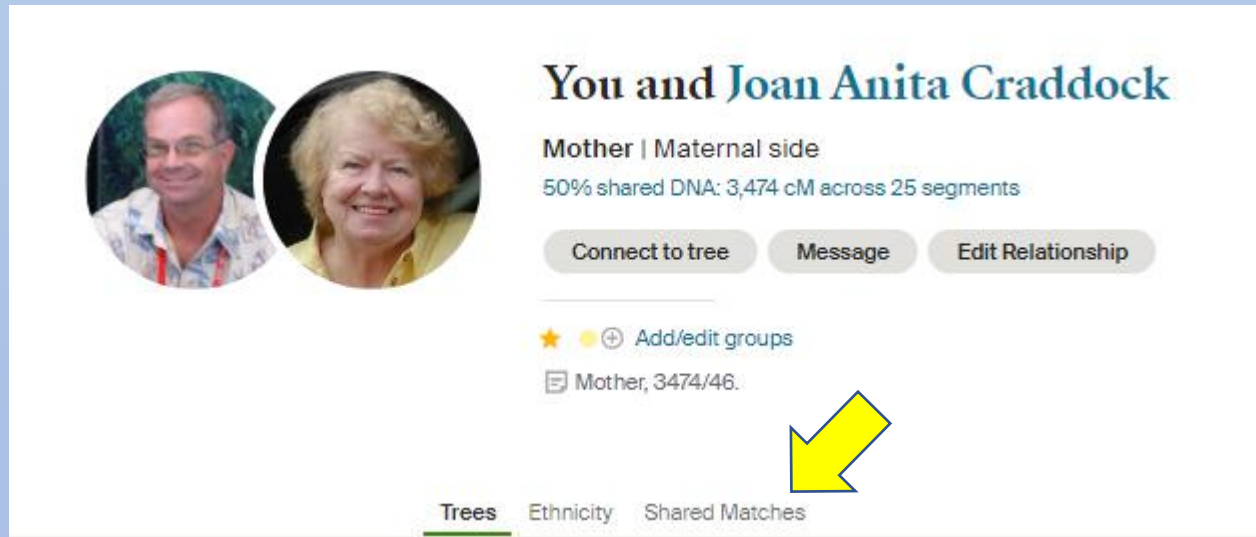
- Living DNA example

Closest shared match →

This is an example from Living DNA showing the shared matches I have with a cousin

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

- To see shared matches on Ancestry, click on the Shared Matches tab

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

- This will yield a list of other matches who share with you as well as the other test taker

- Sorted by strength level

KEY: Look for shared matches that you know how you are related to. For instance, a 1st cousin match would help identify a set of grandparents; a 2nd cousin could identify a great-grandparent couple. A 3rd cousin could identify a common great-great grandparent couple

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

- Highly Recommended:

  - Use Ancestry's Tag Groups to identify ancestral lines

  ● ⊕ Add/edit groups

  - This greatly simplifies the process of identifying common ancestral lines
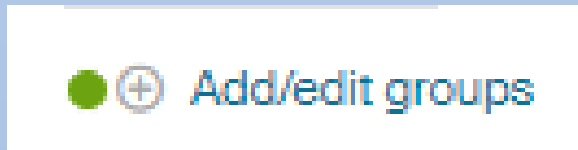
☐ ● 1 - Waters/Unknown (8)

☐ ● 2 - Berkley/Wheeler (38)

☐ ● 3 - Sylvia/Correia (74)

☐ ● 4 - Lemos/San Jose (141)

☐ ● 5 - Craddock/Spivey (163)

☐ ● 6 - Wood/Thurman (221)

☐ ● 7 - Unknown/Unknown MYSTERY

☐ ● 8 - Spencer/Cummings (183)

See my presentations on using tag groups (Dec 2021 and Mar 2023)

Step 1: Identify Common Ancestral Line

- Once you've built up enough matches using tag groups it becomes incredibly easy to quickly sort the match into the correct ancestral line

- I just opened up this unviewed 20 cMs match and can quickly identify which ancestral line by looking at the color dots

Step 2: Identify the Match

Step 2: Identify the Match

- The process of identifying exactly how you are related to the DNA match often requires Identifying the Match

- This is needed in order to build a tree for the person as well as knowing where to place the person in your DNA tree

- Many matches can be identified but some may be difficult or impossible

Step 2: Identify the Match

- A variety of techniques can be used such as people-finding sites, Google searches, public records searches in Ancestry, Facebook, etc.

- In particular try to obtain:
  - Full name including middle initial/name
  - Birth date including the date

TIP: Once I have fully ID'ed a match I like to put that information into the Notes field for future use e.g., "John Smith, 20 Feb 1940, living in Cincinnati"

For much more on this please see my Jan 2023 presentation on identifying matches

Step 3: Build a Tree for the Match

Step 3: Build a Tree for the Match [OPTIONAL]

- You can only do this if you have successfully identified the match (Step 2)

  NOTE: this may not be necessary if the match already has a tree with good sourcing and indicates the shared ancestral couple

- Why do this?
    - Build the tree back in time looking for common ancestral line

- You'll need full name, DOB, and a few sources for this living person such as public records, state birth records (e.g., CABI)

- As always with quick-and-dirty research trees, keep these trees **PRIVATE** and **UNSEARCHABLE**

See my presentation Building a Research Tree, Jun 2021

Step 3: Build a Tree for the Match [OPTIONAL]

- But why can't you just use the tree that the match might already have linked to the DNA kit??

- **"Trust but Verify"**

Public linked tree
4,201 People

- Existing tree may have errors in it

- Existing tree might not be sourced with quality records in it (e.g., census, public records, birth records)

- Existing tree might not go far back enough in time

TIP: By building your own tree you have full control to select sources to use

Step 4: Add Match to Your Tree

Step 4: Add Match to Your Tree

- Once you know exactly how you are related to the match:
  - Add the person to your DNA tree

What is a DNA tree? A tree that is linked to a DNA kit and is kept at a reasonable size

- Adding that new match into your tree will help Ancestry's Shared Match Hints to identify possible common ancestor for other matches

Common Ancestors

GRANDFATHER   GRANDMOTHER

PARENT   UNCLE/AUNT

Add these to tree

YOU

NEW MATCH

1C1R (1st cousin once removed)
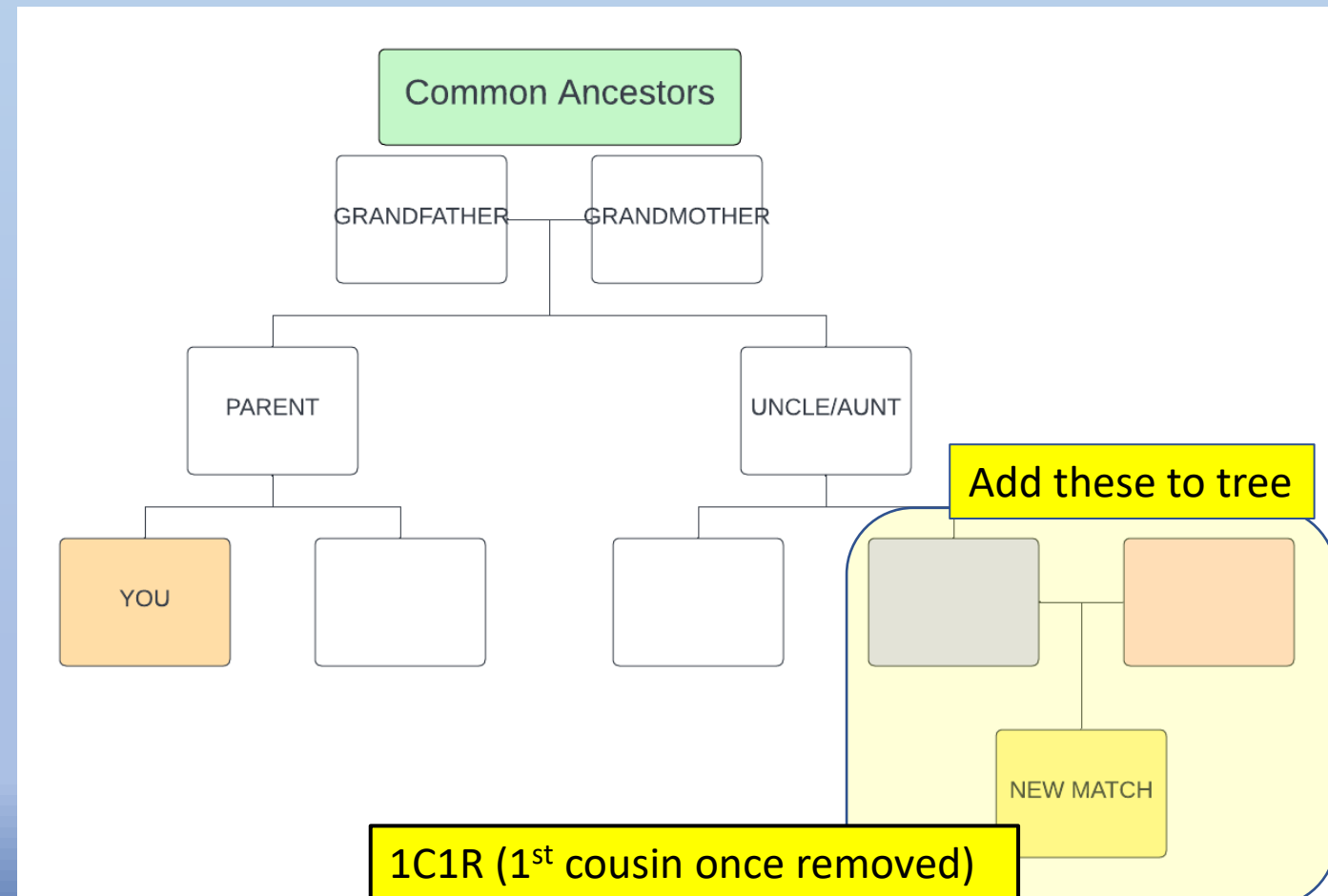
Step 4: Add Match to Family Tree

- Start at the identified common ancestor level and continue down until you've added the match to the tree
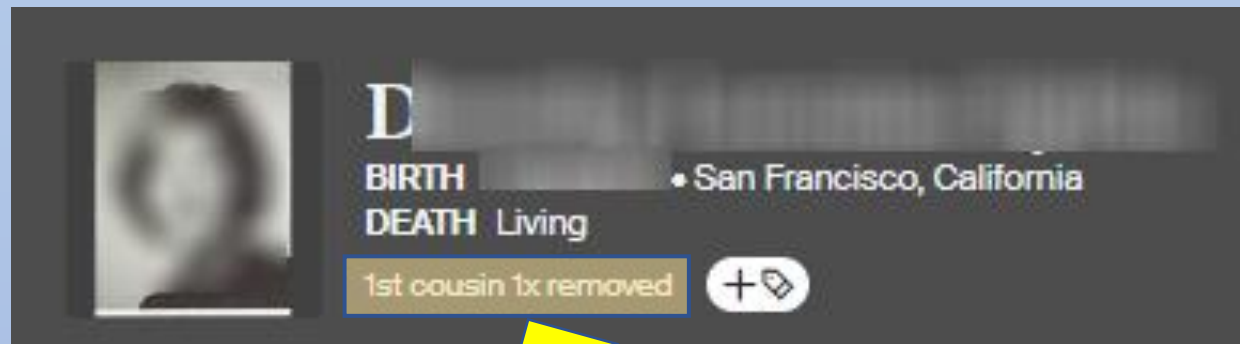
Step 4: Add Match to Family Tree

- If added correctly Ancestry should show the exact relationship relative the "Home" person in the tree

Step 5: Contact the Match [OPTIONAL]

Step 5: [OPTIONAL] Contact the Match

- I "generally" do not attempt to contact matches
- ONLY if there's a strong reason (close cousin, asking for specific information, etc.)
- BECAUSE very low response rates are common with Ancestry messages
  - People not interested?
  - People don't see the message indicator?
  - People changed emails or may even be deceased
  - Flaky Ancestry messaging system

Do as much research on the match as possible before attempting contact!

Step 5: [OPTIONAL] Contact the Match

- If you do try to contact one:
  - Try to include a "hook"--- you're fishing here and want to hook the line

  - You want to get the person interested in your message

  - Keep details to a minimum (no mentioning of triangulation, centiMorgans, etc.)

  - Try to mention a few relevant surnames that you think may be familiar to the person from their own family heritage

  - Short, succinct request is best
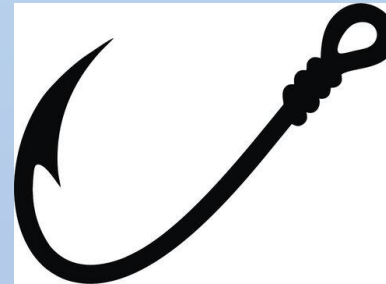
Expect the Expected --- no response. Getting a response is a nice surprise!

Hello Doris, my name is Ken Waters and it looks like we may be cousins. I believe we may be related on the GIBSON or MATHEWS family lines. Do you recognize these names as possible relatives? Thanks so much for taking the time to respond.

Step 5: [OPTIONAL] Contact the Match

- Not just Ancestry messaging!

- Think out of the box as you might find the person on another platform that they might be more active on and so more responsive; maybe you can find the match's children who might be more communicative

- Several times I have elected to contact the person on Facebook rather than Ancestry --- my success rate doing this is much greater than Ancestry messaging
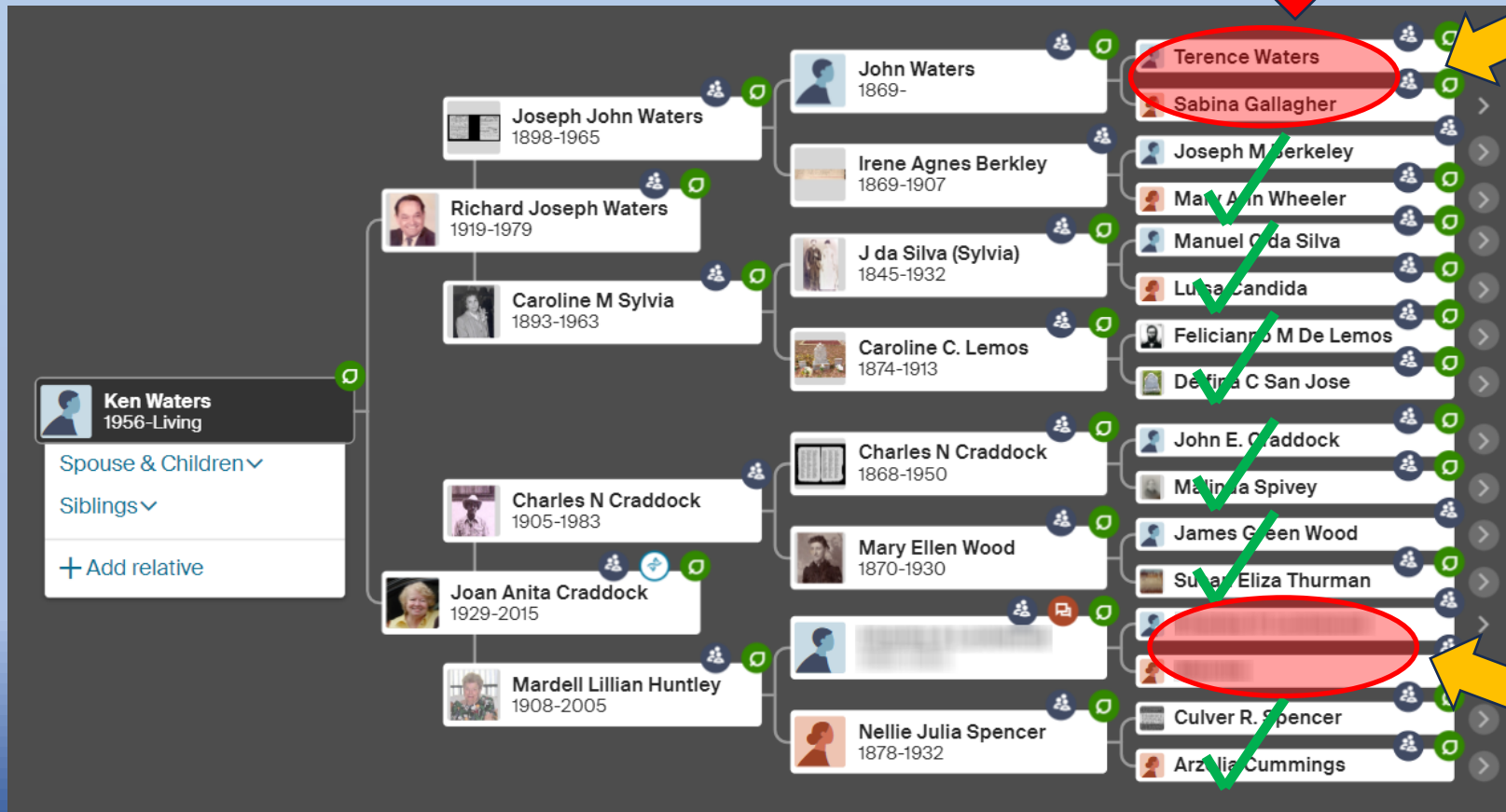
Other Suggestions

Ultimate Goal --- Validate Your Family Tree

16 2nd great grandparents
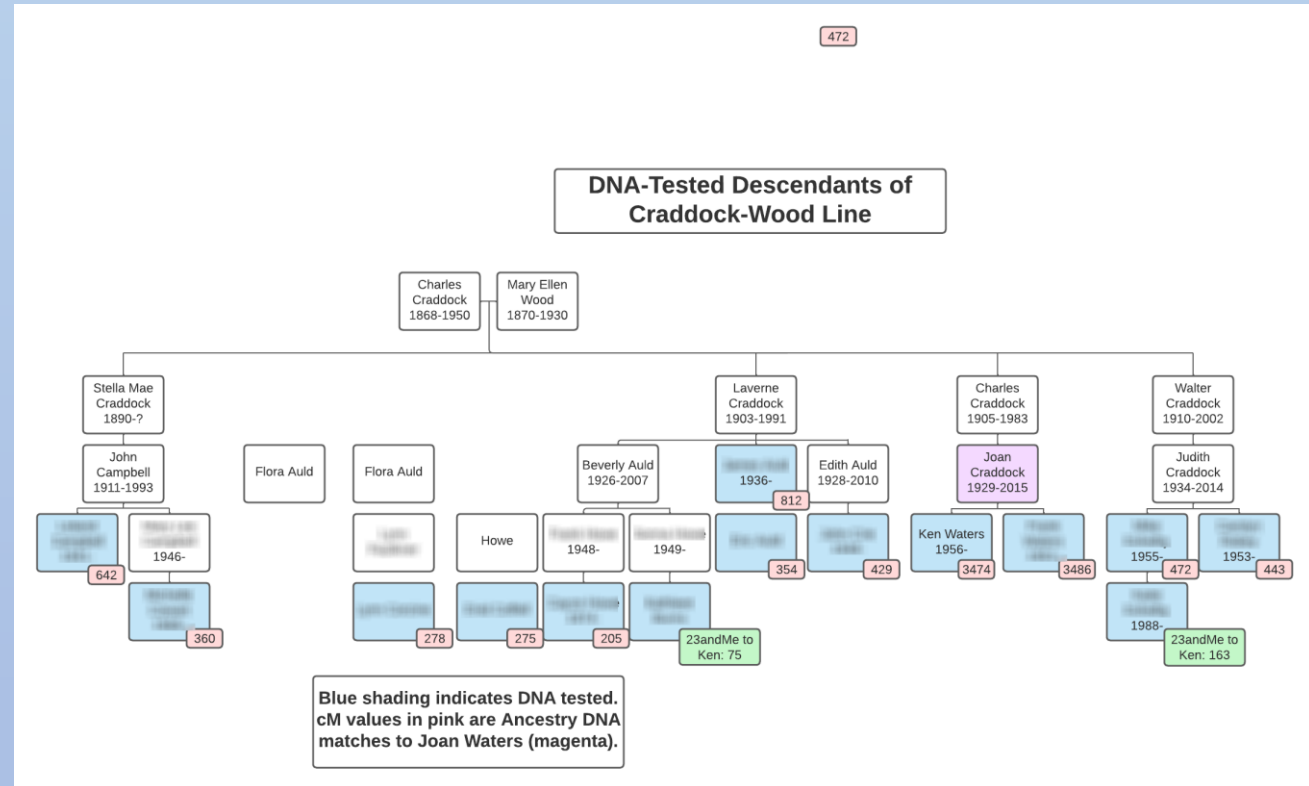
Two sets of 2nd great grandparents are brick walls --- looking for DNA matches to these couples that would be 3rd cousins

3rd cousins would share a set of 2nd great grandparents

Look for 3rd cousins for each set of these

Other Suggestions

- Consider building a DNA relational diagram (aka, descendancy diagram) when you have several matches related to each other

See my Nov 2022 presentation on building these

DNA-Tested Descendants of Craddock-Wood Line

Blue shading indicates DNA tested. cM values in pink are Ancestry DNA matches to Joan Waters (magenta).

Other Suggestions

- Keep checking for new matches
  - When you find them always try to "tag" them into the appropriate ancestral line

  - Use the "Unviewed" filter to quickly see your newest matches

Other Suggestions

- Make use of the Notes field!

- I often enter relevant information in the Notes field for each match to include:
  - Full name, DOB (if identified)
  - If known, exact relationship (e.g., 1C2R for 1st cousin twice removed)
  - Surname list from tree, if included

Upcoming Classes/Presentations

Sat, Nov 18, 3 pm – Mesa Red Mountain Library

What mysteries can be revealed with a DNA test? We will discuss actual instances of surprise matches, how you can learn from them, and where to go from there.

All library classes (highlighted blue) are free to attend and require no registration. Classes are held at the Red Mountain Mesa Public Library at 635 N Power Rd in Mesa (unless otherwise noted above).

Remember---all presentations online

- Presentations: http://familytreeaz.com/Presentations

Genealogy Presentations

2023
Identifying Your DNA Matches (Jan 2023)

2022
A Unified Process for DNA Matches (Dec 2022)
Intro to DNA (Dec 2022)

DNA Painter Dec 2022
GEDMatch (Trilogy)
DNA Relational Diagrams
First Look at Ancestry SideView Matching
Deep Dive into MyHeritage DNA Oct 2022
What Can DNA Do For You Sep 2022
New Match Methodology 2022
GEDMatch Apr 2022 Handout

DNA Tips & Tricks

Intro to DNA (Mar 2022)

FamilyTreeAZ.com

Presentations:
http://familytreeaz.com/Presentations

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Google Voice Phone: (480) 331-5889

Paternal haplogroup (Big-Y700): R-FTB79747
Maternal haplogroup (Full series): H1c1
GEDMatch: A979857