

A DIFFERENT DNA SURPRISE

by Millie Clough

It was a beautiful day last May and I was waiting for the doorbell to ring announcing visitors whom I had never met before. The dogs weren't barking yet, but I had received a phone call saying my guests were not far away. I was about to meet a newly discovered relative found through a DNA test and his wife. This was a surprise connection far away in time and distance.

I first heard of DNA and its use in genealogy in 2003, when I took a trip with the John Clough Genealogy Society to England and Wales. That is a story by itself but not my task for today. I got many members of my family to test (not Cloughs) and somewhere along the line I got lost. What do I do with all this DNA information? How do I organize it to make sense? Time to join the DNA group? I wasn't looking for adoptive parents or other surprises, although I did find an unknown cousin. I wanted to find where those many great grandparents came from.

Having a family of girls, in order to explore where my father's family came from, I asked a nephew to do a YDNA test and then I tried to contact the closest matches to see where they placed in the line. It seems men aren't as enthusiastic responders as many women interested in genealogy are. Only a few times did I get an answer. The name I was researching was Welch. One of the people I contacted was quite far down the list so not a close relative, but he was interested and replied immediately. I was curious because his name was listed as Welchez. Manuel Welchez explained that he was born in Guatemala, and he thought the name had been translated into Spanish and then back into English. I had no idea who of our ancestors could have immigrated to Guatemala nor why or when. The ancestors I had traced had many children and I had concentrated on those in my line. It seemed unlikely that I could help him find his connection. He did straighten out the mystery around the name. In Spanish, Welch sounds like "Gueche" and that had been the name his family had used. Now living in the U. S., Manuel was using Welchez. DNA doesn't lie. We should be able to find the Welch connection.

Quite a few months went by and then I got another email from Manuel Welchez. He had found a marriage certificate for a Joseph Welch who married Ann Noble on Nov. 22, 1733, in Boston, Massachusetts. I contacted my nephew, David, who had been the one with the YDNA test and with his encouragement, I found Joseph and Ann or Anne in my Reunion program. Joseph was a brother of my 5th great grandfather, Paul. Both were sons of Elkanah Welch, (1667-1755), a son of Thomas, (1622-1701), the first in the line to come here as far as I know. We were able to help Manuel find his Welch connection and he was excited to have a big problem solved. He now knew where his New England connection with the Welch/Welsh family occurred. Joseph and Ann Welch's son Joseph, had travelled to Guatemala, probably met a beautiful senorita, married her, and thus located a branch of the Welch family there and translated the name to the closest Spanish sound to Welch, Gueche.

That wasn't the end of my adventure. The best was yet to come. Manuel called and asked if he and his wife could come and meet me. They lived all the way down near San Diego but wanted to take a few days trip and come up to the Bay Area. I truly looked forward to the afternoon and found the Welchez cousins a delightful couple. They brought me a bouquet of flowers and took me out to lunch and were very patient as I got so busy talking, I forgot they hadn't had anything to eat. Lunch was very late, maybe an early dinner would be a better name.

We have stayed in touch, and I will share all my information about the Welch family. I just wish this had happened quite a few years ago so I could have introduced him to the rest of the family. Whether we are 4th or 5th cousins or more, there is something about family that makes you comfortable friends from the minute you meet no matter how far back the relationship goes.

So how many missing ancestors emigrated out of the United States? Have you looked at foreign countries?

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Millie Clough and cousin, Manuel Welchez