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The Genealogy of John Morton, the Signer: the DNA Results

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John Morton (1725–1777) was one of the 56 persons who signed the Declaration of Independence of the United States in 1776. Especially, it is pointed out in many sources that he casted the decisive vote for independence. Consequently, it has been debated, what was his ethnic origin, was he of Swedish or Finnish ancestry? The problem may be studied through the great-grandfather of John Morton, named Mårten Mårtensson, who came from the so-called Forest Finn areas in Central Sweden in 1654 to the colony of New Sweden in Delaware.

To solve the much debated problem of Morton's ancestry, historian Auvo Kostainen and DNA-analyst Pekka Haikkala have issued a study which combines the elements of historical research and genetic genealogy. The DNA research has not been used extensively to solve the ancestry of historical persons, although some interesting personalities have been examined to find out their DNA heritage. These persons include Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther and King Richard III. Regarding John Morton's deep roots, genetic genealogy will give new insights.

John Morton – a Politician from Pennsylvania

The Colony of New Sweden (Nya Sverige) was formed on the lands bought from the Lenape Indian population on the Dela-

ware Bay in 1638, until the Dutch took it over in 1655. Hundreds of settlers and other colonists moved to New Sweden from Sweden and Finland, which at the time was a part of the Kingdom of Sweden. The newcomers included voluntary settlers as well as forced migrants, in addition to a number of soldiers and people doing various services for the colony. This group of people also included both men and women, as well as children.

John Morton was born in the former New Sweden Colony in 1725. His father, also named John Morton, died before the birth of John Junior. His mother, Mary Archer of Finnish origin, soon remarried an English land surveyor John Sketchley. The new stepfather was a learned and skilled person at his time, who educated John Morton as a land surveyor, too, and apparently had great influence on the education of John Morton. He grew up to be an active and successful person, who gained several positions of responsibility in the Parliament and the government of the colony of Pennsylvania. John served as the member of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, despite having no formal training in law. He represented Pennsylvania during the time when North American colonies of Britain prepared for the independence. Morton seems to have hesitated when considering independence, but ultimately supported it. He married Ann Justis, also of Finnish relation. They had eight children who all grew up to adulthood.



The portrait of John Morton from the Norton Art Gallery, Louisiana. Photo: Collections of the Migration Institute of Finland.

John Morton died unexpectedly of apparent lung disease in 1777, only a year after the declaration of independence.

John Morton's ethnic roots were discussed especially from the end of the 19th century both in Finland and Sweden. Available information is sparse, however. John Morton's great grandfather was called Mårten Mårtensson Senior, whose name can also be found in the Finnish form, Martti Marttinen. A Finnish-American historian and priest, Salomon Ilmonen, wrote several books about Finns in America during the early 1900s. He derived the genealogy of Morton to the Finns who moved in the 1500s to 1600s to central parts of Sweden to cultivate land with help of the 'slash and burn' techniques. Ilmonen suggested that Mårtensson actually belonged to the Marttinen family of Eastern Finland, and he had come from the parish of Rautalampi.

In Delaware, Mårtensson had a farm in the Ammansland area, which was settled by many Finnish-related colonists. It is unclear if John Morton was aware of his Finnish ancestry or if he considered himself Swedish. In the location where Mårtensson's descendants lived, there were many people of Finnish relation. If he had information about his Finnish roots, that information must have come from his

mother. It is possible that some people still kept some elements of Finnish culture, such as the *sauna*, and perhaps even some words of the Finnish language were still heard. Perhaps John Morton was even able to use some Finnish words, despite being a fourth generation immigrant.

The Marttinen Family DNA Research

Pehr Kalm, Professor of Turku Academy in Finland, carried out a lengthy exploration to North America in 1748–1751, while researching natural life in America. He is famous for his visit and travelogue to Niagara Falls, although most of his stay in America concentrated on former New Sweden colony. There he met his future wife, the widow of the Swedish priest Sandin, by the name of Margaretha Sjöman. Kalm was interested in both the nature of the colony and the New Sweden descendants. He copied information from the Wicaco Gloria Dei old church records, which revealed the date of Mårten Mårtensson's death, May 31, 1706. There it was written he was "born in Finland in Sweden" (i Finland i Sverige), at the age of 100 years. This piece of information is just about everything the documents tell of the roots of Mårten Mårtensson Senior.

Due to the lack of exact information, the debate around the genealogy of Mårtensson and John Morton has persisted. According to the study carried out by Kostiaainen and Haikala, no written documents were found to establish his location neither in Finland nor in Swedish Forest Finn areas.

The FamilyTreeDNA-testing company (Houston, Texas) has developed a number of so-called group projects, among them the Finland project with 19000 participants. Our specific research project is called the Marttinen-group. It has 103 participants. It includes a "test group" of 12 persons, which represent various branches of the Marttinens, and their test results have been closely analyzed.

The Marttinen family of Eastern Finland has commonly been presented as the background group of Mårtensson, Senior. Therefore, our study aimed first to figure out the male Y-DNA values of this special family, analyzing their genetic branches. The Y-DNA testing has made great progress in recent years and adopted many new ways of analyzing the test results. Today, we may find a high probability of genetic relationship within a number of generations. The tests may be based on the paternal line Y-DNA as well as the maternal line mtDNA.

The planning of the Morton DNA-project has been complicated and time-consuming.



The Memorial of Finnish Colonists in New Sweden, by Wäinö Aaltonen in Chester, PA. Photo: Auvo Kostiainen 2008.

Regarding the genetic roots of John Morton we are able to follow the paternal line of John Morton. The most important factor has been the interest of the Marttinen family society to advance the project, and also the possibility to make use of the Y-DNA test results by the Mårten Mårtensson male descendants in the United States. Our study compares the test results of two Mårtensson descendants, R. Morton and W. Morton from the United States. They are descendants of tenth and eleventh generation respectively, while R. Morton is also a paternal descendant of John Morton.

Thus, documentary materials of historical research have been added with the means and analytical tools of genetic genealogy. The most important tools for our research have been the STR (Short Tandem Repeat) marker test and the SNP (Single Nucleotide Polymorphism) test which look for mutations or "snips". The genetic heritage of Mårten Mårtensson, Senior has also been compared with the results taken from the Marttinens and their "test group" in Finland, mentioned above, as well as with the results of the FTDNA Finland DNA group in general. The Marttinen family in question is an old and expansive family in Finland, and

a lot of their family relations today include persons who do not actually carry the family name Marttinen.

Karelian, Savonian and Swedish Forest Finn Ancestries

The Y-DNA test results show very strong relation of John Morton and Mårten Mårtensson, Senior with Finland. They belong to the large haplo group N, formed in South-East Asia 40000 years ago, its subgroup N-M231, and further subgroup N1C1. These haplo groups dominate Finland, but they are especially found in the genetic heritage of males coming from Eastern Finland. The haplo N originates from Southeast Asia and has contributed to the "Siberian" genetic input in European heritage.

According to the FTDNA analysis, the SNP-snip information is suitable for tracing the long-standing genetic heritage. The "snip"-results are considered the backbone to build the "genetic trees". These trees and their branches inform us that Mårten Mårtensson, Senior as well as John Morton and the Marttinens, belong to an Eastern Finn-



Morton Homestead in its present condition, Prospect Park, PA. Photo: Auvo Kostiainen 2008.

ish branch of the haplo group N-M231, named the Karelian branch, and its close neighbor, the Savonians. The SNPs inform us that around the years 650 and 1000 AD significant new branches in the genetic tree were formed. As a result of major migratory movements to the interior of Finland these people broadened their life circles extensively. They had originally settled on the Karelian Isthmus and South Karelia, but later moved to various parts of the Savo province, to Central Finland, to Ostrobothnia and for example, its Southern Ostrobothnian lake district.

The expansion was mainly motivated by the desire to search new farm lands, particularly with the use of the 'slash and burn' techniques. Historical records tell us that during the 1500s and 1600s, as many as 12000 Finns moved to Central parts of Sweden to cultivate new farming land, some even crossed the border to Norway. Those Forest Finns who continued their journey to Delaware came, for example, from the provinces of Värmland and Dalarna. Some Finns came directly from Finland, particularly from the coastal regions.

Our research is a sample study by nature. We compare the test results within the Marttinen family group to the tested Mortons. Since the number of those who take the Y-DNA tests continues to grow, the overall results may get more specified in the future. The virtual pages of the FTDNA show the growth of tests, and the number of "matches" continues to grow as new names and results appear for comparison.

When looking at the Y-DNA67-test results for the STR-markers, we may compare mutation numbers; the smaller the number is, the closer is the expected relationship with our reference person (R. Morton). We find one

person who has only one mutation to separate him and R. Morton. Additionally, there are three persons with two mutations and circa 40 persons with three mutations. The person with only one mutation is actually a descendant of the Forest Finns from Sweden. In order to get more precise information on the family relations for the persons mentioned, these individuals should take the SNP-test to clarify the genetic family trees.

According to both the STR-tests and the SNP-tests, the Mårtensson descendants R. Morton and W. Morton do have a number of close genetic relatives both in Finland and in Sweden. While looking at the SNP-snip tests results available we find that the specific Morton snip called Y77866 is found in the test of R. Morton, and in the test of the Forest Finn descendant mentioned above as well as in the test of three other persons in Finland. This snip was created around the year 1000 AD. The Forest Finn descendant's paternal line is not clear, but his father came from Västmanland, which is also known as the Forest Finn area.

The Problem of the Home Site of Mårten Mårtensson, Senior

Where in Finland did Mårten Mårtensson, Senior (or Martti Marttinen) come from? We have not been able to solve this problem exactly in our study. However, there is a strong indication that genetic relation has concentrated in a specific area called Southern Savo (or Southern part of the Savo province). The tests indicate strong relation between our reference person R. Morton and the Marttinen people originating from the village of Salmenkylä in the old parish of Kangasniemi. Earlier it was often stated that Mårten Mårtensson's roots were in the Savonian parish of Rautalampi.

However, this question remained largely unanswered in our study.

The research process revealed that there are a number of other Finnish families, who are not named Marttinen but whose genetic heritage shows strong similarity to Mårten Mårtensson, Senior. Based on the information taken from the SNP-snp tests, examples of these related families from the Southern Savo area are named the Himanen and Parkkinen family as well as the Puranen family from the Savo province.

It is possible that Mårten Mårtensson, Senior was born in the Kangasniemi parish, Southern Savo, in Eastern Finland. However, it is even more probable that his forefathers lived there several generations earlier and those forefathers moved to the interior of Finland for farming. Ultimately descendants of this specific family moved to Central Sweden to become Forest Finns. A member of this population, a male farmer Mårten Mårtensson, Senior and his family crossed the Atlantic to Delaware in 1654. We do not know exactly where the Kangasniemi, Salmenkylä Martinens or their forefathers were located and earned their living around the years 1000-1300 AD. Possibly at the time they lived in Southern Karelia or Karelian Isthmus and only later moved to Kangasniemi parish.

The name Mårten Mårtensson is a patronymic name type, translated as "Mårten, the son of Mårten". In Finnish language he has been mostly called Martti Marttinen or Martti Martinpoika, translated as "Martti, the son of Martti". In the Delaware colony the name of Mårten Mårtensson was reformed into various English-type names, and finally it was shortened as Morton. Thus far, there is no evidence that the Finnish last name Marttinen was ever used in the colonial records of the 1600s.

As mentioned above, the genetic genealogy and its methods and tools continue to develop, and there is heavy competition between the companies in business. Therefore, we may expect that new and more specific results may soon be available. We may expect that new information on Mårten Mårtensson, Senior and John Morton roots will be revealed. Perhaps, we may ultimately also find new documentary information about their roots.

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