



# Research Committee Annual Report July 2002

Submitted by

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## **Introduction**

***"As genealogists we work in the present, studying the past to share in the future. How we do it today will be tested by our descendants tomorrow."*<sup>1</sup>**

I would like to thank the members of the Board for their help and support this past year. I believe we have made significant gains towards realizing our mission, goals and objectives and this would not have been possible without the Board's leadership.

The DNA Study has moved forward and the first results have been received. It appears that as the Second Phase results are received, we may have some interesting data to help us better understand some of the relationships between the Family Groups.

The John French Master File (JFMF) project continues as the main project and the focus of much of our efforts and time. Its' purpose is to collect genealogical data from our members and other researchers to further the study of the Pennington surname.

We are in the middle of the second cycle of collecting and distributing changes to the John French Master File (JFMF). This process takes much more time than we had hoped, however, we are moving forward.

This report reflects the abilities and qualities of the members of the Research Committee. Without their skills, tireless efforts, dedication and concern for the PRA, none of our successes would have been achieved.

I want to mention the hard work and dedication by our new Assistant Research Directors and the new Chairman of the DNA Committee. The PRA is indeed fortunate to have such an outstanding Team.

- Carmen Johnson -- Responsible for the John French Master File (JFMF). Carmen is also the Group Leader for Group 7.
- Rene'e Davis -- Responsible for our Family Groups and Group Leaders. Rene'e is also the Group Leader for Group 9.
- Nick Pennington – Chairman of the DNA Committee. Nick is also the Group Leader for Group 33.

Bobby Pennington, Assistant Research Director responsible for the PRA Indexing Program, is also the Group Leader for Group 6. Bobby has had

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from John Vincent Wylie, Professional Genealogist in an article written in *Everton's Genealogical Helper*, July/August 1998, page 223.

some serious health problems all year and is slowly but steadily making a recovery. When his health allows, Bobby will be able to participate more in the efforts of the Research Committee.

I want to once again recognize the outstanding work by Margaret E. Wood, our Obituary Database Editor. Since taking on this important job three years ago, she has entered hundreds of obituaries on the Ancestry.com Message Board. Many Pennington researchers have been helped by her efforts.

While this position is not part of the Research Committee, I believe Margaret's contribution is noteworthy and she continues to help the Pennington Research Association meet one of its' major goals.

## **Projects**

The Research Committee has struggled all year with many problems which have, at times, prevented us from working on our projects as much as we wanted. Our major projects to work on this year and their status are:

- Maintain the PRA web site – On-Going
- Continue to make changes to the John French Master File (JFMF) and develop a process to disseminate the data – On-Going.
- DNA Study – Phase One Results Received – Phase Two in progress
- Pennington Pedigrees Indexing (PRA Index Project) – On hold

These projects are listed by their priority. They were assigned these priorities based on discussions with the Board, the Research Committee and what I thought must be completed in order to accomplish our primary goals and objectives.

## **Noteworthy Accomplishments**

- Improved communications with members and other researchers. For the third year in a row there was an increase in the number of queries and general e-mail messages. Our first attempt at holding on-line meetings with Group Leaders has only met with partial success. The technology and timing of the events seems to be the main obstacles. I hope that we can take better advantage of this technology this next year.
- Collection of genealogical information from new members and other researchers has improved. Since July 2001, I have collected four (4) reports from new PRA members and three (3) reports from other Pennington researchers. These either have been or will be forwarded to the Editor of the Pedigrees to be published. They will also be added to the JFMF during the next cycle.

- Our web site continues to grow and improve. We have received a number of positive comments and suggestions to improve it. We continue to add new features and information to the web site.
- Hundreds of new and returning Pennington Research Association members were sent "Welcome to the Pennington Research Association" and "New Member Process" messages via e-mail or a letter by U.S. Postal Service. This follow up, combined with the new member material sent by our Membership Chair, Barbara Pennington, has been a tremendous success. I continually hear back from new members and in many cases some of them have become Family Group Leaders. This process has greatly enhanced our ability to reach out to new and returning members and has helped us meet our primary goal of providing value to our members.
- DNA Study – Phase One was completed and the results have been received (see report from DNA Committee for details). Phase Two has been started. The Board approved a modification of the DNA Study Plan to allow non-PRA members to participate in the study. For details, please refer to the background material submitted to Board for vote on this subject.

## **DNA Committee Report**

By Nick Penington, DNA Committee Chairman  
May 29, 2002

The DNA committee has made great strides in the last calendar year. In September of 2001 we received the first results from the testing of 14 Pe(n)ningtons. These results immediately suggested that as represented by these individuals, 6 of the family groups from a total of 13 groups are related genetically in genealogically relevant time i.e. the last 1000 years. By the same logic the results also suggested that 7 Pennington family groups are not related to the first group or (closely) to each other. One possible exception to this statement is group 28 that on further testing with more markers may still be classified with the first group of 6. The only way to confirm or refute these suggestions is for each group that is now represented by a single sequence to be represented by a few more tests.

Nick Penington took over the chairmanship of DNA study in November of 2001 and since that time, as a result of incorporation, we have been able to open a dedicated tax free bank account with which to operate the study. The price for a single DNA test, if carried out within a family organization surname study, has been reduced for us to \$115 which brings the test within the reach of most family historians. The company FamilyTreeDNA.com has

been very supportive and efficient and they have introduced 9 new markers allowing us to differentiate those individuals who score 12/12 and appear identical. I am told that those who upgraded to 21 markers, for a reasonable charge, will be given 4 more for free for a total of 25.

A 12/12 identical score would suggest that the subjects share a common ancestor most likely within 14 generations, but obtaining an identical sequence using 21 markers allows one to estimate the most likely time that a common ancestor existed to 8 generations into the past. We have found that our 6 related groups: 4, 5, 7, 14, 30 and 31 can be split into two identical groups 5 and 14 on the one hand and 7, 30 and 31 on the other. Group 4 is just one mutation away from the cluster of group 7, 30 and 31 but two mutations from groups 5 and 14. These three nodes form a network of related clusters.

Recently another group 7 individual has just tested (with 12 markers) identically with groups 5 and 14. This all suggests quite strongly that all six groups are merely a network of related families, separated by a few random mutations in the Y-chromosome sequence. The time frame for when these mutations occurred could be between 40 or 1 generations ago.

We currently have two volunteers from group 28 (but I think these tests need to be refined or upgraded to 21 markers) and two from groups 7 and 29. We are currently awaiting the results from the second volunteer from group 29.

Now for the future. It is imperative that we get more volunteers of patrilineal Pen(n)ingtons from all groups to volunteer. Thus we need other volunteers from groups 8 (promised), 6, 4, 5, 15, 31, 30, 10, 33 and 9. This will remove the doubt that the sequence that we have, representing each group, is possibly not the prevalent one for each group. There are also several groups that could be represented in this study but currently are not.

In the near future we will consider advertising in a British publication such as the UK edition of "Family Tree Magazine" ([www.family-tree.co.uk](http://www.family-tree.co.uk)) to attempt to get some British Pen(n)ingtons to take part in the study. Since Pennington is a Lancastrian name another idea is to write an article for the newsletters of the FHS (Family History society) of Liverpool and S.W. Lancashire and the Manchester and Lancashire FHS. Cumberland and Westmoreland and Cheshire also have a FHS and all of these groups have thousands of members some of who are Penningtons or people who know Penningtons. We currently have about \$2000 in the DNA bank account, enough for 20 DNA tests. This money would be well spent in obtaining sequences from individuals with lengthy family trees in the UK or from family groups here in the US that are currently unrepresented. In short, the more sequences we have in our database the more we can conclude about the overall structure

of the Pennington family.

Some of the other (at this time apparently unconnected) DNA sequences we have found are sure to be represented in the UK. If we are lucky enough to find the most frequent sequence that we have found in this country also in the UK, it will provide some valuable clues. This outcome will give us information about whether the network that we have found is a lineage that flourished in this country only, and became extinct in the UK, or whether it is the prevalent Pennington DNA signature in the Old Country also. If the location of this signature can be found in the UK it will provide a good clue as to the origin of the first American Pennington with this sequence. The same also applies for the other Pen(n)ington sequences.

## **Web Site**

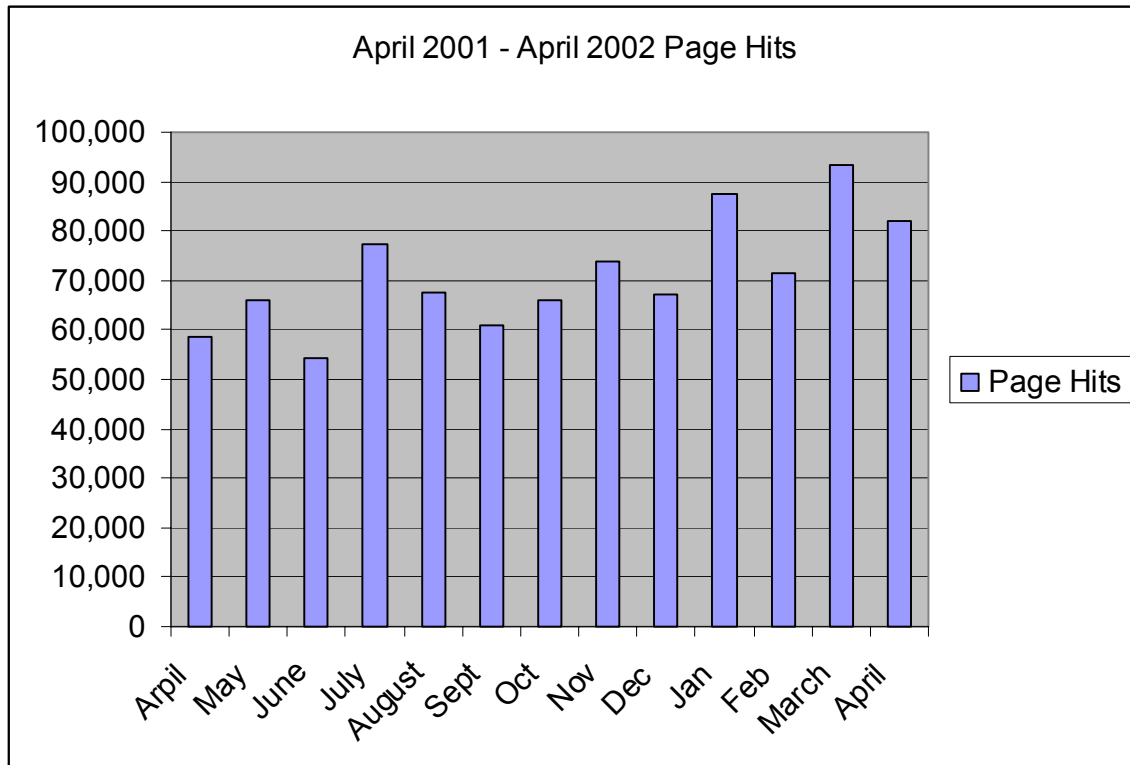
Our web site continues to be successful and has helped us to meet one of our major goals.

While we have implemented several ways to use our web site, we must continue to explore new ways to provide on-line access to the information the PRA has such as Family Groups, the Pedigree and Courier indexes and perhaps even the JFMF. Each of these data sources has tremendous value to our members and other researchers. We need to find a method to make the data available on-line so it can not only be read, but can be updated by authorized members of the PRA.

Remember that the future of the web site is limited only by our imagination.

Below is a chart summarizing the number of page hits our web site has experienced between April 2001 and April 2002.

When reviewing these numbers, remember that these are PER MONTH! The web site average is 71,253 page hits per month. That is, in my humble opinion, amazing.



## **Mail List**

The Pennington Research Association's mail list is working, however, it remains a fairly quiet mail list. It should be utilized more by the Board, Staff and Research Committee members if we want the members to take full advantage of its potential. I cannot stress enough how under utilized this mail list continues to be at this time. I urge the Board, Staff and Research Committee members to set the example by using it more for communications and research exchanges.

As of May 15, 2002, there were 129 subscribers to PRA-L (normal mode) and 41 subscribers to PRA-D (digest mode) for a total of 170 subscribers.

The purpose of the PRA mail list is:

1. To provide information for researchers of the Pennington surname;
2. To provide general information such as announcements, research tips and resources and;
3. To provide an easy method for PRA members to communicate with each other;
4. A discussion list for research and;
5. To provide a source for queries and answers to queries for the editor of the Pedigrees should he/she choose to use them.

## **Message Boards on Ancestry.com**

With the merger of Rootsweb.com, Ancestry.com, MyFamily.com and other companies, we saw the merger of all of the Pennington message boards into one easy to use message board covering all of the topics. The topics include wills, pensions, queries, obituaries, births, cemeteries, census, deed, immigration, marriage, bible and biography. This board is operated by the PRA. Operation of this board has helped the PRA to meet its mission.

## **PRA Indexing**

Due to Bobby Pennington's health challenges this past year and his slow but steady recovery, this project is on hold.

## **JFMF**

The John French Master File (JFMF) has continued to be a major hurdle. While it is true the JFMF has the potential to be of great value to our members and other Pennington researchers, it has certainly been the most challenging.

During the year, some Group Leaders discussed the JFMF and tried to develop methods to make the changes to the JFMF an easier process. In addition, I moderated an open discussion on the JFMF at our annual reunion/meeting in San Antonio last year to solicit comments from our members. I will moderate another open discussion on the JFMF at this year's reunion/meeting in the hopes we can encourage positive suggestions on how to improve the process.

The best method to address the JFMF and all of its problems is to have a meeting with as many of the Group Leaders as possible and to set specific topics for discussion and to formulate a new plan for working with the JFMF.

Last year I told you that I hoped that within 3 years we could hold such a meeting. I now think I was too optimistic and I hold out little hope of being able to host such a meeting. I think the problems associated with holding such a meeting are too many to overcome given the other problems we are trying to overcome.

I also said that during those 3 years, I would discuss the JFMF and its' problems by holding on-line meetings on the Internet. The good news is that there have been several such on-line meetings. The bad news is the results have been slow in coming. The problems are not easily identified and solved and using on-line meetings is not a replacement for in person discussions.

## **Family Groups**

Rene'e Davis, Group Leader for Group 9, accepted the position of Assistant Research Director responsible for Family Groups this year. Rene'e has worked very hard to establish communications with all of the Group Leaders and to stimulate discussions on a wide range of topics concerning Family Groups.

She has been successful with her efforts with many of the Group Leaders and she is to be congratulated on her sterling performance and attempts to complete her tasks and bring the Family Groups up to the high standards we have established.

Unfortunately, despite her efforts, some of our Group Leaders continue to be detached from the PRA and our efforts to improve. There are a few of the Group Leaders who do not respond to e-mail messages and/or phone calls nor do they contribute any research to the JFMF or share information with other researchers.

This behavior was noticed in 1998 and the plans submitted to the Board by the Research Committee at that time (and in 1999) were designed to correct this problem. Unfortunately, we still have some Group Leaders that have not fully joined our efforts to improve the PRA and our methods.

Unfortunately, we do not have any new plans to present at this time to the Board which may correct this problem. I hope that with the continued support of the Board and the active and interested Group Leaders we will develop some viable solutions in 2002.

## **Future**

There are two (2) critical issues facing the Research Committee this next year.

1. Apathy by some of our Group Leaders.
2. The JFMF – How to update it and how to distribute the information

I don't have any solutions for either of these two issues. I encourage any positive suggestions and comments.

As I said last year, I believe the future of the Pennington Research Association is very bright. We know there will continue to be challenges to face and obstacles to overcome, but with hard work and dedication, we can overcome these challenges and obstacles.

I continue to believe strongly that we must continue to explore new ways of making our information available in printed and electronic media and on the Internet.

This will pose a number of significant challenges. Security of the data, the ability to make it available to members only, the cost to provide this service and how to make it available for updating by Family Group Leaders. All of these challenges, and others yet to be identified, need to be carefully examined.

The purpose of an association such as the Pennington Research Association is to foster the exchange of genealogical information and to embrace others in our extended family.

I encourage the Board members to renew their commitment to our vision, our mission and our goals.