

Early Pikes in Seattle

by Stuart Pike

Every genealogist has hit brick walls. This is the story about how one brick wall with a seemingly hidden twig, lost in the fog of time, was revealed and solved by genetic DNA.

The Questions

Like many novice genealogists, I can spend 50 hours a week obsessively following a family twig or, on the flip side, not touch genealogy for months at a time. As I'm retired in Costa Rica, I have plenty of time to dabble online. My primary focus has been on the Pike surname. Seattle is nominally home.

My grandmother Genevieve Pike was one of the early women graduates from the University of Washington. Census data shows my great grandfather Allison G. Pike residing in Edmonds in 1910. Most of my genealogy research was informed by a book on my twig, *Hess-Higbee Genealogy* by William Emerson Babcock, published in 1909.¹

The book shows Allison G. Pike in the Seattle area prior to 1909. It also shows a trail back through Missouri to Benton Harbor, Michigan, where for a long time it ended because I couldn't find the parents of my great-great-grandfather William H. Pike, born in 1835.



Pike Place Market, circa 1913: Public domain

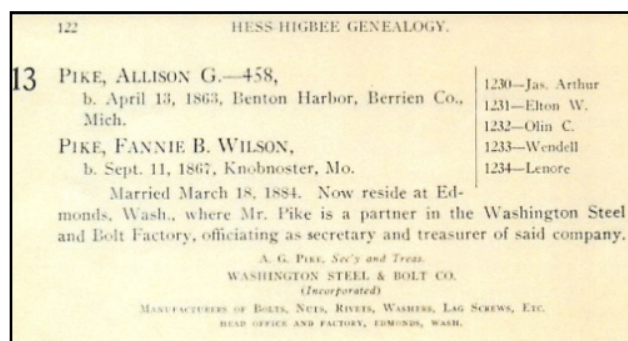
I jumped on the DNA bandwagon about ten years ago. Using DNA, I was able to discover to which twig of the Pike surname I belonged and pushed my tree back to James Pike, born 1621 in England. An overview of this twig can be found in "Group 6" of the PIKE DNA Surname Project where I'm a co-administrator. <http://www.math.mun.ca/~dapike/familyhistory/pike/DNA/index.php?content=results.html> "Group 6" aka my twig or clan. There is a book documenting multiple branches of this clan: *Some Descendants of James Pike of Charlestown and Reading, Massachusetts; and the Times in Which They Lived*, by Ruth G. Pike (1990).²

As most genealogists know family lore often informs us about our tree, and we were no different. At family gatherings in the Queen Anne neighborhood of Seattle we would quiz Grandma, asking "Are we really related to Zebulon Pike, the explorer who discovered Pike's Peak?" She would respond with a shrug and say, "I don't know, perhaps? Maybe."

Grandma would also tell the humorous story (or urban legend) of how her husband Wendell Pike had a chance to buy Mercer Island but "everyone knew it wasn't worth much and you had to take a boat to get there."³

The other question we'd dangle was: "How about the Pike Place Market? Is that named after a relative?" Grandma would say, "No, our trail is out of Missouri and then Michigan. We're not related to the market founders." Grandma would once again reference the *Hess-Higbee* book.

So the story ends...or not.



Excerpt from *Hess-Higbee Genealogy*

The Backstory

Shel Slade, another amateur genealogist, grew up knowing that she was related to John Henry Pike, one of the lesser known pioneers who settled Seattle and the somewhat unknown, eponymous settler of Pike Street. Lucile McDonald, writing in the *Seattle Times*, described how the street and market got its name:

John Henry Pike was a member of the same wagon train in which Dexter Horton, the Rev. Daniel Bagley, William H. Shoudy, Aaron and Thomas Mercer (all Seattle pioneers) crossed the plains in 1852. Pike, then 37, a native of New Hampshire, was in Princeton, IL when Thomas Mercer of that town organized a small company of 14 wagons and 40 horses. At the time Pike's 4 nephews, the Warren brothers...**[Pike] died in 1903 and didn't survive long enough to see the present Pike Place Market that bore the family name.**⁴

Over the years, Shel built out her tree and collected the documentation and articles that provided a rich tapestry of her ancestors. Apparently John Henry knew Chief Seattle, the legendary native American. However, she had all but given up finding John Henry Pike's parents and extending her tree. There were some census clues but with a common name like John, it was sadly impossible to pin down who John's parents were and where he was born. Brick walls, clipped branches and dead ends are familiar stories for every genealogist.

After ten long years with no progress, Shel finagled her uncle Robert Pike of Des Moines to take a Y-DNA test. I offer a little "geek speak" by my friend and co-administrator David Pike of the PIKE DNA Surname Project from the site mentioned above:

Y-DNA tracks the markers in MALE Y-DNA (because only males carry a Y-chromosome). Keep in mind that the Y-chromosome is passed only from father to son. So those men who provide DNA

samples ought to have direct Pike paternity (i.e., their father's father's.... father's father should have been a Pike). Since a son typically inherits his surname (as well as his Y-chromosome) from his biological father, the men with the bit of DNA that we are looking for usually have the surname Pike."...The DNA segments that are tested belong to the Y-chromosome, which is just one of the 24 chromosomes in human males. The Y-chromosome is inherited by male children from their fathers. Since the Y-chromosome of a male child is not genetically influenced by his mother's DNA, its genetic variation is solely the result of occasional mutations that occur naturally. What this means is that each man's Y-chromosome is extremely similar to those of other men in his paternal family, which in turn makes Y-chromosome analysis an ideal tool for genealogists.

Analyzing the DNA markers, we can tell which twigs or clans are related to each other and which clans are NOT related to each other.

Back to the story. Shel sent in her uncle's DNA sample to Family Tree DNA with an email note to the project administrators:

I have been trying to trace our Pike family tree off and on for a few years and can't seem to get any further. So...I came across the DNA info and convinced my Uncle Robert Pike to tickle his cheek for the cause. [author note: Some DNA samples use a "Q Tip" like tool to swab the inner cheek.]

Just a little background. My maternal grandfather was John H. Pike b. 25 Dec. 1815. He married Helen Comfort Lake in Bath N.Y. 29 Aug 1841 and they joined a wagon train and ultimately ended up in Washington State. I found him listed

on a census that says his parents were both born in Massachusetts, but I have no names for them. I am really hoping the DNA test will help in furthering our search.

I responded to Shel's note, perhaps with foresight:

Dear Shel-

My GGrandfather Allison G. Pike was in Seattle area in the 1910 census. Good to have you in the project. Given the early Seattle connection **there is some chance we are related.** (emphasis added) During that time period family, cousins, uncles, brother & sisters often traveled together. Propinquity or proximity can sometimes help reveal family but sometimes it gives false clues, so let's see what the DNA says.

Stu Pike

Co-administrator PIKE DNA

The results came back from the DNA vendor FTDNA and I was stunned! Shel and I were **related!** What? WHAT! But, but how??? And who is John Henry Pike?

Truth be told, I honestly didn't know who John Henry Pike was or that he had any relationship to Seattle pioneers. After all, Grandma had told us we weren't related to the Seattle founders! The second part of this mystery was: Now that we knew there was a DNA match, who was the mysterious common ancestor? I alerted my other cousins to the DNA match and, joining our new cousin Shel, we furiously searched for clues on John Henry Pike with no success. There were multiple unhelpful trees on Ancestry with no documentation. False trails down rabbit holes. Then something toggled a switch in my mind: The above newspaper article in the Seattle Times mentioned "4 Warren nephews." What if I did some searches looking for the Pike surname with "Warren"? And some words like "wagon" or "Oregon"? Could I find an aunt or uncle from that time period?

Family Tree DNA (the vendor that runs the DNA test) provides a tool that allows people to see how closely related they are.

Y-DNA Matches

FILTER MATCHES

Show Matches For:

The Entire Database

 Markers:

67

 Distance:

All

 Matches Per Page:

25













Last Name Starts With:

(Optional)

 New Since:

Run Report

67 MARKERS - 6 MATCHES

Genetic Distance	Name		Most Distant Ancestor	Y-DNA Haplogroup	Terminal SNP	Match Date
2	Mr. Douglas W. Pike	  Y-DNA67 FF		R-M269		7/20/2016
2	Wm. William Pike	  Y-DNA67		R-M269		1/28/2016
3	Robert Mark Pike	  Y-DNA111		R-M269		7/19/2016
3	Thomas William Speight Pike	  Y-DNA111 FF	James Pike, d. 1699 Massachusetts	R-M269		1/28/2016
3	Robert Speight Pike	  Y-DNA111 FF	James Pike, arrived by 1647 in Charlestown, MA	R-Z156	Z156	1/28/2016
6	Wm. Douglas Speight	  Y-DNA67	Charles Speight, b.04, Aug. 1867 Sheffield, England	R-M269		1/28/2016

Y-DNA TiP Report

In comparing Y-DNA 67 marker results, the probability that **Robert Mark Pike** and **Mr. Stu Hartley Pike** shared a common ancestor within the last...

COMPARISON CHART	
Generations	Percentage
4	74.60%
8	95.27%
12	99.32%
16	99.91%
20	99.99%
24	100.00%

Refine your results with paper trail input

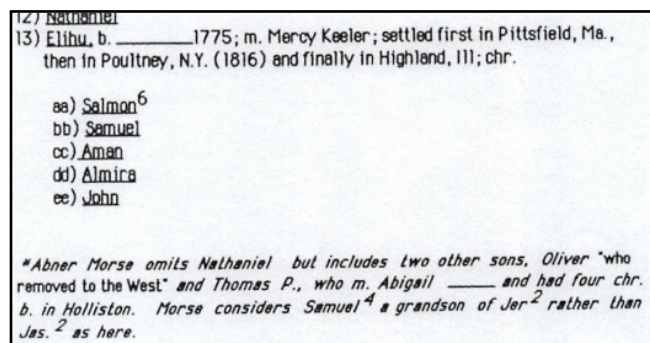
Google came to the rescue! Daniel K. Warren, John Henry Pike's nephew, tells the story this way:

My father, Danforth Warren, who was the fourth child of Grandfather Warren, was born September 22, 1806, in Edinburg, Saratoga County, New York. My mother Amanda PIKE, was born April 9, 1809 in Springfield, Massachusetts, and they were married in Bath, Steuben County, New York, December 16, 1830.⁵

In the spring of 1852 the four Warren boys (the eldest of whom was not yet twenty-one years old, while I was only sixteen fitted out a four-horse team for a trip to Oregon. We joined a company which was then organizing in Princeton, and sold our team to the captain of the company, Mr. Thomas Mercer,...Our company was then fully organized and consisted of the following: Capt. Thomas Mercer....John Pike, Daniel Drake and four Warren boys.⁶

Things moved quickly then, Cousin Shel found an ancestral record saying Amanda's parents were Elihu PIKE and Mercy Keeler. Given that, I was soon able to pop up a tree on familysearch.org. familysearch.org/ark:61903/2:2:STLM-L2S

Better yet, it was sourced! Parents were Elihu Pike, b. 1730 and Mercy Keeler. I consulted *Some Descendants of James Pike of Charlestown and Reading, Massachusetts and The Times in Which They Lived*. The linkage was on page 82 with Amanda spelled Aman, making it doubly hard to find!



Excerpt from *Some Descendants of James Pike of Charlestown and Reading, Massachusetts*.

John Henry Pike was the great-uncle several times removed from my great-grandfather Allison G. Pike. DNA testing was able to extend Shel's tree almost 200 years by piggybacking on the "Group 6" paper trees. And I? I was able to associate my tree with a Seattle pioneer. A link that I never imagined and was never, ever on my radar.

A final thought on the *Seattle Times* article mentioned above. Lucile McDonald said that John Henry Pike was a scion of Zebulon Pike of Pike's Peak fame. This may have been family lore as well. DNA clearly shows, however, there is no relationship between the two twigs of the Pike surname.

Endnotes

- ¹ Available online through Archives.org.
- ² Private printing of family tree.
<https://archive.org/details/somedesendantso00pike>
- ³ Mercer Island is now among the priciest real estate venues by far in Puget Sound.
- ⁴ *Seattle Times Magazine* article, August 5, 1979, page 7.
- ⁵ Even with this data, I have yet to find vital records for Amanda or John Henry.
- ⁶ Fred Lockley, *History of the Columbia River Valley from the Dalles to the Sea, Vol. III*, (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing, 1938), pp. 526-532.

Stuart Pike

Stu Pike and his wife have retired to Costa Rica. He has a degree from Whitman College and an MBA from the University of Washington. He has tested his Y-DNA at FTDNA and his autosomal (aDNA) at 23andme, Ancestry and FTDNA. His tree, faults and all can be found here:

<https://trees.ancestry.com/tree/13239399/family>.