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Czech DNA Project: Background and Update

By Leo Baca

Introduction

What do genealogists do after they've traced their ancestors as far as written records will take them? One possibility lies in the application of genetic research.

I was not aware of the potential of genetic research until I attended Dr. Gary Kocurek's presentation at the September 2001 Texas Czech Genealogical Society Conference in College Station. At that time Gary presented the results of his first mitochondrial DNA test which indicated the possibility of a genetic marker for Valachs. He later published his test results in the *České Stopy* (Volume I, Number 3). That was the beginning of the Czech DNA Project.

DNA Testing Uses

DNA testing is primarily used by genealogists to connect family branches. This is done by determining if two people are related because

they descend from the same ancestor. In this manner genealogists can confirm their family trees. In addition this type of testing will let you determine whether others with your surname are related to you. In this way surname variants can be confirmed. A number of adoptees have used genetic genealogy in their search for their biological parents and siblings. Richard Hill's *Finding Family: My Search for Roots and the Secrets in My DNA* provides numerous examples on the use of DNA in his search. DNA testing can also be used to get a glimpse of your “Deep Ancestry” which has significant time depth and can take you to prehistoric time periods.

DNA Testing

Genetics research during the past twenty years has shown that an incredible amount of information about our ancestry is encoded in our genetic material (DNA). What we learned in school is that we receive half of our genetic material from each our parents. What we didn't learn was that there are two kinds of DNA that are passed down from the father and mother that are not mixed. This makes it possible to trace both our maternal and paternal lines since no mixing of DNA occurs for these two kinds of DNA.

The method for gathering a

DNA sample does not involve any blood. You are sent a small brush to scrape some cells from the inside of your cheeks. You seal the brush in small plastic package and return it to the genetics' testing company with the payment for the test. Since DNA testing prices have been declining, it is best to check the websites of the various DNA testing companies for the latest prices.

The method for tracing your maternal line is called mitochon-

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Blahník Family Genealogical and DNA Research

By Lori M. Dollevoet © Nov 2013

Blahník Surname

The name "Blahník" is not an extremely common one, but certainly originated in the Czech Republic. This is one Czech name that has been thoroughly researched by numerous family members for at least 80 years. Because of the great family effort and fairly uncommon name it makes the use of DNA research an interesting prospect to help further understand the ancestry.

I have researched this family for about 40 years and have created and maintained a Blahník web page at <<http://Blahník.accessgenealogy.com/Index.htm>> for almost 15 years. There were already other researchers who developed a fantastic base for different parts of the Blahník family. Wenzel Blahník documented the Algoma Blahníks from George and Katerina in Kewaunee, WI while Francis Blahník commissioned research in Czech for this family. Ladislav Blahník researched the Smržovice Blahník family back to the 1400s and Joel Blahník brought that and other information to America. Jon Blahník researched the Kout na Šumavě Blahníks and Agnes Hallama researched the Canadian Blahníks from U Blahníků. We were never able to connect any of these families together with the 1400s family tree from Ladislav. With the web page I was able to contact family and researchers including Ledvice CZ, Volduchy, CZ and Ashland, WI Blahník families. None of these families could be related to each other with genealogy.

According to immigration records, 118 known immigrants from 32 different Blahník families came to America. More than half of them settled in Wisconsin. Further research showed that many of the emigrants had lived in a small 10 mile pocket between Domažlice and Klatovy in SW Czech and old Chodsko. The close relationship of these ancestral villages could certainly indicate a blood relationship. Prior to the late 1800s the feudal system would have limited the ability to travel and kept people close.

Ladislav Blahník had done considerable research in Czech. Ladislav was born in 1906 and lived in Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic. He had been the former governor of a Northeast section of Bohemia before WWII.

Ladislav spent a great deal of time reviewing archive, land and parish records to collect a very comprehensive Chodsko Blahník history going back to documentation in 1482. Ladislav wrote the *History of the Blahník Family from Smržovice, 1482-1944*. In this document he described the earliest origins for this name.

He researched the Smržovice family tree back to the late 1400s and believed that all Blahníks descended from old Chodsko in Southwest Bohemia. He located the first notation of the name Blahník in the Latin writing of the Chods from November 15, 1430. Ladislav read Dr. František Roubík's work on the History of the Chods and hypothesized that Blahník was the Christian name "Blazej." Immigrant descendents, Joel Blahník and his father Arthur, were impressed with Ladislav's research, worked with him and brought documentation to America.

Since there was a theory that all Blahníks were related and I was finding many of our immigrant ancestral villages within the 10 mile pocket, DNA testing made for an ideal tool in determining more about the early Blahník origins in old Bohemia.

This article will discuss the findings of the Blahník DNA study and test the theory that all Blahníks are related with a common ancestor. The primary Blahník group will then be followed with their ancestral journey through time. The DNA group is a work in progress and current interpretations of the data will be explored. Some of the information presented here will need further investigation for more specific clarification.

DNA STUDIES OF BLAHNÍKS

Please take a special caution not to over interpret the data presented in this article. Research continues and new findings could change the current beliefs. I have used FTDNA, National Geographic, publications of Ken Nordtvedt, timeline interpretations from Mike Glime from the Algoma Blahník branch as well as some other information about the Haplogroups and their SNP evolution. In some ways it also provides a bit of an anthropological as well as historical journey through time. The time estimate or even labels may change as more DNA research is conducted.

CURRENT DNA RESULTS 2013 with ten tested families

A Blahník DNA group was started with FTDNA and three men from Blahník families going back to at least the early 1700s with no common ancestor. A 111 marker test was used and confirmed that they all were indeed

related with the 1400s tree back to Ondra Blahník in the 10 mile Blahník pocket area. We began encouraging other Blahník families to join the project using 67 marker tests. Only males can be tested for the paternal family line. Ten Blahník males joined this Y-DNA test group. The results were as follows:

Within the 10 mile Blahník Pocket

1. Libkov Blahníks (consolidations of five)
Y-DNA Haplogroup I-P37.2 (I2-CTS5966-)
2. Cedar Rapids Iowa/ Mlýnec, CZ
Y-DNA Haplogroup I-M253
3. Trhanov & Ashland, WI (consolidation of two)
Y-DNA Haplogroup N-M231

Outside the Blahník Pocket

4. Volduchy Blahníks
Y-DNA Haplogroup L-M61
5. Ledvice Blahníks
Y-DNA Haplogroup I-M223

The DNA samples made it possible to consolidate 10 different male family lines into five. In the Blahník Pocket the Libkov group took in the Smržovice, Algoma, Kout na Šumavě, Canada and Vítovky Blahník families. Certainly the other four Blahník Haplogroups would suggest that more than one family chose the surname of Blahník when the use of last names became constant. Additionally it would seem that there were at least 3 different direct paternal lines named Blahník in the Blahník pocket during the mid to late 1800s into early 1900s. Ladislav's theory that all Blahníks are all related could not be substantiated by direct paternal passage of this name and DNA.

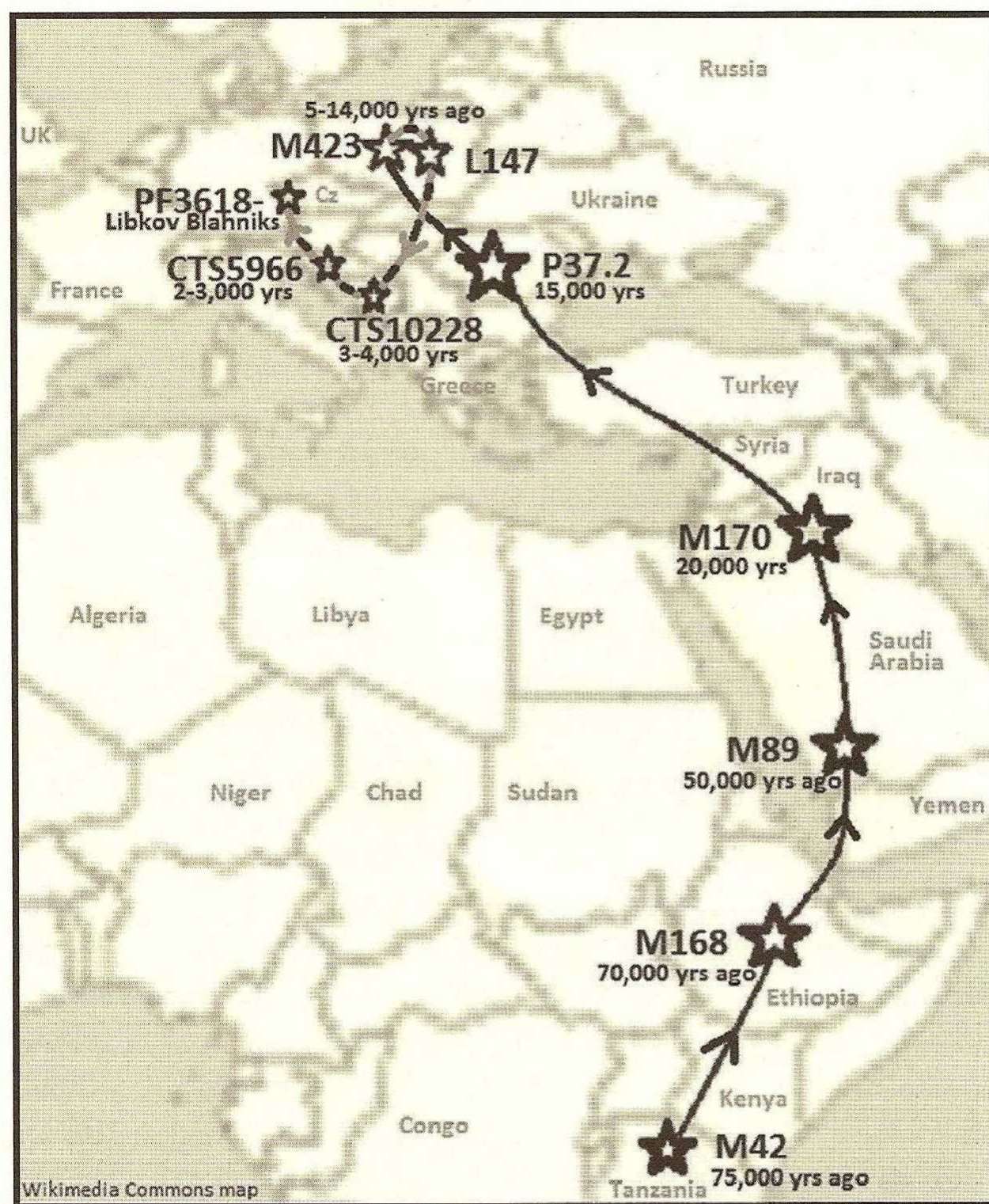
The evidence does suggest that there certainly was one primary family in the Chodsko Blahník Pocket who all relate to Ondra as researched by Ladislav. With the old feudal system, families generally did not move a great distance because they were tied to the land. The Libkov Blahník family will continue to be followed for the purposes of this article.

LIBKOV BLAHNÍKS Y-DNA Haplogroup I-P37.2 aka (I2)

The five consolidated branches, have been renamed LIBKOV for the village of first known Blahník in the

1400s named Ondra. It now combines Smržovice, Kout na Šumavě, Algoma/Starec, Canada/U Blahníků and Vítovky. Because DNA combined five families in this group and we have a great deal of genealogical research on this group, we will take a more thorough journey through the origin of this family group. The story begins from the DNA analysis.

The Blahník family migration map using DNA records.



Scientists believe the human race started in Africa. The man called Y-Chromosome Adam since all men now alive descend from this one man. Scientists cannot say he was the only male hominid alive, but he was the only man whose Y-Chromosome lineage still exists today. This man would have existed some 140,000 years ago.

This man is believed to have descended from the ancient Homo heidelbergensis between 300,000 and 400,000 years ago. There were other groups that emerged from Homo heidelbergensis that left Africa and

went north toward West Asia and Europe. One group became the Neanderthals. Another branch moved further east and became the Denisovans. By the time of our Y-Chromosome Adam, our Homo heidelbergensis group had become Homo sapiens (Humans).

From our own Y-DNA Adam a new genetic marker evolved giving us the group of M42. Almost all men alive come from this group which emerged some 75,000 years ago in the general area of Tanzania as shown on the map above. These ancestors would have lived in hunter gatherer type societies. ALL the Blahník groups are related to this line.

About 70,000 years ago all hereditary Blahník families would have followed M42 to develop the SNP marker group known as M168 further north out of Africa. National Geographic suggest that the first man to develop this genetic marker probably lived in Northeast Africa near the Rift Valley as shown with the solid line path on the map.

His lineage was the only one to survive outside of Africa and is the common ancestor for all non-African men living today. Changes took place in both Africa as well as in the north as the ice sheets from the last Ice Age began to melt. Some areas of Africa became inhospitable with heat and droughts. People may have followed the animals who had located new grass lands that were formed as the ice sheets melted in the North. It is thought that language may have emerged during this time and it helped humans communicate to build tools as well as explore and migrate. ALL of the Blahníks in the DNA group had this marker in their family line.

The next genetic branch for the ALL tested Blahníks was F-M89 which emerged some 45,000 years ago. This group followed the grasslands into the Middle East. About 40,000 years ago the climate again became colder. A drought occurred that caused the grasslands to revert to desert. Apparently the next 20,000 years closed off the Saharan Gateway and our ancestors needed to remain in the Middle East or move on to other areas. They could not retreat back to Africa at this point. The F-M89 marker is currently found in some 90 to 95 percent of all non-Africans today. ALL of the DNA Group Blahník families had this same direct paternal ancestor 45,000 years ago. This is where some of the family lines began to split.

The Libkov and Ledvice Blahník families remained together and share the next marker in branch I-M170 shown on the map. Marker I-M170 emerged in a man some 25,000 years ago after the last glacial period. Glaciers covered most of Europe and people gathered

in pockets of land that could be inhabited. The other Blahník DNA groups took different paths.

Human/Neanderthal contact

There is no specific information about when humans merged with some Neanderthal and Denisovan lines, but scientists have found that most all non-Africans have about 1-4% Neanderthal and perhaps the same amount of Denisovan in them. National Geographic found that there were no Neanderthals in sub-Saharan Africans. Those African ancestors never migrated through Eurasia so their DNA has no Neanderthal/Denisovan lines in them.

It was once felt that Neanderthals all mysteriously died out about 30,000 years ago. This was about the time modern humans came to Europe. At first it was thought that modern humans may have totally annihilated the Neanderthals, but analysis of DNA has confirmed that there had been some intermingling of the species perhaps between 60,000 and 30,000 years ago. It is now thought Neanderthals were absorbed into the human population. The Denisovan population is still being studied. They have been found in Siberia and are said to have emerged more recently than the Neanderthals.

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History reports that Neanderthals had genes for red hair and tended to have pale skin. While not all Neanderthals had red hair they also may have been more like us than we had once thought. The National Geographic also noted that we may have inherited some important immune system genes from these Neanderthal cousins.

In short, it appears that mankind all started some 300-400,000 years ago as Homo heidelbergensis, split apart and then briefly reconnected again some 30-60,000 years ago. National Geographic DNA study had about 3% Neanderthal and 2.5% Denisovan in the Blahník test sample. These percentages are common among European/Asian lineages today.

Perhaps the Libkov genetic mix with the Neanderthals and Denisovans could have happened sometime around M170 when the ancestors came into Europe. This is pure speculation but would certainly have been the time period when all three species were in existence in that part of the world.

The FTDNA study ends with the marker I2a1 (old listing for P37.2) which occurred perhaps 15,000 years ago in South East Europe. As the late glacial period ended people from this line moved west into Europe, Central and West-Asia. During the Neolithic (new stone age) period these ancestors would have changed from

hunter-gatherer cultures into farming communities. Wheat and barley were among the first crops grown in the Middle East and spread quickly to western Asia, Egypt and Europe. This ancestral line would have moved through the Middle East on their way to Europe. A Libkov Algoma Blahník member participated in the National Geographic test which provided additional information.

Please note that up to P37.2 (I2a) information is quite certain and shown with a black line on the map. The dotted line shows the current thoughts about the Libkov Blahník's emigration path to Czech using a combination of information from National Geographic, FTDNA, Ladislav's genealogy and conjecture by Ken Nordtvedt.

Newer markers continue to be analyzed. Information beyond this point is still under investigation. National Geographic has extended the analysis to marker I-M423 (old listing: I2a1b) which they say emerged 12,500 to 5,250 years ago. There was a population boom with the Neolithic Revolution of agriculture that caused growth across Europe to the southern borders between Europe and West Asia. People began building sedentary villages which led to the separation of labor or job roles, trade, and technologies such as irrigation among other things. This particular marker tends to still be associated with many from Bosnia. I have inserted a dotted line on the map to show the historical path of the Libkov Blahníks from one of the current speculated paths. This is only a proposed pathway based on DNA speculation from Ken Nordtvedt and historical facts.

The theoretical path proposed from M423 to more recent times with CTS10228 arising perhaps 3,000 to 4,000 years ago in the current area of Croatia and Bosnia along the Adriatic Sea near the Dinaric. This would have been during the Bronze Age. The Greeks referred to these Western Balkan tribes as the Illyrians. They consisted of various tribes that were loosely connected. The Illyrians' location was sandwiched between the Boii to the North, the Greeks were directly South, while the Adriatic Sea separated them from current Italy.

The Libkov family appears to have moved further North to an area bordering the Boii Celtic Tribe (current Slovenia). A new mutation emerged called CTS5966 Dinaric for these Blahník ancestors perhaps 2,000 to 3,000 years ago during the Iron Age. During this time there would have been conflict with the Romans. During the Illyrian Revolt about 2,000 years ago, the Romans conquered and split the Illyrian tribes into different groups.

Some of the Illyrians were even deported or sold as slaves.

It appears most likely that the Blahník (proposed Illyrian) ancestral line migrated into and joined the Celtic group called the Boii tribe. Historically we know that the Boii were in the area of Northern Italy or Southwest Austria in 1000 BC and were eventually pushed over the Alps into Bohemia by the Romans. Indeed, about 36% of the current male DNA Haplogroup in Czech is the Celtic "R1b", but the Blahník ancestors with "I2a1" or P37.2 Haplogroup went on to become part of the Chods (Border Guards) of Bohemia. Only 1-2% of the Czech male population currently has Haplogroup P37.2.

The marker PF3618- is currently being evaluated as a very new occurrence. It's a back mutation and may be unique to the Blahník family.

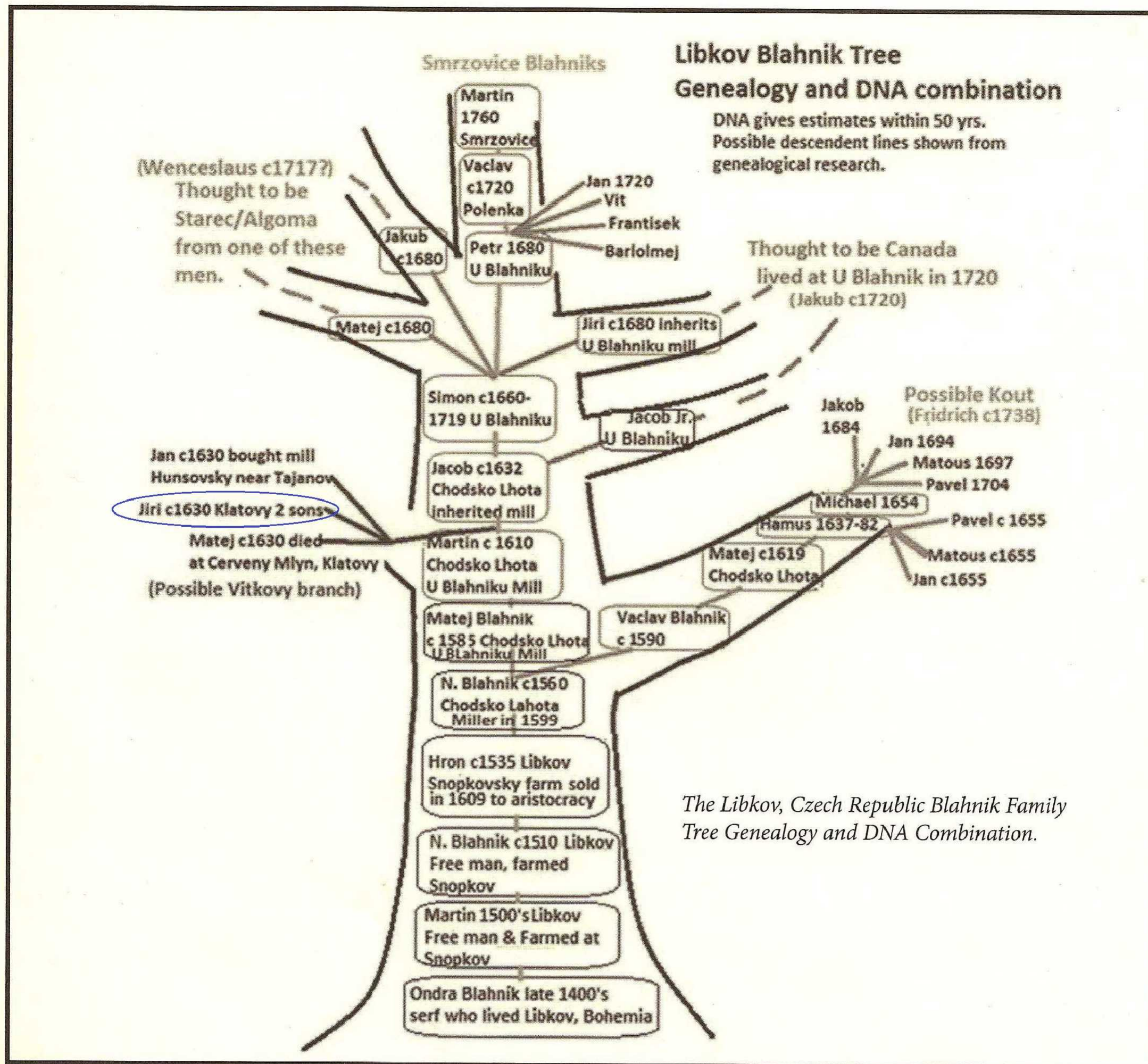
From here the DNA story is connected with other resources. One can further research the story about the Chod ancestors by viewing the book called *The Wolf Dogs*. (The story of the Chod rebellion as told by Jirasek). Roy Rushka translated the book into English with a copyright of June 2002. Ladislav Blahník's genealogical research begins perhaps only 1,500 years after the CTS5966 marker near the Boii tribe.

Continuing with the Lipkov Blahník story we now move from historical and DNA evidence to these other sources.

The tree shown below is an approximation of the DNA research analysis and timeline from Mike Glime combined with the known genealogy. Through the use of STR testing the Y chromosome in Blahník males, we have been able to confirm the relationship between five separate family lines previously only presumed to be related. Mike indicates that the estimates showing when the tree branches split has a 50 year margin of error. This tree is simply a theoretical picture for when the four families broke off from the known Smržovice tree using DNA and genealogical evidence.

(See Related Diagram on the following page)

All of these Blahník branches would have been Millers. The Kout na Šumavě Blahník branch broke off first, perhaps ca. 1520-70. The next family split was the branch called Vítovky perhaps ca. 1575-1625. The Canada branch broke off ca. 1630-1680 and stayed with u Blahníků Mill up until emigration. Some Blahník family remained at these mills through WWII and until just recently. The last group we found to break off from the Smržovice family tree was the Algoma/Starec family perhaps ca. 1650-1700.



Summary

Ladislav's hypothesis saying all Blahniks are related has been researched both through genealogical techniques and DNA and presented in this article. His theory was that all Blahniks came from the Blahnik Pocket in the old Chodsko area of the Czech Republic was not true. There certainly is good evidence that a very predominate group of Blahniks descended from Ondra in the 1400s and that Ondra was from an old Chod family with P37.2 the DNA Haplogroup. This is the Lipkov Blahniks who have present lines living in the Czech Republic, Canada and the USA. We have been able to combine five separate genealogical Blahnik families into this one group.

Certainly all Blahniks do relate through the Y chromosome prior to the development of Surnames because all of mankind relates to our Y-Chromosome Adam. The DNA journey showed a better timeline about when our families split from each other.

The DNA has done a remarkable job of linking some of the Blahnik families with one another and even verifying relationship to a genealogical tree going back to the 1400s. The three men in Northeast Wisconsin who started this DNA project had only known about each other because of a shared last name. Because of this shared name, they discovered that they shared the same direct paternal ancestor path from some 140,000 years ago in Africa, through the ice age, Middle East/

Mediterranean and on to Ondra Blahník in the 1400s in the Czech Republic. After some 140,000 years it has only been some 300 to 500 years since these 3 men's families branched off from each other. Given the fact there was emigration to a different continent, it seems remarkable that they would find themselves living near each other in NE Wisconsin. This is indeed a successful DNA research study.

Many Blahník family members have worked together to discover our history.

It is important to thank all of them for their contributions and love for their family. Without this kind of cooperation this story would not have been possible.

Future

One often finds that the more answers we get, the more questions we have. This is true for the Blahník families as well. The next theory to be tested will be making the actual connection of the Libkov family in a genealogical tree which will confirm our time line estimates. A group of Libkov Blahníks is currently commissioning genealogical research in Czech to see if these branches can be connected by name to this ancestral tree. A number of people are donating money toward this research project and contributions are welcome. Additionally the Blahník DNA group will continue. Even though Blahníks are not all related to Ondra in the 1400s, they all share the common Czech Republic heritage whether the actual families broke apart 25,000 or 500 years ago when surnames emerged. If you would like more information or become part of our group, please contact me at <kldollevoet@centurytel.net>.

Addendum:

Update November 22, 2013. Research from Jan Dus was just received which provided the actual connections



2012 Domažlice, Czech Republic Blahník Reunion, courtesy Lori M. Dollevoet.

for Algoma and Canada to the 1400s tree. The DNA had a 50 year range of prediction and we found we connected within this range though a bit earlier. On the tree the Algoma and Canada branch came from the left side thought to be Vitovky. These branches descend from the two sons of Jiri ca. 1630; Petr and Jakub Petrak aka Blahník of Blahník's Mill.

About the Author:

Lori M. Dollevoet, MA, LCSW is the daughter of Bette (Blahník) Nickasch and grew up in Appleton, WI. She has a BA from Lawrence University and MA in Psychology from Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. Lori has a number of websites including <<http://blahník.accessgenealogy.com/>> which contains Blahník and several other Czech immigrant families. She enjoyed serving on the 2011 Blahník Reunion committee, presenting at the 2012 Blahník reunion in the Czech Republic and setting up the route for an ancestral home tour for the various Blahník branches in Czech Republic. Lori initiated the Blahník DNA group and had the generous support of many Blahník family members to make this all happen.

Libkov Blahnik

Immigrant Family Branches

This tree was reconstructed after we received the results from the Nov 2013 genealogical data from the Czech Republic. It is an update to the article printed in Nase Rodina. The Smrzovice family tree now sows the branches of the Starec/Algoma Blahniks and the Canada U Blahniku Blahniks families.

Libkov Blahnik Branches

