

Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project

The **Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project** is a long-running, independent genetic genealogy initiative focused on males with the surnames **Carpenter**, **Zimmerman**, and related variants such as Charpentier and Carpentier^{[1] [2] [3]}. The project began in 2002 and is designed to help participants identify their genetic relationships and distinguish between Carpenter/Zimmerman families with similar or identical surnames through analysis of their **Y-chromosomal DNA**^{[4] [5]}.

Key aspects:

- **Eligibility:** Open to biological males with the surnames Carpenter, Zimmerman(n), Charpentier, Carpentier, or other closely related variants^{[1] [2] [5]}.
- **Methodology:** Participants submit a Y-DNA test (typically at 37 or 111 markers) through approved DNA testing labs. The results are grouped based on shared genetic markers (haplotypes), which allows identification of distinct family groups and helps clarify genealogical connections or distinctions among lines that may not be apparent from the surname alone^{[4] [3]}.
- **Scope:** The project does not track mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) or autosomal DNA (atDNA/Family Finder)—it is strictly a Y-DNA surname project^{[4] [2] [5]}.
- **Organization:** There are currently about **42 organized genetic groups** within the project, plus one group semi-organized by haplogroup and a catch-all group for those with no matches^[6]. The two largest and most studied groups are known as **Group 2 and Group 3**, each tracing back to separate 17th-century Carpenter immigrants to New England: William Carpenter of Rehoboth and William Carpenter of Providence. These two groups are distinguished by subtle differences at specific DNA markers^{[1] [3]}.
- **Genealogy Integration:** Participants are encouraged to submit their genealogical information. The project maintains detailed lineages and sketches for the various family groups, aiding traditional genealogy with genetic evidence^{[7] [3]}.
- **Privacy Protections:** Results are published using kit numbers or codes, not names, to protect participant privacy. Members must approve publication of their data^{[4] [2]}.
- **Global Participation:** The project is open to Carpenter/Zimmerman males worldwide, with special attention to surname changes and Anglicization resulting from migration (for example, "Zimmerman" being changed to "Carpenter" in North America)^[5].

Anyone interested can find further details on joining and FAQs on the Carpenter Cousins Project's official web pages^{[7] [6]}.

How can my Y-DNA results help trace my Carpenter ancestry more accurately

Your **Y-DNA results** can significantly improve the accuracy of tracing your **Carpenter ancestry** by leveraging the specific way that the Y chromosome is inherited: it is passed almost unchanged from father to son, mirroring the tradition of surname inheritance in many societies^[8]^[9]. Here are the key ways your results can help:

- **Identifying Distinct Carpenter Lineages:** Since unrelated families can share the surname "Carpenter" (or its variants), Y-DNA testing separates them by genetic lineage. By comparing your **haplotype** (the specific pattern of marker values on your Y chromosome) with others in the Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project, you can see whether you belong to one of the established genetic Carpenter groups—for example, those descended from William Carpenter of Rehoboth or William Carpenter of Providence^[8]^[9].
- **Confirming or Refuting Paper Trails:** If genealogy records suggest you descend from a particular Carpenter line, a close Y-DNA match with others who are well-documented descendants provides genetic confirmation. A match at many markers (such as 37 or 111) dramatically increases confidence in a shared paternal ancestor within genealogically relevant time frames^[10]^[9].
- **Estimating Time to Common Ancestor:** The number of differences (mutations) between your Y-DNA and matches in the project can estimate how many generations back a common ancestor lived. Fewer differences indicate more recent shared ancestry^[10].
- **Detecting Non-Paternal Events:** Unexpected mismatches may reveal surname changes, adoptions, or other events in your paternal line. This provides opportunities to investigate breaks in the biological line that might not be evident in written records^[11]^[9].
- **Grouping for Deeper Analysis:** The project maintains over 40 genetic groups, further subdivided by both paper trails and unique marker mutations. This allows you not only to confirm belonging to a major Carpenter line but also to more specific sub-branches, increasing granularity in your ancestry^[9].

To sum up, with your Carpenter Y-DNA results, you gain a powerful tool to:

- Distinguish your branch from unrelated Carpenter families
- Validate or challenge traditional genealogical research
- Estimate how long ago your most recent common Carpenter ancestor lived
- Collaborate with genetic cousins to share and corroborate genealogical information^[8]^[9].

For best results, combine your Y-DNA analysis with traditional genealogical research. If you have close matches in existing groups within the project, you can trace how your lineage fits into the broader Carpenter family tree more confidently^[8]^[9]^[10].



What are the main genetic groups identified within the Carpenter Cousins Project

The **Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project** organizes participants into several distinct **genetic groups** based on shared Y-DNA marker patterns, reflecting unique paternal lineages among those with the Carpenter, Zimmerman, and related surnames.

Main Genetic Groups:

- As of early 2024, the project identifies **about 42 organized genetic groups**. In addition, there is one group semi-organized by broad haplogroup (such as R-M269 and its sub-types), and a "catch-all" group for those with no matches^[12].
- Groups are primarily defined by:
 - Shared Y-DNA marker values (haplotypes)
 - Confirmed genealogical lineages where possible^[13] ^[12].

Most Notable Groups:

- The two largest and most closely studied are **Group 2 and Group 3**. Both represent descendants from two famous 17th-century immigrant ancestors:
 - Group 2: **William Carpenter of Rehoboth, Massachusetts** (immigrated 1638)
 - Group 3: **William Carpenter of Providence, Rhode Island** (immigrated 1635)^[14] ^[13] ^[15].
- These two groups have **24 out of 25 Y-DNA markers in common**, but further testing (up to 111 markers) has identified subtle, consistent differences at specific markers (e.g., DYS464d, DYS413a, and DYS635)^[14] ^[15].
- The project has also identified additional, smaller groups representing other distinct Carpenter/Zimmerman paternal lines, often traceable to different countries of origin or founder individuals^[12] ^[13].

Group Structure & Organization:

- Genetic groups are numbered (e.g., Group 2, Group 3, Group 12, Group 18, Group 23, etc.), with documentation provided for their defining markers and known ancestry^[14] ^[16] ^[17].
- There is also a "near-match" group and a random/no-match group for participants whose DNA does not fit any established cluster^[13] ^[12].

Sub-grouping:

- Within larger groups, sub-groups may be formed based on shared marker mutations or additional genealogical evidence, though some sub-clusters await further confirmation as more participants are added and lineages clarified^[14].

Summary Table of Key Groups:

Group Number	Immigrant Ancestor	Region/Origin	Notable Marker Differences
Group 2	William Carpenter (Rehoboth, MA)	England → Massachusetts, 1638	DYS464d=16, DYS413a=21, DYS635=23

Group Number	Immigrant Ancestor	Region/Origin	Notable Marker Differences
Group 3	William Carpenter (Providence, RI)	England → Rhode Island, 1635	DYS464d=17, DYS413a=22, DYS635=24
Others (12, 18, 23, etc.)	Various	England, Germany, elsewhere	Unique marker profiles per group

Key Takeaway:

The project's major groups are defined by both traditional genealogy and unique, distinguishing Y-DNA marker values, with Groups 2 and 3 accounting for the largest clusters of Carpenter descendants in New England, and dozens of other groups recognized, capturing the broader diversity within the surname. All told, these groupings have clarified the multiple independent male Carpenter/Zimmerman lineages across the U.S. and internationally ^[14] ^[13] ^[12] ^[15].



Why do related surnames like Zimmerman and Charpentier matter in this Y-DNA project

Related surnames like **Zimmerman** and **Charpentier** are crucial to the Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project for several reasons:

- **Same Occupational Origin Across Languages:** "Carpenter," "Zimmerman" (German), and "Charpentier"/"Carpentier" (French) are occupational surnames meaning "worker of wood" or carpenter in their respective languages. Many families adopted these surnames independently in different countries ^[18] ^[19].
- **Surname Anglicization and Name Changes:** Immigrants to North America often **anglicized** their surnames—for example, "Zimmerman(n)" sometimes became "Carpenter." Including these variants allows the project to account for historical name changes and correctly group biologically related lines regardless of which version of the surname they use today ^[18] ^[20].
- **Testing for Shared or Separate Origins:** The project uses Y-DNA to determine if different families with these related names share a common paternal ancestor or represent **separate genetic lineages**. So far, DNA shows that Carpenter, Zimmerman, and Charpentier families **do not have a single common root**; their grouping generally aligns more with the surname's country of origin than with a universal ancestor ^[21] ^[19].
- **Capturing Full Paternal Diversity:** Including all spelling and language variants ensures that the project accurately traces all paternal lines that could connect to the Carpenter surname and its foreign equivalents. This comprehensive approach minimizes biases from only studying one version or nationality of the name ^[18] ^[21].
- **Genealogy and DNA Integration:** By combining paper trails (that may jump between surname variants) with DNA, the project can help members break through genealogical "brick walls" where a name change obscures the biological connection ^[20] ^[18].

In summary: Including related surnames like Zimmerman and Charpentier helps the project fully capture the true depth and complexity of Carpenter-line paternal ancestry, account for surname

changes due to migration or assimilation, and scientifically distinguish between groups that only look related on the surface because of similar-sounding names^{[21] [18] [19] [20]}.



How does privacy law affect participation in the Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project

Privacy law directly shapes participation and data handling in the Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project. Here's how:

- **Membership Process Now Requires Explicit Consent:** Due to stricter privacy laws—especially in Europe—the project now mandates an *approved join request*. Prospective members must affirmatively agree before their genetic (Y-STR marker values) and basic lineage information are published on the project's web pages^[22].
- **Anonymous Display of Data:** Even after consent, the project protects member identities by displaying results using **kit numbers or codes, not real names**^[22]. This protects individual privacy and aligns with legal expectations regarding personal genetic information.
- **Control Over Personal Data:** Participants retain **ownership and control of their data**. Any changes to published information or withdrawal of participation must be submitted by email and are respected by the project administrators^[22].
- **Legal and Regulatory Backdrop:** Recent high-profile US court cases, such as *Carpenter v. United States*, have clarified that while uploading DNA to genealogical databases is voluntary, it carries privacy implications^{[23] [24]}. Unlike situations where DNA is collected passively (e.g., shed DNA), joining a genealogical project involves active, deliberate sharing. However, sharing genetic information with a third party does not automatically remove all expectations of privacy, especially for sensitive, personal information such as genetic data^[24].
- **Disclosure Restrictions:** The project does not track or share other types of DNA (mitochondrial or autosomal) and only publishes data for those who have **given explicit permission**^[22].
- **Impact on Relatives:** Legal discourse also highlights that, by uploading Y-DNA, a participant's biological relatives can inadvertently have their genetic information indirectly exposed, even if they did not themselves consent. This is an ongoing concern in privacy law and genealogy circles^[24].

In summary, **participation in the Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project is structured by privacy laws and best practices:**

- Participation is voluntary and requires clear, affirmative consent.
- Identities are protected by anonymization.
- Data control remains with the participant.
- Law and project policy work together to safeguard personal and family privacy as much as possible^{[22] [24]}.



What specific insights can I gain about my lineage from joining this project

By joining the **Carpenter Cousins Y-DNA Project**, you can gain several highly specific and actionable insights about your lineage that go far beyond what's possible with traditional genealogy alone:

- **Identify Your Paternal Ancestral Line**

Matching your Y-DNA with one of the project's defined Carpenter/Zimmerman/Charpentier genetic groups allows you to pinpoint exactly which paternal lineage you descend from. This can confirm (or refute) a suspected connection to major Carpenter immigrants or reveal a connection to a different geographic or ethnic branch than you expected.

- **Confirm or Break Through Genealogical Brick Walls**

DNA evidence can validate your paper trail or steer your research in a new direction if there's a mismatch. If your results align with a group tied to a well-documented ancestor, you gain confidence in decades (or centuries) of research. Conversely, unexpected results can uncover adoption, name changes, or other hidden events in your family line^[25].

- **Discover Genetic "Cousins"**

You'll be able to contact and collaborate with distant relatives who share your Y-DNA signature. Working with those in your genetic group often leads to sharing family stories, photos, and records that you wouldn't find otherwise. This collaborative aspect frequently unlocks new clues and deepens your understanding of family connections^{[26] [27]}.

- **Trace Geographic and Migration Patterns**

By seeing where your group's members' ancestors lived, you can get a clearer picture of your family's migration over time—across continents, countries, and regions^[25].

- **Determine Timeframes to Most Recent Common Ancestors**

The number of shared Y-DNA markers provides an estimate of how many generations ago you and your closest matches shared a common paternal ancestor. This helps clarify how your branch fits with others.

- **Belong to a Global, Evidence-Driven Community**

The project maintains meticulously curated genetic groups, each anchored in both DNA and documented lineages. You'll be part of an ongoing effort to clarify all Carpenter-line descents, which can lead to historical and even medical insights.

- **Gain Deeper Context and Identity**

Understanding your lineage, both genetically and within the project's broader research, can offer a *stronger sense of belonging and identity*, connecting you with your roots, culture, and the lives of your ancestors^[27].

Participation fast-tracks your family research by leveraging both modern genetics and collective traditional research, letting you move beyond speculation to *evidence-based conclusions*—helping you answer, with scientific confidence, “Where do I come from?” and “Who are my people?”^{[27] [25]}.



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