Tracking the Jefferson Y chromosome

Only males carry the Y chromosome. All direct descendants in a line share the same or nearly the same Y chromosome. Here’s how the match was made.

Field Jefferson and his brother, Peter, received the same Y chromosome from their father.

Martha and Thomas were married for 10 years before she died.

Only Thomas’s daughter Martha gave him grandchildren, 11 in all. Seven of them produced 35 grandchildren for Martha and her husband, Thomas Mann Randolph. Today, more than 2,000 Jefferson descendants come from this line—but as offspring of Thomas’s daughter, none carries the Jefferson Y chromosome.

Sally Hemings had seven children. The chromosomal match was made through her youngest son, Eston.

His Y chromosome matches the Y in the Field Jefferson line.

Sources: Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, Down From The Mountain, Nature