The Family History Notation

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0.1 Notation

0.2 Notation

0.2.1 Standard Abbreviations

Abbreviations:
B., b. born
bro. brother
dau. daughter
ab. about
c. circa (Latin for “about”) nr. near (for a location)
D., d. died
s. son (used by some authors)
chr., chr’nd christened
n.chil. no children
unm. unmarried
m. married
m1. first marriage (if more than one)
m2. second marriage

Comments in round brackets (comment) are the usual parenthetical comments. Comments in square brackets [source: ...] are references to sources or questions or comments and will not appear in the final draft. Disputed data, and further questions for information are listed in square brackets with 2 question marks following, e.g. [date for marriage ??].

0.2.2 Numbering of generations.

The standard notation in genealogical books to trace the descendants of a certain person is to assign a generation number 1 to him, generation number 2 to his children, 3 to his grandchildren, and so on. These numbers are often written as superscripts following the individual’s name. Having generations numbers is very useful in distinguishing two people in different generations having the same name. However, starting the numbering with the earliest known ancestor presents at least two serious problems. First, new earlier ancestors may be discovered later, causing the numbers to be completely rewritten in any books or references. A more serious problem is that in studying the ancestors of my father, Irving Walker Soare¹, whose parents
were Robert Ellison Soare\textsuperscript{0} and Mary Walker\textsuperscript{0} we may know more Soare ancestors than Walkers. Hence, Irving’s generation number may be 8 in the Soare line, but only 6 in the Walker line. Combining this with my mother’s ancestors for both her parents, my own generation number may have at least four different versions depending on which line we are studying.

It is desirable to have a single \textit{absolute} numbering of the generations which will never change, which is potentially infinite in both directions, and which produces the same generation number for me whether I am working on my mother’s or father’s ancestors. Therefore, I have selected the generation of my Soare grandparents, Robert Ellison Soare\textsuperscript{0} and Mary Walker\textsuperscript{0} to be numbered generation 0. Their descendants will be numbered generations 1, 2, 3, \ldots, and their antecedents, generations $-1$, $-2$, $-3$, \ldots, in ascending order. The generation numbers will be indicated by superscripts as usual.

The derivation of my granddaughter, Elizabeth Julia Soare\textsuperscript{4} from the earliest known Soare ancestor, John Soare\textsuperscript{−6}, spanning ten generations of the Soare family is the following.

- John Soare\textsuperscript{−6} and Elizabeth
  - John Soare\textsuperscript{−5} and Ann Walker
  - William Soare\textsuperscript{−4} and Susanna Finney
  - Thomas Soare\textsuperscript{−3} and Elizabeth Hunt (Coventry, U.K.)
  - William Hunt Soare\textsuperscript{−2} and Sarah Ann Fulton (Walden, New York)
  - Robert Fulton Soare\textsuperscript{−1} and Wilda Louise Relyea
  - Robert Ellison Soare\textsuperscript{0} and Mary Walker
  - Irving Walker Soare\textsuperscript{1} and Margaret Gordon Whaley
  - Robert Irving Soare\textsuperscript{2} and Pegeen Jocelyn Linn
  - Gregory Warren Soare\textsuperscript{3} and Lisa
  - Elizabeth Julia Soare\textsuperscript{4}

In studying history we arbitrarily fix the birth of Christ as the origin and number the later centuries 100 A.D., 200 A.D., and so on, and the earlier centuries are 100 B.C., 200 B.C., and so on. The negative numbers of generations behave exactly like B.C. dates and are used in calculations the same way. To calculate the number of years between 300 B.C. and 400 A.D.
we calculate $300 + 400 = 700$ years. Similarly, the difference in generations between John Soare$^{-5}$ and Elizabeth Julia Soare$^4$ is $5 + 4 = 9$ generations.

I have arbitrarily chosen the generation of my grandparents to be numbered 0 because this is a convenient base point, and because they are the earliest generation I knew personally, so that the members of generations 0, 1, 2, ..., are ones I mostly know personally, while the members of generations $-1$, $-2$, $-3$, ..., are ones I know only through photographs, letters, and other records. For those in my generation (generation 2) this notation has an additional minor benefit. Our great grandparents are in generation $-1$, e.g. Robert Fulton Soare$^{-1}$. Our great great grandparents are in generation $-2$, e.g. William Hunt Soare$^{-2}$. In general, our great$^n$ grandparents are in generation $-n$. This makes it a bit easier for me to remember which generation my great$^n$ grandparents are in.

If one prefers to use only positive numbers, then one can add seven to each generation number in the example above. Hence, the earliest known Soare ancestor, John Soare$^{-6}$ becomes John Soare$^1$, his son John Soare$^{-5}$ becomes John Soare$^2$ and in the current generation Elizabeth Julia Soare$^4$ becomes Elizabeth Julia Soare$^{11}$. The path numbers described next are not affected by this change.

0.2.3 The Path Number for Members on the Family Tree

All the Soare descendants we study here are descendants of a single couple, John Soare$^{-6}$ and his wife Elizabeth$^{-6}$. There are ten generations separating them from my granddaughter, Elizabeth Julia Soare$^4$. If every one of their descendants had an average of two or three children, there could be thousands of descendants to classify. We shall study far fewer, but to organize them and their relationship to one another we use the standard mathematical notation for numbering each node on a tree which has a unique root (an ancestor from which all other members on the tree descend).

John$^{-6}$ and Elizabeth will be the root of our tree. They are assigned no path number (or in mathematical notation they get the empty set $\emptyset$ as path number) because they are the top. They had eight children and these receive path numbers $1$, $2$, ... in order of their birth. My ancestor was John$^{-5}$ who was born fourth and is assigned path number 4. Now John$^{-5}$ married Ann Walker$^{-5}$ and had five children, of whom William was the third. We assign William his father’s path number 4 followed by William’s own position of 3 in birth order, so his path number is 43. All the descendants we shall consider are descendants of William and Susannah Finney. Therefore, all our path numbers will begin with 43.
For readability it is convenient to break a path number into blocks like a telephone number. To make a telephone call from Chicago to Leeds, England, we dial a long number broken by dashes into small blocks: country code, city code, local number, for example: 44 (country code for U.K.) - 532 (Leeds city code) - 782-111 (local number).

Similarly, we shall write the path number in three blocks. For example, the path number for Robert Irving Soare is

\[ 43 - xyzw - 11 \]

where 43 is the derivation of William from John and Elizabeth, the next block of four digits \(xyzw\) is the derivation of my grandfather Robert Ellison Soare from William Soare, and the final block of two digits more) is the derivation Robert Irving Soare from Robert Ellison Soare.

0.2.4 Extracting Information From the Path Number