The image features a brick wall background. A central white rectangular area contains the main title text. The text is arranged in three lines: 'GENEALOGY' in a dark red serif font, 'BRICK WALL' in a dark grey sans-serif font, and 'BUSTERS' in a larger dark red serif font.

GENEALOGY BRICK WALL BUSTERS

EDITORS of FAMILY TREE MAGAZINE

COUNTING. COUSINS



How, exactly, are you related to the child of your great-great-grandmother's sister's son? We'll explain the steps to calculating cousinhood.

BY DIANE HADDAD

. **EVER PLAY THE** “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” game? It involves linking famous actors and actresses to Kevin Bacon via movies they’ve appeared in together. George Clooney, for example, clocks in with a Bacon number of just 2: He appeared in *Hail, Caesar!* with Matthew Skomo, who was in *X-Men: First Class* with Kevin Bacon. Turns out just about everyone in Hollywood is six or fewer movies “removed” from Kevin Bacon. (Check it out at <oracleofbacon.org>.) And supposedly, none of us is further than six connections from any one person on earth—even Kevin Bacon.

When it comes to cousinhood, the relationship possibilities are just as endless. Your number of grandparents doubles

with each generation. Count back 10 generations, and that’s 2,046 total ancestors, which means the cousin potential is exponential. You could have millions of them: fourth cousins, second cousins three times removed, tenth cousins twice removed ... we could go on. And with DNA testing, Facebook <www.facebook.com>, online family trees and message boards that connect you to new cousins every day, you’re bound to get curious about exactly how you’re related. Good thing we’re here with this guide on figuring out what kind of cousins you are, based on degrees of separation from shared ancestors. Who knows? Maybe you’ll even discover Kevin Bacon’s your kin.

Starting simply

What makes someone a cousin? The simple fact that you share an ancestor with that person. But to understand the intricacies of cousin relationships, you have to get this: Your ancestors are only the people in your direct line: parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on. Your ancestors' siblings are aunts and uncles (no matter how many greats you add)—not ancestors.

Just about any other blood relative who isn't your sibling, ancestor, aunt or uncle is your cousin. To determine your degree of cousinhood—first, second, third, fourth—you need to identify the ancestor you share with your cousin, and how many generations separate each of you from that ancestor.

Your first cousin (sometimes called a full cousin, but usually just a cousin) is the child of your aunt or uncle. The most recent ancestor you and your first cousin share is your grandparent. You typically share 12.5 percent of your first cousin's DNA.

Your second cousins are the children of your parents' first cousins. Take a look at your family tree, and you'll see that you and your second cousins have the same great-grandparents. You typically share 3.125 percent of your second cousin's DNA. For third cousins, great-great-grandparents are the most recent common ancestor and you share .781 percent of your DNA. You get the picture.

Time for a pop quiz: What's the relationship between your granddaughter and your sister's grandson? And the answer is ... second cousins. The kids' most recent common ancestor is their great-grandparent (your parent).

How far removed?

"I aced that one," you say, "but what about a removed cousin? Or a fourth cousin three times removed? What does that mean?"

A remove happens when two cousins have different numbers of generations back to their most recent common ancestor. One generation of difference equals one remove. First, count back the number of generations from each cousin to the common ancestor. The cousin with the lower number of generations determines the degree of cousinhood—first, second, third and so on. Then subtract the lower number of generations from the higher number to find out how many times removed the cousins are.



TIP: Remember that the shared DNA numbers shown in the chart later in this article are averages. Due to the random way DNA is inherited, it's possible you don't share any DNA with a given relative beyond about second cousins.

Take my son, Leo. He and my cousin Matt (son of my mom's sister) share my grandmother as their most recent common ancestor. My grandma is Matt's grandmother, too, but she's Leo's great-grandmother. Matt is just one generation away from their common ancestor, so he and Leo are first cousins. But Leo is two generations away from the common ancestor—making Leo and Matt first cousins once removed. They share about 6.25 percent of their DNA. Of course, the further removed a cousin gets, the less DNA they share, as you can see in the chart later in this article. You can be distantly related to long-deceased individuals through removes, too. For example, say you're fourth cousins three times removed with Warren G. Harding. (Because of the mind-boggling number of cousins you have, there's bound to be someone famous in your family tree.) That would mean your sixth-great-grandparents are Harding's third-great-grandparents.

Anthropologists call the process of figuring out cousin relationships "collateral degree calculation" (don't worry, we won't spring that term on you again). Multiple removes and degrees of cousinhood can get complicated, but you don't

Relative Surprises

Think you have unusual relatives? Genealogy makes strange bedfellows. Just consider these odd couples:

- **ELVIS PRESLEY** and **JIMMY CARTER** are sixth cousins once removed through Andreas Preslar and Antje Wells, who were married in May 1723.
- **MADONNA** and **CELINE DION** are 10th cousins once removed through Jean Guyon, an early settler of Quebec.
- **BARACK OBAMA** and **DICK CHENEY** are eighth cousins through Mareen Devall, a 17th century immigrant from France. **OBAMA** and **GEORGE W. BUSH** are 10th cousins once removed, linked by Samuel Hinkley of Cape Cod, who died in 1662.
- **GEORGE W. BUSH** and **HUGH HEFNER** are 11th cousins twice removed through Thomas Richards, who died about 1650.
- **HILLARY CLINTON** and **ANGELINA JOLIE** are ninth cousins twice removed through Jean Cusson, who died in St. Sulpice, Quebec, in 1718.
- **BEN AFFLECK** and his pal **MATT DAMON** are 10th cousins once removed through William Knowlton, an Ipswich, Mass., bricklayer who died in 1655.
- **PRINCE ALBERT OF MONACO** is seventh cousins with **NAPOLEON BONAPARTE** and 17th cousins with **TOM HANKS**.
- **BRITNEY SPEARS** and **JOHN EDWARDS** are seventh cousins three times removed through John Stovall, born in the early 1700s in Virginia.
- **DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES**, and **SARAH PALIN** are 10th cousins. Their ninth great-grandfather, John Strong, was born in 1605.

have to be a scientist to get it right. The chart on the next page will help straighten out your cousin confusion; just follow the instructions for using it. For example, to figure out how you're related to your great-great-grandmother's sister's son, first determine the ancestor you share with him: your third-great-grandmother. Find her on the chart, then count down one generation for the sister and one more to the sister's son. He's your first cousin three times removed.

Double the fun

You may have heard people say they're double cousins. That's a special cousin category for the offspring of brothers- and sisters-in-law—for example, your sister weds your husband's brother. Instead of sharing one set of grandparents, as first cousins do, double cousins share both sets of grandparents.

Resources

- **Ancestor Search Cousin Relationship Calculator** <www.searchforancestors.com/utility/cousincalculator.html>
- **DNA-explained.com: Why Are My Predicted Cousin Relationships Wrong?** <dna-explained.com/2013/10/21/why-are-my-predicted-cousin-relationships-wrong>
- **DNA Matches: What to Do With All Your Genetic Fourth Cousins** <louislouise-cooke.com/2015/01/dna-matches-genetic-4th-cousins>
- **Dozens of Cousins** by Lois Horowitz (Ten Speed Press)
- **The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy** by Blaine T. Bettinger (Family Tree Books)
- **International Society of Genetic Genealogy Wiki: Autosomal DNA Statistics** <isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_statistics>
- **iRoots.net Cousin Calculator** <www.iroots.net/tools/cusncalc>
- **Kinship: It's All Relative**, 2nd edition by Jackie Smith Arnold (Genealogical Publishing Co.).
- **RelativeFinder** <www.relativefinder.org>

Your ancestors are only the people in your direct line — parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on.

As you might expect, double cousins have more DNA in common than typical first cousins—about 25 percent.

Despite how it sounds, a kissing cousin isn't a cousin you marry. Rather, it's any distant relative you know well enough to kiss hello at family gatherings. Now we're begging the question: How close a cousin is too close to wed? States have different laws governing consanguineous marriages (and we've heard all the jokes, so just stop right now). It's best to ask a lawyer about statutes for the state in question.

And while we're on the topic: Due to limited mobility in our ancestors' day, most of us have instances in our family trees of cousins who married, whether knowingly or unknowingly. That means you can be related to the same person in multiple ways.

Someone you're related to by marriage, rather than by blood, isn't your cousin. You might be in-laws, or your relationship might not have a name other than (we hope) good friends. You can read more about collateral degree calculation — oops, we mean family relationships—in *Dozens of Cousins* by Lois Horowitz (Ten Speed Press) and Jackie Smith Arnold's *Kinship: It's All Relative*, 2nd edition (Genealogical Publishing Co.). ■

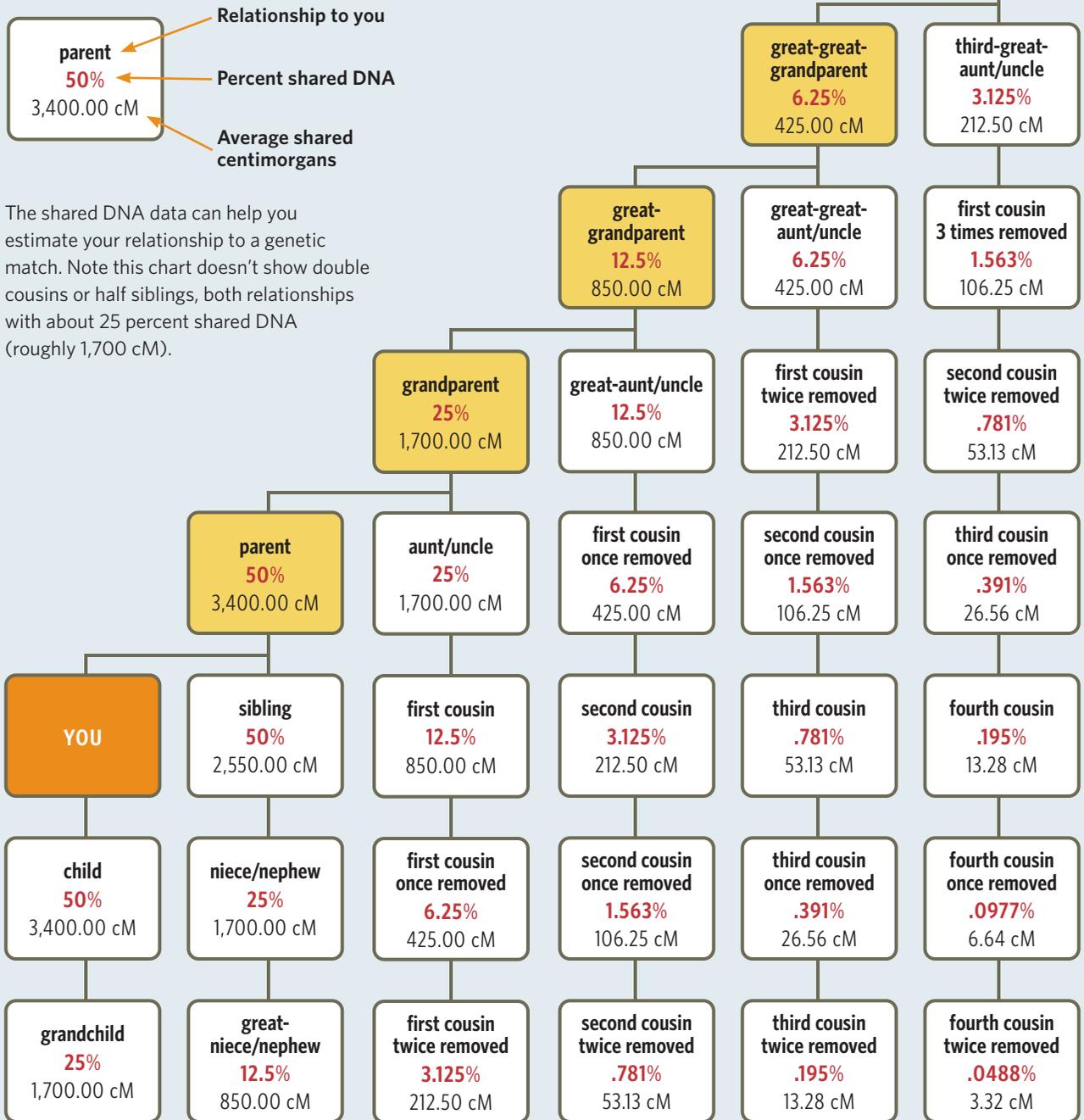
.....
DIANE HADDAD is the editor of *Family Tree Magazine*. She has 20 first cousins and an unknown number of second cousins and beyond.



How to Calculate Cousinhood

Follow these steps to figure out what kind of cousins you are with a relative:

1. Identify the most recent ancestor you share with your relative, and how that ancestor is related to both you and to your relative.
2. Find the ancestor on the chart (such as your parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, etc.).
3. Count down one box for each generation between that ancestor and your relative. The box you land on specifies your relationship with the relative, and how much DNA you share with him or her.



The shared DNA data can help you estimate your relationship to a genetic match. Note this chart doesn't show double cousins or half siblings, both relationships with about 25 percent shared DNA (roughly 1,700 cM).



BUSTED!

We expose the truth behind
10 genealogy falsehoods that
could sabotage your family tree.

BY JULIE CAHILL TARR

🐾 **WAS YOUR GREAT-GRANDMA** a Cherokee princess? Mine too! And like lots of Americans, you probably have an immigrant ancestor whose surname was changed at Ellis Island. Oh, and your whole genealogy is awaiting you on the internet, right?

Wrong. Myths and misconceptions like these abound when it comes to genealogy. Some, like the last name changes, come from family lore and some we hear from other researchers. Anyone can fall victim to these myths because they're so often repeated and sound reasonable. Why wouldn't you believe

that your original Polish surname Tomaszewski was changed to Thomas by an immigration inspector at Ellis Island? It seems plausible. And of course not every historical record is on the web, but genealogy commercials seemingly would have you think you can find your complete family tree just by going online. And how cool is it that you descend from a Cherokee princess? Dear old Grandma wouldn't have made that up.

We hate to bust your bubble, but we'll do it anyway. See why 10 common genealogy myths are false and how to avoid falling for them.

MYTH 1

Surnames were changed at Ellis Island.

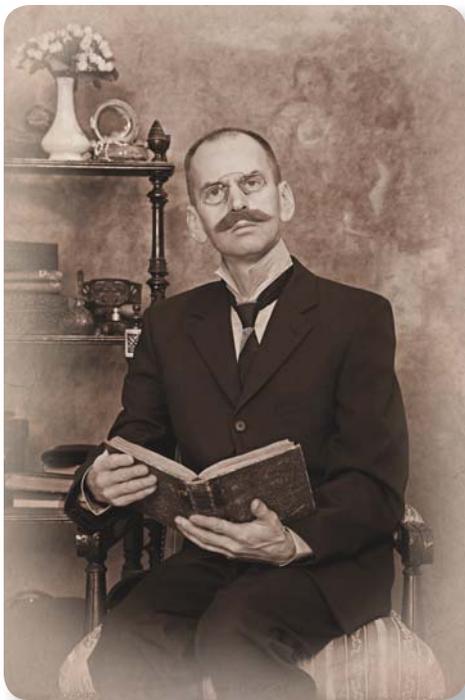
This often-repeated family story would have you believe that Ellis Island officials crossed off immigrants' names on passenger lists with abandon, scribbling in American-sounding substitutes. But in fact, those passenger lists were compiled at ports of departure as passengers bought their tickets. Officials at Ellis Island merely compared them to passengers' answers to interview questions, sometimes making notations on the lists. Misunderstandings weren't an issue: Ellis Island staffed interpreters fluent in dozens of languages.

Why the myth? It is true that immigrants' surnames did often change; however, the immigrants did so themselves. They may have "Americanized" their surnames (and often, given names) to blend in with their new surroundings, distance themselves from ethnic stereotypes and make their names easier for bosses and teachers to say. The Gaelic *Ó Murchadha* might become Murphy, or the German *Schwarz* might become Black, its English translation.

Genealogists encounter a broad variety of surname spellings. Sometimes record-keepers (including ships' clerks, who listed ticket-holders) wrote the name incorrectly; sometimes the ancestor provided a variant spelling. Keep an open mind and be on the lookout for these variants. Grandpa may



have always spelled his surname Smyth, but you might find it as Smith or Smythe in different records. The name at one time might've been Schmidt, especially if he was of Germanic descent. Download our free Surname Variant Chart form familytreemagazine.com/info/surnamevariantchart to help you keep track of these variants and translations.



MYTH 2

It's in print. It must be true!

Sometimes you'll get lucky and find a compiled genealogy book on a particular family or come upon an ancestor mentioned in a county history. If you read genealogical journals, such as the National Genealogical Society's *NGS Quarterly*, you might discover a relative named in another researcher's case study.

But just because the information you find is in print doesn't mean it's true. Errors can creep in due to incomplete research, misinterpreted records or reliance on other inaccurate sources. As much as you want to believe this windfall of genealogical information, proceed with caution. Ask questions such as:

- Who is the author?
- When and where was the work published?
- Does the author cite the sources of the information?

Use the details in the book or journal as clues and thoroughly investigate them to verify the information in original records. If the author cites sources, try to review the sources yourself. Compare your findings to your existing research and draw your own conclusions. You very well may get the same answer, but you can be more confident in the conclusion if you've done the work yourself.

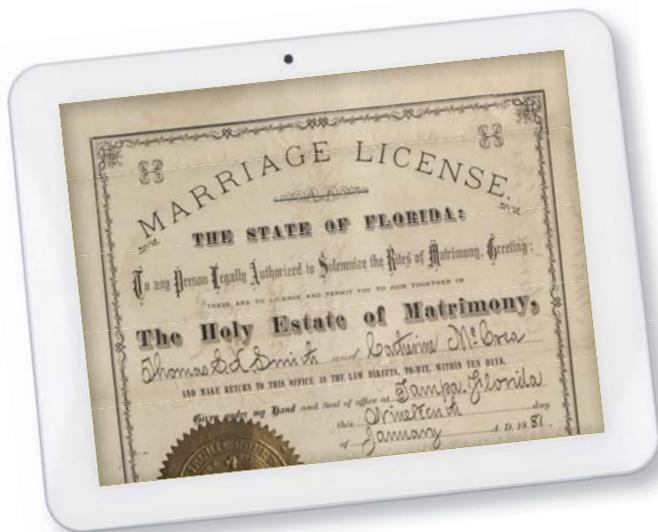
MYTH 3

All the records you need about your family history are online.

Genealogy information is more accessible than ever, thanks to the internet. Sites like Ancestry.com <ancestry.com>, MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> and FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> add new records every day. Anyone can share family photos with a blog or online tree. Still, the web offers only a fraction of historical records housed on paper and microfilm in libraries, archives, courthouses and other repositories.

You can find a lot about your family from websites. That includes building the foundation of your family tree from basic records with broad coverage, such as US censuses. Online vital, military and even court and church records can help you fill in details. Digitized newspaper websites such as GenealogyBank <www.genealogybank.com> let you search millions of pages at once.

But those online databases don't have every county's court records or every town's newspaper. In some cases, such as Ancestry.com's Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934, the database gives you only indexed results, which you can use to track down the original record. Some entire record groups are offline, such as the vast majority of Civil War pension applications (a few are on Fold3 <www.fold3.com>; others must be ordered from the National Archives and Records Administration) and land entry case files of those who claimed federal land. Venturing out to a local library or historical society may get you access to microfilmed church registers, printed city directories, and records of businesses and organizations—not to mention the expertise of the librarian.



It's easy to assume a death date is correct when it's repeated in hundreds of family trees, but repetition doesn't turn a mistake into the truth.

MYTH 4

This is my ancestor, according to these 423 online trees.

Online trees are great tools for keeping track of your discoveries, and it's easy to expand branches with the automated "hints" you get on sites like Ancestry.com and MyHeritage. And when you see how many other trees include that same data or record—well, accepting that suggested person or record is a no-brainer, right?

Not so fast. No one independently verifies the trees on genealogy websites. Mistakes proliferate when tree owners accept hints that aren't good matches. It's easy to assume a death date is correct when it's repeated in hundreds of family trees, but repetition doesn't turn a mistake into the truth.

When you get a hint, check it out carefully. Examine the original record or the sources in the supposedly matching tree. Ask yourself if it makes sense. Remember that many people living in the same place could have the same name and be a similar age. If you're not 100 percent confident in the hint's correctness, set it aside for now. Increase your chances of getting accurate hints by including as much verified detail—names, places, family members' names—in your tree as possible, and see the January/February 2017 *Family Tree Magazine* <shopfamilytree.com/family-tree-magazine-january-february-2017> for help managing Ancestry.com hints.



TIP: You can order microfilmed records from the Family History Library (for a fee) and view them at your local branch FamilySearch Center. Start by searching the FamilySearch online catalog by place <www.familysearch.org/catalog/search>, then click the online ordering system link.

MYTH 5

We descend from a Cherokee princess.

Stories of Indian ancestry—often, Cherokee—are common in the United States. By 2010, the Census Bureau reports, 819,105 Americans claimed at least one Cherokee ancestor. The stories have a basis in historical reality: The Cherokee and other Indians did intermarry with white settlers. Some Cherokee families (just over 7 percent by the mid-1830s) owned black slaves.

But we've got some bad news: Your great-grandma wasn't a Cherokee princess. The Cherokee never had royalty, nor did any American Indian tribe. Historians speculate the Indian princess myth arose because Pocahontas was touted as a princess in England, or because "princess" was used as a loose translation for *Ghigau*, a Cherokee title of honor for women. Romanticized notions of American Indians and our fascination with royalty help perpetuate the myth.

Your family may have American Indian heritage: In a 2014 analysis of 160,000 samples, 23andMe <23andme.com> estimated that about 2.7 percent of European-descended Americans and one in five African-Americans carries detectable Native American DNA. The only way to know is through research and DNA testing. If your ancestors lived in a place and time they would've had contact with Indians, consider taking a DNA test and consult the American Indian research guide in the October/November 2016 *Family Tree Magazine* <shopfamilytree.com/family-tree-magazine-october-november-2016>.



MYTH 6

The courthouse burned and the records are gone.

Have you ever called a county courthouse to ask about a will or deed, only to hear "The courthouse burned in the late 1800s and we have no records prior"? Courthouse fires, floods and other disasters weren't uncommon, especially in the South, where the Civil War raged. But the "no records survive" claim often isn't entirely true.

If you dig a little, you might find that some records were reconstructed. For example, after an 1884 riot and fire destroyed Cincinnati's courthouse, citizens showed up to re-register their deeds and marriages. Or you might discover that a harried or new courthouse employee didn't tell you that some records were spared, were recovered after the fact, or were stored off-site at the time. Or due to boundary changes, another county may be in possession of the records you need. The local genealogical society is a good source of such details about courthouse disasters. You can record your findings in our Burned County Records Inventory form <familytreemagazine.com/info/burnedcountyrecordsinventory>.

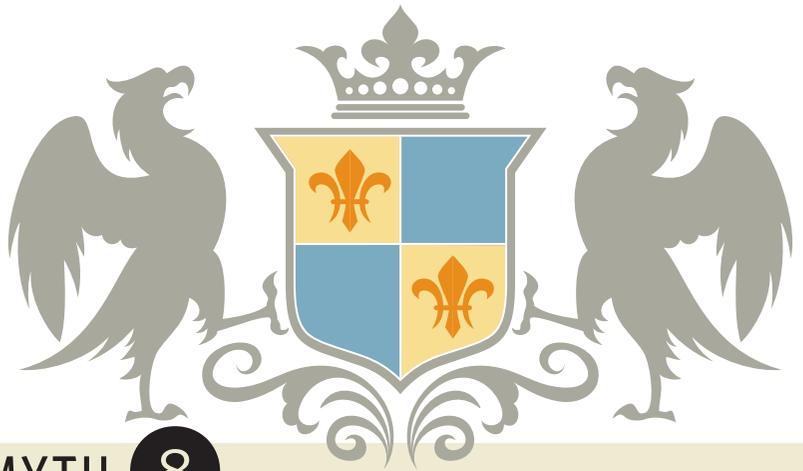
If the records you want were in fact lost, consider what other documents might hold the answers. For example, a church baptismal record might substitute for a birth register. Local newspapers might contain probate-related notices, digests of court proceedings, and lists of property transactions. Our Records Checklist <familytreemagazine.com/article/recordreferences> can help you brainstorm substitutes to seek.



MYTH 7

Same surname— must be a relative.

Whether it's President George Washington, *Mayflower* passenger John Alden or pop star John Legend, genealogists often hold out hope of finding a connection to a famous relative. But just because you have the same last name, it doesn't mean there's a relationship. So for all those Boones whose family lore claims Daniel is a cousin, you'll have to back it up with some research: Trace your family tree and the famous person's family tree (which already may be well-documented) and look for a connection. And remember: While it's fun to find the famous in your family tree, don't forget about your plain-Jane ancestors. Their role in your existence is just as worthy of your attention.



MYTH 8

Hey look, it's our family crest!

The term *crest* is often used interchangeably with *coat of arms*, but the crest is actually a part of the coat of arms. Neither, however, belongs to a surname. Instead, the right to use a coat of arms is granted to an individual and is passed down to the legal male-line descendants. Therefore, in order to claim a specific coat of arms, you must prove a male-line descent from a person listed on a country's heraldic register. (Note that many private, unofficial enterprises will design or register a "coat of arms" for you for a fee.) You can learn more on the website of the College of Arms, the heraldic authority for England, Wales and Northern Ireland <www.college-of-arms.gov.uk>.



MYTH 9

Three brothers came to America ...

The story goes that three brothers (not four brothers, or two brothers and a sister) arrived in the United States, where one went north, one went south and one went west, giving rise to families with their surname across the country.

Of course, brothers (and sisters) often did immigrate at the same time, but rather than disperse themselves, families and neighbors from the old country tended to stick together in their new homeland. They were much more likely to settle the same area than to spread across the country. A similar story in your family merits careful research to determine if the immigrants in question were in fact related or just shared the same surname.

MYTH 10

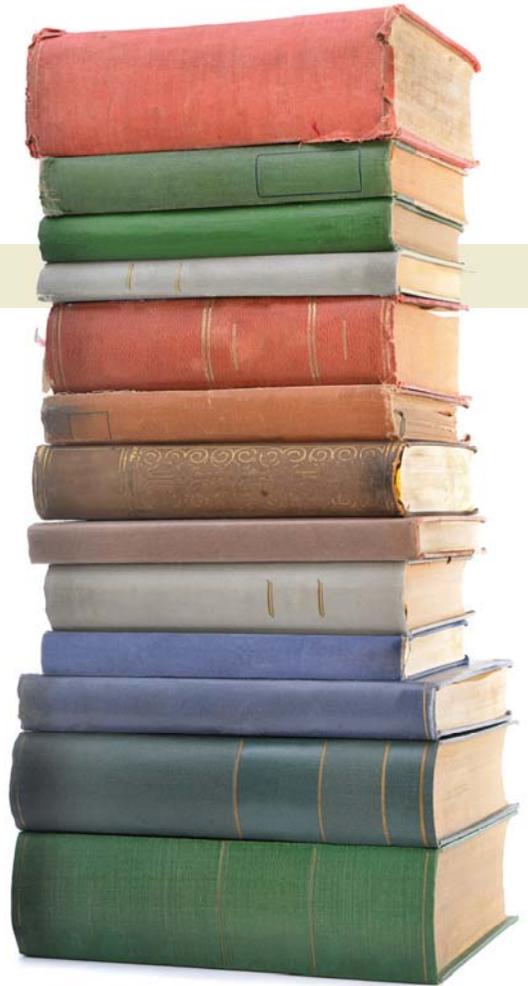
Source citations are just for professionals.

Most genealogists are hobbyists, researching in their spare time to satisfy a personal desire to know their history. If you're doing genealogy for fun and don't plan to share your discoveries outside your family, is it really necessary to go through the tedium of citing sources used in your research?

The answer is yes, especially if you're interested in knowing your family's *true* story. Recording information about the sources of your genealogical conclusions is beneficial for several reasons:

- It'll keep you from scratching your head, trying to remember why your tree says Great-great-grandpa was born in 1852.
- It saves you time in trying to find a source again. Say, for example, you discover a different record that says your great-great-grandfather was born in 1855. You'll need to re-check your sources for his birth to determine whether to go with 1852 or 1855.
- It helps you evaluate the reliability of information you've gathered. A county history written long after the events it describes, for instance, is less likely to be accurate than a newspaper account written at the time of those events.

The tome *Evidence Explained* by Elizabeth Shown Mills (Genealogical Publishing Co.) is many a genealogist's citation-writing guidebook. Most nonprofessionals, though, won't need to craft formal citations. Focus instead on just recording the source information: title, author, publisher, website and database name (if applicable, with date of access), publication date and place, format of the version you used (book, microfilm, digital images, etc.), and page number. For a hard-to-find or one-of-a-kind source, also note the repository or relative's home where you found it. Your source information should allow you or someone else to easily find the source again.



Repetition in families and online keeps these myths front and center in American culture. But now you're armed with the truth. It's time to break it to Mom that Great-grandma wasn't a Cherokee princess. ■

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JULIE CAHILL TARR is a professional genealogist, writer and editor.

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THE ROARING TWENTI

Celebrate the 20th anniversary of *Family Tree Magazine* with our 20 best timeless genealogy tips.

by THE EDITORS OF FAMILY TREE MAGAZINE



When *Family Tree Magazine* began in 2000, the world looked different. Christina Aguilera's "What a Girl Wants" topped the charts, and a gallon of gas cost "just" \$1.51. Google <www.google.com> was still a fledgling start-up, and Facebook <www.facebook.com> just a glimmer in 16-year-old Mark Zuckerberg's eye.

More to the point: Billions of genealogy records had yet to be digitized at the turn of the millennium. Megawebsites Findmypast <www.findmypast.com> and MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> were years from being founded, and DNA testing (still a young science) had limited utility for genealogists.

But that was about to change. Founding Editorial Director David A. Fryxell wasn't kidding when he wrote in the premiere issue of *Family Tree Magazine* that "It seems everybody in America has caught 'roots mania.'" Genealogy has continued to explode in popularity as online records databases continue to grow, and as social media and DNA testing make it easier than ever to discover and connect with your relatives.

They say with age comes wisdom. And though so many things have changed in the past 20 years, the core of good genealogy research has remained the same. Here's a list of 20 timeless family history tips to help you take your research into the new decade.



PHOTOGRAPH BY LORI PEDRICK; STYLING BY CHLOE BARCELOU; CAKE FROM EAT MORE CAKE (KEENE, NH); ARCHIVAL PHOTO: PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY/STOCK PHOTO

ES



Though so many things have changed in the past 20 years, the core of good genealogy research has remained the same.

SEARCHING FOR FAMILY

1. Start with what you know.

Look around your home. You may be sitting on a treasure trove of family history. What objects or research have you inherited from other relatives? What family stories did you hear growing up? You'll need to validate family lore, but information passed down from generation to generation can give your research some direction.

2. Move backward in time.

Start with the most recent members of your family (you and your parents), then carefully document each generation as you work backward in time, one ancestor at a time. Strong

research needs to be built on a solid foundation—even if you're studying ancestors you've met in person.

This will keep you from making rash jumps in your family history or making false assumptions about your family's lineage. While it's exciting to think you might be related to someone famous, for example, you can't start with that famous person and work your way down the family tree. Rather, climb your family tree from the bottom up, sturdy limb by sturdy limb.

3. Make a plan.

For efficient, methodical research, sit down and consider your goals. Rather than jumping down a random research rabbit hole, consider what

questions about your ancestry you'd most like to answer.

Your goals might seem big and daunting. But once you've outlined them, you can figure out what specific tasks will help you attain them. The 31 entries in our genealogy "fitness plan" on page 26 are good examples.



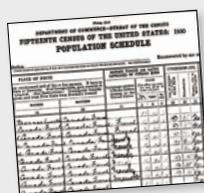
4. Ask for help.

You certainly don't have all the answers to your most pressing questions, and you're no less of a genealogist for asking others for assistance. By tapping into a network of family members and other genealogists, you can start to uncover new information and resources that you'd never have access to alone.

This can take many forms. Perhaps you reach out to relatives on Facebook <www.facebook.com>, or set up an in-depth interview with a member of your family. Even distant relatives can have information on your ancestors, so

The Genealogy Industry, 2000–2019

Genealogy has changed a lot in the past 20 years—and *Family Tree Magazine* has been here for it all. Here are some of the most important events that have taken place since our first issue in 2000.



The 1930 US census becomes available for researchers.

Findmypast, originally called www.1837online.com, comes online as a database of UK vital records from the General Register Office.

2000

The first issue of *Family Tree Magazine* is published.



2001

Ancestry.com (then under the corporate name MyFamily.com) acquires RootsWeb. Later acquisitions include Heritage Makers (2005), Footnote/Fold3 (2010), 1000memories (2011), Archives.com (2012), GeneTree (2012) and Find A Grave (2013).

Family Tree DNA launches its first consumer Y-DNA and mtDNA tests.

2002

2003

The first version of the RootsMagic software debuts.

MyHeritage, then a software download, launches from the living room of CEO Gilad Japhet.

2004

don't be afraid to connect with even second and third cousins.

If you've hit a dead end, consider hiring a professional who specializes in that area of research. The Association of Professional Genealogists <www.apgen.org> and Legacy Tree Genealogists <www.legacytree.com> each maintain databases of experts who might have the right know-how to scale your highest brick wall.

5. Study social history.

Your ancestor's birth and death dates are just the tip of the iceberg. Try to understand your ancestor's life and times. What were their towns and communities like? What dangers did they face? What social, economic, religious or political forces impacted the decisions they made? How did their lives compare to those of their peers? Understanding these factors will help you put your ancestor's life in context, and help you better



connect with the generations that came before you.

Sources such as city directories and Sanborn fire insurance maps can help you piece together the physical layout of your ancestor's neighborhood. And city or county histories, scholarly texts and even well-researched historical fiction provide solid information. Newspapers, too, can give you insight on the day-to-day goings-on in your ancestor's community.

Also take care to study how borders changed over time as well, as jurisdictional changes will affect where your ancestors' records are held today.

The Atlas of Historical Geography of the United States <dsl.richmond.edu/historicalatlas> and the US Geological Survey <www.usgs.gov/products/maps/overview> are good resources to get you started.

6. Research your ancestors' networks.

Your ancestor was part of a wider community, and researching your ancestor's friends, neighbors, extended family members and coworkers can lead to information about your ancestor himself. Study your ancestor's "clusters" (social networks, such as friends and neighbors) and "collateral relatives" (i.e., your non-direct-line relatives, such as your ancestor's siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles). We discussed cluster and collateral research in depth in our December 2019 issue <www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/cluster-collateral-research>.



23andme offers the first direct-to-consumer autosomal DNA test for genealogy.

The Family History Research Wiki comes online.

2005

The UK version of "Who Do You Think You Are?" premieres on the BBC.

2006

2007



The first episode of the Family Tree Podcast premieres.

2008

2009

Family Tree University offers its first genealogy webinars. Online courses follow in May 2010.



USING RECORDS

7. Seek original records.

Indexes, whether paper or digital, don't always tell the full story. Spelling mistakes and transcription errors can make a mess of even the most precise keyword search, so you'll sometimes need to turn to record images to even *find* your ancestor. Many online records collections include images of the original record, or you can request documents from an archive for a nominal fee.

Viewing original records can also generate new leads in your research. By looking at the pages immediately before and after your ancestor's listing in a census, for example, you might find friends, extended family members or neighbors whose information can help you grow your family tree.

8. Evaluate your sources.

Not all resources are created equal.

When and how a record was created (especially in relation to the event it's documenting) can drastically affect the reliability of the information you find in it. Ask yourself when and by whom a record was made.

In general, records created by people closer to an event (both in time and in relationship) are more reliable than those that weren't. For example, tombstones (created shortly after a person's death) are somewhat reliable resources for death information. But death certificates—which were created within a couple days of a person's death and generally required a witness who was often a close friend or relative of the deceased—are even more reliable than tombstones.

This advice rings even truer as family trees become more interconnected online. When you're reviewing another user's family tree profile for an ancestor, consider where the data there comes from, and how

reliable those sources are. If the person has only cited other people's family trees (or hasn't cited his sources at all), take the information there with a grain of salt.

9. Watch for data errors and impossibilities.

We've already mentioned index mistakes, but other, less obvious errors can damage your family tree. As you work, make sure the data you find makes sense. Were parents born *before* their children? (And, conversely, were mothers alive when their children were born?) Flag any data that doesn't line up. And, using your social history knowledge, determine if your ancestor's actions make sense given his age and the time and place he lived in.

We've collected more common genealogy errors <www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/5-common-genealogy-errors> and "illnesses" <[A horizontal timeline from 2010 to 2014 with various genealogy events marked by vertical lines and text boxes. The timeline is set against a light blue background with a white horizontal line representing the year axis. The years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 are printed in bold black text below the axis. Vertical lines of varying heights extend from the axis to text boxes containing event descriptions. Some text boxes include logos for Geni and findmypast.

- 2010**: The US version of "Who Do You Think You Are?" premieres on NBC.
- 2010**: GEDmatch is founded.
- 2011**: Family Tree DNA first offers its Family Finder autosomal DNA test.
- 2011**: The first RootsTech conference is held in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 2012**: "Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr." premieres on PBS.
- 2012**: MyHeritage acquires WorldVitalRecords.com.
- 2012**: AncestryDNA launches, accelerating the autosomal DNA test boom.
- 2013**: MyHeritage acquires Geni.com.
- 2013**: Ancestry.com launches Newspapers.com as a separate service.
- 2014**: "Genealogy Roadshow" debuts on PBS.
- 2014**: Findmypast acquires Mocavo.com.](http://www.familytree</p></div><div data-bbox=)

magazine.com/premium/family-tree-remedies>, plus how to avoid and remedy them.

10. Use records as stepping-stones.

Critically examine your ancestors' records to find clues to other documents they may appear in. Census records, for example, can contain multiple breadcrumbs that lead to other resources:

- Country of origin (passenger lists)
- Date of naturalization (passenger lists, declarations of intent, certificates of naturalization)
- Military service (draft cards, service records, pension documents)
- Number of years married (marriage banns, marriage certificates)
- Occupation (occupational records)

And, of course, your ancestor's stated age in a census record gives you a clue about birth year, as does birthplace.

11. Expand your definition of "records."

We spend a lot of time talking about census records and birth, marriage and death certificates. But your ancestors may have been recorded in a wide variety of less frequently used documents.

Keep an open mind when deciding which documents to research. Though sometimes harder to access and understand, court and land records can reveal fascinating details about your ancestor's life. Your ancestor may also have been recorded in

even more obscure sources, such as society minutes, school report cards or newspaper gossip columns. Courtney Henderson's article on records for finding female ancestors (page 56) contains a handful of these lesser-known sources.



RootsTech and the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) cohort their 2015 conferences in Salt Lake City.



LivingDNA begins offering its DNA test.



FamilySearch discontinues its microfilm lending service, vowing to publish all its microfilmed records online by the end of 2020.



NGS and FGS announce their intent to merge.

2015

Ancestry.com sells the Family Tree Maker desktop software to MacKiev, who launches a new version of the program in 2018.

2016

MyHeritage launches its own autosomal DNA test.

2017

California law enforcement use DNA information from GEDmatch to identify a suspect in the long-cold Golden State Killer case.

2018



MyHeritage hosts its first MyHeritage LIVE conference in Oslo, Norway.

2019

RootsTech holds its first international conference in London.

ORGANIZING YOUR GENEALOGY

12. Develop a consistent filing system.

As you accumulate files, records and other data over the years, it can be easy to feel like you're drowning in stuff. By adopting a standard filing system, you can bring order to all that family history chaos and find your files quicker and more easily. The *Ahnentafel* (German for "ancestor table") system is one possibility, as it uses a simple, standard method to assign a number to each ancestor. Genealogist Kimberly Powell wrote a helpful summary of *Ahnentafel* for ThoughtCo <www.thoughtco.com/ahnentafel-numbering-system-explained-1420744>.

13. Cite everything.

Though time-consuming, source citations lend more credibility to your research. They don't have to be overly complicated, but they should contain enough information about a source that you or another researcher can easily trace the data back to its source. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* by Elizabeth Shown Mills (Genealogical Publishing Co.) will get you started.

14. Back it up.

The evolution of digital tech doesn't mean your documents are safer than they used to be. If anything, your hard-earned research is even more at risk now from file formats becoming outdated and hard drives crashing—in addition to the fires, floods and other natural disasters that also threaten your physical papers.

Set aside some time to regularly back up your genealogy data, and make sure you've backed it up in multiple places. For example, in addition to having your files on your desktop, also back them up on an external



hard drive, in paper format and in a cloud storage service such as Dropbox <www.dropbox.com>.

15. Store heirlooms and documents safely.

No amount of scanning can digitize treasured heirlooms—Grandpa's watch, your mother's wedding dress or a beloved childhood toy. These items require special care to minimize age-related damage.

In general, you want to keep heirlooms, papers and other keepsakes in a dry, climate-controlled room, away from direct sunlight and stored using acid-free boxes and paper. Our experts (such as Denise May Levenick, the Family Curator) have written extensively on how to best preserve a variety of heirlooms throughout the years; see page 12 for Denise's tips on saving baby artifacts.

APPLYING YOUR RESEARCH

16. Share your stories.

You're not just finding names and dates in your research—you're also uncovering stories. Find ways of sharing these stories with loved ones, who might be drawn in by their ancestors' trials and tribulations in a way they never would be by data alone.

Consider blogging about your ancestors, or even just sharing anecdotes or snippets of research on social media. More ambitious writers might even consider putting together a narrative biography of their family's story. Richard Campbell, author of *Writing Your Legacy: The Step-by-Step Guide to Crafting Your Life Story* (Writer's Digest Books) shares some tips on page 42. 

17. Turn your research into gifts.

Another way to share your findings and involve living family members is to create gifts out of your research. You can print and distribute family trees or beloved family photos, or put your data together in a photo book <www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/creating-a-photo-book-the-5-elements-to-include>.

18. Celebrate your heritage.

Once you've studied your ancestors and ethnic heritage, get in touch with your roots! This can be as simple as trying a recipe from the old country or as involved as joining a heritage-focused society, such as the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe <www.sggee.org> or the Order Sons and Daughters of Italy <www.osia.org>.

You can also practice family traditions or take part in ethnicity-focused festivals, such as Oktoberfest or activities highlighted by the Association of Scottish Games and Festivals <www.asgf.org>. Planning a family reunion (page 48) can also help you get in touch with your relatives—both living and deceased. 

19. Keep learning.

You may be out of school, but that doesn't mean you have to stop learning! Read books on researching in your ancestor's area, and take advantage of online education opportunities. Libraries and genealogical societies, such as Brigham Young

University <fh.lib.byu.edu/classes-and-webinars> offer educational programming on various genealogical topics, as does FamilySearch through its Learning Center <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Classes_in_the_Learning_Center> and Research Wiki <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page>.

You can also take advantage of live-streamed genealogy conference sessions, such as those from RootsTech <www.rootstech.org/video-archive> and MyHeritage LIVE <blog.myheritage.com/2019/09/myheritage-live-2019-lectures-now-online>.

At Family Tree University <www.familytreemagazine.com/university>, we have dozens of self-paced online genealogy courses written and instructed by experts, plus on-demand webinars that will give you the best tools for growing your family tree.

20. Embrace new tools.

Where would genealogy be today if we hadn't adopted the tools ushered in by the internet revolution? Online family trees, DNA testing, social media—all developments that changed family history research forever, but also disrupted “business as usual” for genealogists.

Keep an open mind toward new resources for researching and sharing your ancestry as they become available. While not all will stick—Google Plus comes to mind—new genealogy tech can dramatically cut your research time and make it easier than ever to save and share your findings.

The annual RootsTech conference <www.rootstech.org> in Salt Lake City (taking place in 2020 from Feb. 26 to Feb. 29) highlights some of the best new genealogy tools each year. And, of course, you can keep reading *Family Tree Magazine*, where we'll continue sharing the best genealogy advice and resources into this new decade. ●

The Future of Genealogy

As anyone who's gone shopping for jetpacks lately knows, predicting the future is a crapshoot. When we founded *Family Tree Magazine* 20 years ago, we never could have predicted home DNA testing or family trees that you could view on a phone. Nonetheless, here are some educated guesses about what the *next* 20 years hold for genealogy:

- The **1950 and 1960 US federal censuses** will be released in 2022 and 2032, respectively. Though still useful for genealogy, census details began to shrink in 1950, with only 20 questions for the full population. The 1960 “short form” collected only five questions: relationship to head of household, age, sex, race and marital status.
- We'll likely see **increasing digitization of records**, with: FamilySearch completing scanning its microfilm; Findmypast partnering with US Catholic archives; and Chronicling America continuing newspaper digitization. Beyond censuses and vital records, look for less-familiar land, probate, church and military records. Also expect more access to online records for those with Eastern European and Asian ancestries, as digitization projects reach the extant records from those parts of the world.
- **Microfilm readers gather dust.** Ditto for sources on paper.
- **Privacy and budget concerns** will crimp state and local archives' hitherto robust digitization efforts—especially of vital records.
- **Artificial intelligence** will build possible family trees based on DNA matches, following the leads of Ancestry.com (ThruLines) and MyHeritage (AutoClusters).
- Expect a **shakeout in the DNA market**, as saturation and disappointing results (“I'm half-Italian. Now what?”) take a toll.
- **Genealogy will continue to go global**, with international conferences (RootsTech London, MyHeritage LIVE) and the beyond-US branding of MyHeritage and Findmypast.
- Genealogy will go more **mobile**, with roots on your wrist and eyeglasses.
- **Genealogy software will continue to decline** in favor of online family trees, which can integrate with others' trees, records and DNA-match searches.
- Look for **increasing concentration in the genealogy business**, with major players snapping up smaller services and launching brand extensions. One of today's giants could even fold or merge. (“Impossible,” you say? Who would have thought 10 years ago that Family Tree Maker would be bought and even briefly discontinued?)
- **Amateur, homegrown genealogy websites will dwindle** or migrate to social media, as hosting costs, hassles and ubiquitous hacking weigh heavily.
- **Digital assistants** join in on genealogy: “Alexa, show me my Smith family tree.” “Hey Siri, when was Great-grandpa Jones born?”

—David. A Fryxell



HOLES in HISTORY

Major, record-destroying fires have likely impacted your ancestry search. We'll help you raise your family tree from the ashes of these disasters.

by SUNNY JANE MORTON

Pieces of the 1790 to 1820 and 1860 censuses are missing, too: It's likely some districts or states never turned in their schedules, and the British burned most of the 1790 census for Virginia during the War of 1812.

“I lost her in the 1890 census!” If you've ever had cause to say this, you're not alone. Thousands of family history researchers curse the loss of almost the entire 1890 US census. After learning of its destruction due to a fire nearly a century ago, they quickly begin to “skip that year” in their record searches, turning instead to city directories, tax records and other substitutes that might name an ancestor during those key years between 1880 and 1900.

Unfortunately, the 1890 census isn't the only major US record set that's gone up in smoke. Other conflagrations have burned gaping holes in the collective historical record. Most notably: military service records for more than 16 million Americans and passenger records for a half-century of arrivals to New York City. Entire courthouse collections have been consumed, too, including vital records, probate files, deeds, court cases and more.

Behind these disappointing, frustrating genealogical disasters are alert watchmen, brave first responders, bewildered immigrant detainees and government officials of varying competence. We can at least be glad that three of the major fires reported here involve no loss of life—just loss of history.

But the proverbial smoke clouds produced by these record losses aren't without silver linings for researchers. Not every loss was complete. And not every loss was final—some records have actually been recreated. Though the following fires ruined millions of documents, they don't have to ruin your family history research.

1890 CENSUS FIRE

The missing 1890 census isn't as simple as "it was lost in a fire." Actually, different parts of the census burned in not one, but two fires. After the second and more devastating fire, the surviving waterlogged records were left neglected, then quietly destroyed years later by government administrators.

The ill-fated 1890 census was taken at a critical time in US history. The population had topped 50 million in 1880 and climbed by another 25 percent in the following decade. Foreign-born residency jumped a third during those years. Inside the country, a restless population moved westward and into urban centers. The 1890 census captured a nation in motion.

It also collected individual information of unprecedented genealogical value. For the first time, each family got an entire census form to itself. Race was reported in more detail. Questions appeared about home and farm ownership, English-language proficiency, immigration and naturalization. Civil War veterans and their spouses were noted. Questions about a woman's childbearing history first appeared. Additional schedules captured even more about people in special categories, such as paupers, criminals and the recently deceased.

By 1896, the Census Bureau had prepared statistical reports. Then a disaster occurred—one almost nobody remembers now because future events would overshadow it. A fire that March badly damaged many of the special schedules. It was a loss, but probably wasn't considered tragic. After all, statistics had been gathered and the population schedules were still intact.

Over the next 25 years, many Americans lobbied for the construction of a secure facility for federal records. But there was still no National Archives. The 1890 census was stacked neatly on pine shelves just outside an archival vault in the basement of the Commerce Building in Washington, D.C.

Late in the afternoon of Jan. 19, 1921, Commerce Building watchmen reported smoke emerging from pipes. They traced the source to the basement. When the fire department arrived a half hour later, they first evacuated employees from the top floors. By that time, intensifying smoke blocked access to the basement. Thousands of bystanders watched fire crews punch holes in the concrete floors and pour streams of water into



1890 Census Fire

- **Records lost:** 1890 US census population schedule (62.6 million names) and most special schedules
- **What survived:** about 6,300 names from 10 states and Washington, D.C.; as well as Civil War veterans schedules for half of Kentucky, states alphabetically following Kentucky, Oklahoma Territory, Indian Territory, and Washington, D.C.
- **Where to look:** Find surviving schedules at major genealogy websites, including Ancestry, FamilySearch, Findmypast and MyHeritage.
- **Substitute records:** city directories, tax lists, state censuses and other records created between 1880 and 1900; see the 1890 Census Substitute database at Ancestry <search.ancestry.com/search/group/1890census>
- **Pro tip:** Use the 1900 and 1910 census columns for "children born" to a woman and her "children still living" to help determine whether you've missed any children born after the 1880 census who died or left home before 1900.

the basement. Firemen continued the deluge for 45 minutes after the fire had gone out. Then they opened the windows to diffuse the smoke and went home.

Anxious census officials had to wait several days for insurance inspectors to do their jobs before they could access the scene of the fire. Meanwhile, census books that hadn't burned sat in sooty puddles on charred shelves. When officials finally tallied the damage, they found about a quarter of the volumes had burned. Another half were scorched, sodden and smoke-damaged, with ink running and pages sticking together.

The Census Bureau estimated it would take two to three years to copy and save the damaged records, but it never got the chance. The moldering books were moved to temporary storage. Eventually they came back to the census office, but the

subject of restoring them didn't come up again. Twelve years after the fire and without fanfare, the Chief Clerk of the Census Bureau recommended destroying the surviving volumes. Congress OKed this final move the day before the cornerstone was laid for the new National Archives building.

Of the nearly 63 million people enumerated on the 1890 census population schedule, only about 6,300 entries (0.0001 percent) survive. Worse yet, a backup protocol followed for previous censuses had just been dropped: The 1890 census was the

first for which the government didn't require copies to be filed in local government offices.

As sad as this story is, it could've been worse. Those concrete floors prevented the 1921 fire from spreading to the upper floors, which housed the 1790 to 1820 and 1850 to 1870 censuses. Inside the basement vault were the 1830, 1840, 1880, 1900 and 1910 censuses, but only about 10 percent of the records were damaged to the point of needing restoration. About half of the 1890 veterans schedule survived. The 1920 census was in another building entirely. So while the losses are significant, consider this: Can you imagine trying to trace your US ancestors without any federal censuses between 1790 and 1910?



National Personnel Records Center Fire

- **Records lost:** up to 18 million Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) for the Army (80 percent of files for discharges from Nov. 1, 1912 to Jan. 1, 1960) and Air Force (75 percent of discharges from Sept. 25, 1947 to Jan. 1, 1964)
- **What survived:** about 6.5 million files, now marked "B" ("burned")
- **Where to look:** Request records from the NPRC, following instructions at archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records.
- **Substitute records:** reconstructed ("R") NPRC files; discharge forms for some returning servicemen filed with county courthouses
- **Pro tip:** Surviving OMPFs and DD 214s (discharge papers), and reconstructed service details from burned records, are available at no charge to most veterans or their next-of-kin. For information, see the FAQs at archives.gov/veterans/faq.html.

DISASTER AT THE NPRC

The federal government learned a thing or two about protecting archival records in the half year following the Census Bureau fire. That's why a 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri wasn't a total loss. Although millions of 20th-century US military service files were destroyed, quick-acting officials, dedicated workers and advancing technology led to a much more hopeful ending for genealogists.

It was just after midnight July 12, 1973, when a fire was reported at the NPRC. Firefighters arrived in less than five minutes and headed up toward the sixth floor. Within three hours, they had to retreat from the searing hot flames. Pumper trucks outside shot water up several floors into broken windows.

The fire burned out of control for nearly 24 hours, and wasn't declared officially dead for four days. The thick smoke forced local residents to stay indoors. The 40-plus fire crews battling the blaze had difficulty maintaining water pressure. One pumper truck broke down after running 40 hours straight.

Document disasters in history

1618-1648

German church records in the Thirty Years War

1688-1697

More German records in the Nine Years' War

1755

Royal Library of Portugal collections in the Great Lisbon earthquake

1922

Irish censuses, wills and parish registers at the Four Courts bombing in Dublin

1923

Collections of several Japanese libraries in an earthquake and subsequent fires

1940s

WWI British service records and many others in bombings across Europe and China



Ellis Island Fire

Recovery efforts began even before the fire was out. Other agencies received orders to preserve any records that might be helpful in reconstructing the affected Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs). Workers removed key records from floors they could safely reach, including more than 100,000 reels of Army and Air Force records. They sprayed the waterlogged ruins of the building's top with a mold prevention agent.

Less than a week after the fire died, employees began hauling thousands of plastic crates filled with smoky, sodden records to the nearby McDonnell Douglas aircraft facility. They stacked 2,000 crates at a time in an enormous vacuum-drying chamber that had been used to simulate conditions in space. The chamber squeezed nearly eight tons of water from each group of crates. Officials used other drying chambers at McDonnell Douglas, too, and sent some records to an aerospace facility in Ohio.

The efforts paid off. Workers saved more than 25 percent of the OMPFs, or approximately 6.5 million records. (Compare that to about 6,000 lines of text from the entire 1890 census.) From related records, the NPRC began reconstructing basic service details lost from 16 to 18 million Army and Air Force service records. This effort continues today. The NPRC maintains the partly damaged “burned” files, monitoring them for further deterioration.

WHEN ELLIS ISLAND BURNED

The immigration station at Ellis Island was only five years old when it burned to the ground on a summer night in 1897. Remarkably for a facility designed to accommodate up to 10,000 visitors per day—and some overnight—no one was killed. But millions of records were lost.

The story of the “first” Ellis Island is also a story about the federal government assuming

- **Records lost:** passenger arrival records at Castle Garden (1855-1890), the Barge Office (1890-1891) and Ellis Island (1892-1897)
- **What survived:** none of the records held at Ellis Island up to the date of the fire
- **Where to look:** Search for free at CastleGarden.org <www.castlegarden.org> (indexes only), Ellis Island website <www.libertyellisfoundation.org> and FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org>; also at subscription site Ancestry <ancestry.com>.
- **Substitute records:** Customs Office passenger lists (National Archives microfilm publication M237, Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, 1820-1897)
- **Pro tip:** Stephen P. Morse's third-party search of the Ellis Island website's passenger records <stevemorse.org/ellis/passengers.php> offers flexible search options that may help you home in on your hard-to-find immigrant.

control of immigrant processing, which was previously left to individual states. Castle Garden, on the tip of Lower Manhattan, had opened in 1855 as New York's official immigrant station. But by 1890, it was clear the facility (and its operators) weren't properly managing the increasing immigrant traffic.

In April of 1890, the federal government began processing New York arrivals; it would soon do so nationwide. The Barge Office, also in Lower Manhattan, served as a temporary immigration

1976

Most collections of the National Library of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge

1989

Collections of University of Bucharest library and archive in the Romanian Revolution

2003

Iraq National Library and Archives and other Iraqi repositories burned and looted

2004

Sweeping losses across South Asia after Indian Ocean earthquake

2014

Historical documents spanning centuries in fire at National Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The passenger arrival lists lost in the 1897 Ellis Island fire didn't include arrivals at ports outside New York.

station while contractors enlarged the land mass of nearby Ellis Island.

The new half-million dollar facility opened on Ellis Island Jan. 1, 1892. The enormous main building was 400 feet long with distinctive square towers. Its wooden walls and open-ceiling plan gave the place a light, airy atmosphere. Inside, immigrants stored their baggage on the first floor and climbed to the second for questioning and inspection. Successful arrivals could exchange currency and purchase rail tickets to their final destinations. Those who were detained for further inspection stayed in dormitories. Other structures on the island supported a revolving community of detainees: a hospital with staff quarters, a bathhouse, restaurant, laundry, boiler house and electric light plant.

This magnificent building caught fire around midnight on June 15, 1897. A watchman called an alarm after spotting flames dancing out of a second-floor window. Newspapers reported that employees calmly evacuated more than 200 overnight detainees—including 55 hospital patients—to a ferry boat. Fire boats arrived promptly. But the fast-moving blaze gutted the wood-framed building within an hour, then burned the nearby buildings and docks, too.

Ellis Island remained closed and immigrant processing returned to the Barge Office until Dec. 17, 1900. The new fireproof red brick facility cost three times as much to build as its predecessor. Millions more immigrants passed through its doors. Before it closed in 1954, it also sheltered

wounded WWII servicemen, Coast Guard trainees, enemy aliens and deportees.

What records were lost in the fire? Now that you've heard the story, the answer will make more sense. Ellis Island passenger arrival lists (1892-1897) went up in flames. So did records created during the federal startup period at the Barge Office. Unfortunately, federal officials also had claimed the State of New York's Castle Garden passenger arrival lists created between 1855 and 1890. So those are gone, too.

Then what's in those huge New York passenger databases you can search online? Are they missing early arrivals to Ellis Island and all who passed through Castle Garden? Happily, no. The US Customs Office also collected passenger lists from ship's captains. These records have been microfilmed and indexed, and now fill the holes burned by the 1897 fire.

COURTHOUSE CATASTROPHES

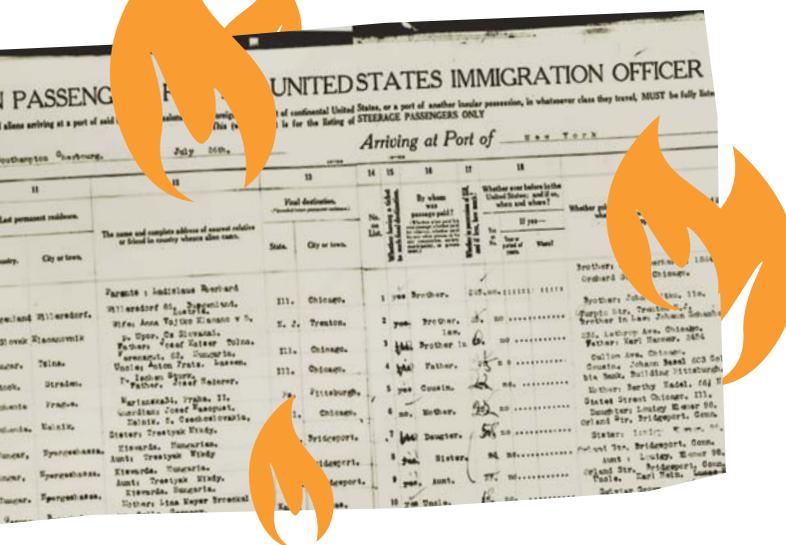
Those tracing US ancestors inevitably will come across the discouraging term “burned county.” It refers to places that have experienced courthouse disasters, whether fire, flood or weather. Records in county courthouses have fallen victim to destructive acts over the years.

One of the unluckiest counties for courthouse disasters has to be Hamilton County, Ohio, home of the “Queen of the West” city, Cincinnati. Fed by Ohio River traffic, German immigration and an early 1800s meat-processing industry, Cincinnati grew into one of the first major cities of the inland United States.

The county's first courthouse was a log cabin near a swamp. Locals must have been relieved when a two-story limestone brick building replaced it around 1802. But it only survived a decade. Soldiers billeted at the courthouse during the War of 1812 accidentally burned it to the ground.

The third Hamilton County courthouse was built on the outskirts of town. But that didn't keep it safe. In the summer of 1849, sparks from a nearby pork-processing house landed on the courthouse's exposed wooden rafters. A devastating fire ensued.

The county hired a nationally renowned architect to design a massive fourth courthouse building. By 1844, it housed one of the country's leading law libraries. For the next 40 years, it seemed that the fire gods were finally smiling on the courthouse.



But nobody was smiling on March 29, 1884, after a jury returned a manslaughter verdict in the trial of a German immigrant. Seven witnesses testified that he'd described how he planned and carried out the murder of his boss. Locals thought the man should've been found guilty of murder, a more-serious charge. Police and Ohio National Guardsmen battled rioters storming the jail. The next day, a growing mob torched the courthouse and prevented firefighters' efforts to put it out. It took 2,500 more guardsmen and another two days to quell the violence. The riots left more than 40 dead and 100 wounded, and another Hamilton County courthouse in ruins.

Another courthouse fire was part of a much larger conflagration: the Great Chicago Fire. When the Cook County, Ill., courthouse burned in the early morning hours of Oct. 9, 1871, no one was thinking about saving records. People were running for their lives. Well, everyone except for the unfortunate souls trapped in the basement of the courthouse—but we'll come back to them.

The fire began about 9 p.m. in a poor urban neighborhood, in the barn belonging to Irish immigrants named O'Leary. Postfire rumors blamed Mrs. O'Leary's cow for kicking over a lantern during milking. Historians have refuted this, with most instead pointing to young men playing dice. Chicago's city council officially absolved Mrs. O'Leary in 1997.

Whatever the cause, wind quickly whipped the flames into a wall 100 feet high. Someone began tolling the courthouse bell as the blaze spread over downtown Chicago. Sparks landed on the wooden cupola of the courthouse sometime after 1 a.m., igniting the building. Panicked prisoners trapped in their basement cells cried out and pounded on the walls. Bystanders tried to free them, but were restrained until the mayor could send a hurried message allowing their release. With a few of the most dangerous criminals left under guard, the rest disappeared into the glowing night.

About 2:30 a.m., the heavy bronze bell that had been ringing for more than five hours crashed to the ground. When the last flickers of the Great Chicago Fire died 24 hours later, more than 2,000 acres of downtown Chicago had burned. Three hundred were dead and a third of the city's population was homeless. The limestone courthouse was gone, along with all the records inside: vital records, court records, deeds and more. Record-keeping began again the next year.



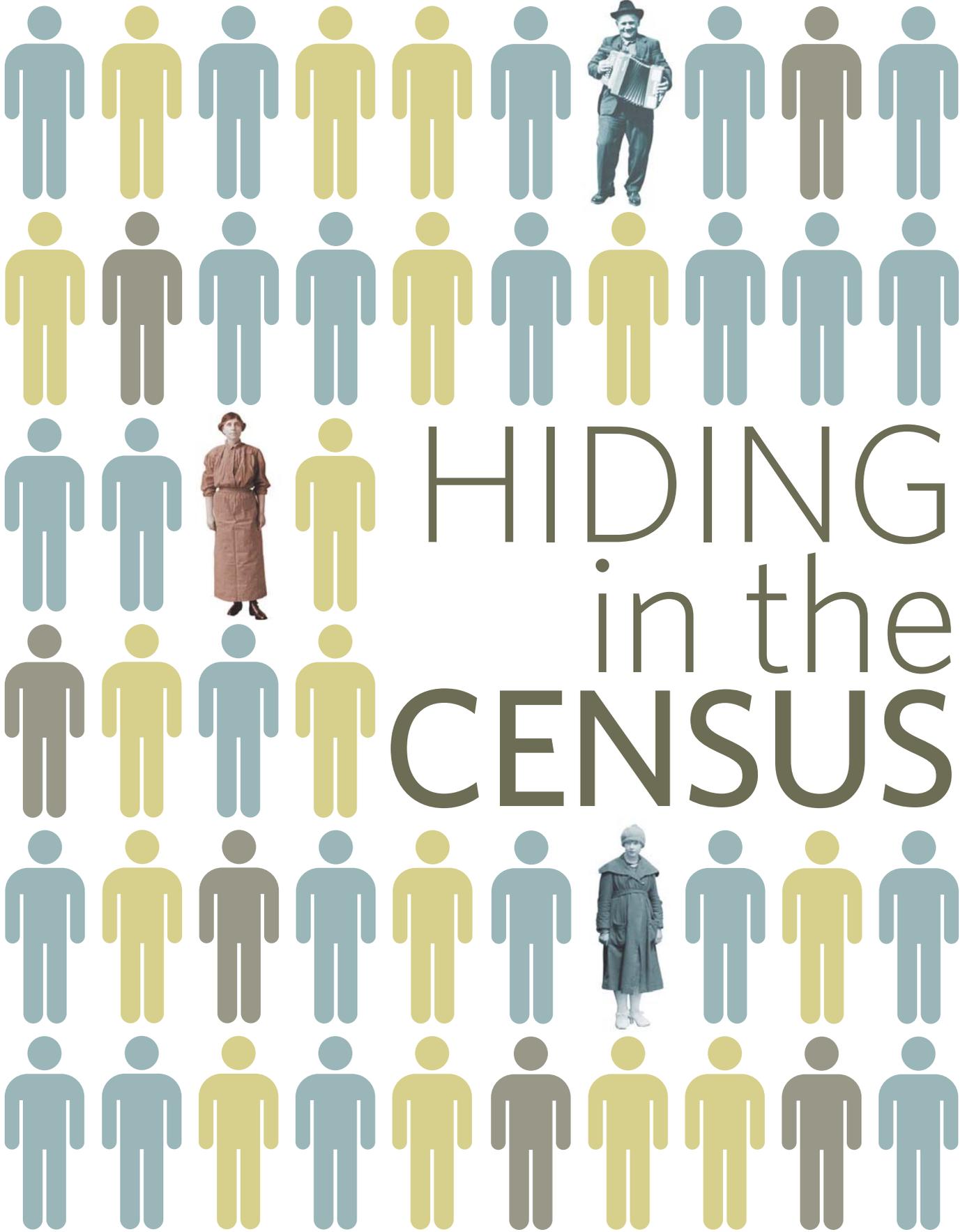
Courthouse Disasters

- **Records lost:** court records such as deeds, probate files, marriage licenses, vital event registers and trial documents
- **What survived:** varies
- **Where to look:** consult local research guides, county officials, and local historical and genealogical societies
- **Substitute records:** re-recorded deeds and other documents; delayed birth certificates; and local records not kept at courthouses, including church records, newspapers, town or township records
- **Pro tip:** Research plans are helpful when working in a burned county. Note the specific record needed, then (once you've verified it was destroyed) list all the records that might provide the same information.

Courthouses and other county repositories across the United States have suffered fires, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and even cleaning frenzies by well-meaning officials. The Civil War in particular took a toll on Southern states. Union troops burned 12 courthouses to the ground in Georgia, for example, and 25 Virginia counties have Civil War-related losses of records.

Because fires may have spared some records in a "burned county," always double-check whether the ones you need survived. Even if they didn't, all may not be lost for your research. Court records have legal implications, so local officials would go to great lengths to restore the information. This includes asking residents to re-record their marriage licenses, wills and deeds. Genealogists might reconstruct lists of births and deaths from newspapers, cemetery records and other sources. Local government offices and genealogical or historical societies can help you learn about any surviving records and substitutes. ●

The WWII service records for both grandfathers of contributing editor **Sunny Jane Morton** were destroyed in the 1973 NPRC fire.



HIDING in the CENSUS

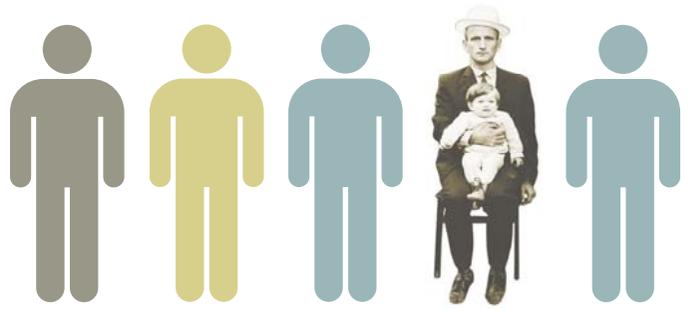
Censuses help you build the backbone of your family tree. Use our search strategies to overcome seven common reasons your ancestors might be hard to locate in the records.

BY DAVID A. FRYXELL

🐛 **YOU DON'T HAVE** to dig too deeply into your family history before coming up against an ancestor who's "hiding" in the US census. The census, conducted every 10 years since 1790 and now widely available through 1940 in electronic form (more on where to search censuses later), is among your most useful family history resources. But sometimes the answers it ought to contain about your ancestors stubbornly refuse to be revealed.

It's possible, of course, that your "missing" ancestor actually got skipped. Even today, when it seems no one can hide from the government, the 2010 census didn't tally an estimated 0.38 percent of the population. The missing surely were more numerous in decades past, when enumerators traveled door to door on foot, following ill-defined boundaries and trekking into remote rural areas. They occasionally missed houses or found no one at home and no nearby neighbors willing to hazard a guess. A family might move from a not-yet-counted street to one the census taker had already visited. (And just as some might escape the enumerator's eye in this way, others could be counted twice.)

More likely, though, your ancestors are in the census, but hiding in an unexpected place or with a strange name. Human weakness and imprecision are often to blame: Spelling wasn't always our forebears' strong suit. They might change their name spelling or give a middle name or nickname instead of the one you know—and census takers didn't ask how to spell names. Ages might be rounded to the nearest decade, or fudged to be more flattering. For example, Mary Todd Lincoln was listed as 28 years old in the 1850 census, but only 35 in 1860, as her husband began campaigning for president. Your family might have passed down wrong information about where Grandma lived in 1920, or a transcriber, in reading handwritten census records and entering names into an online database, may have misread what the enumerator wrote.



Understanding these common enumeration mistakes and how they affect your searches in online census records can help you find even the most elusive ancestors. We'll go over seven problems that can trip up even the most intense census search, and show you how to overcome them.

1 Tricky transcription errors

My third-great-grandfather James M. Lowe shows up in the 1850 census as "Lowd." The one-letter difference doesn't seem like a big deal, but when I first looked for him, his entry refused to be found. I tried spelling variations and different ages. Zip. The problem? The way Ancestry.com <ancestry.com> searching worked at the time, the site didn't think Lowd was a possible variation of Lowe (or Low, for that matter).

Most sites let you search with an asterisk wildcard to replace zero or more characters in a name, and a question mark to replace a single character. Using wildcard characters was tricky with such a short surname, because Ancestry.com requires that names contain at least three nonwildcard characters. But that's what ultimately found my hidden ancestor: I searched for *Low?* to retrieve all possible four-letter hits beginning with *Low*. (I also could have tried *Low**, which would have retrieved variants with any number of characters, from Low to Lowell to Lowenstein and so on.) And there was James, in Harris County, Ga.. The census listed the correct family members and ages, so I knew this was the right person.

If I were hunting for James M. Lowe today, I could search census databases on other sites, such as FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> or MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com>. Sometimes different sources have different transcriptions—and sure enough, FamilySearch's 1850 census has him correctly transcribed as James Lowe.

Another approach to transcription errors and other puzzles is to search for relatives or neighbors from a city directory or the previous or subsequent census, then scroll up or down. Your ancestor might be "hiding" in plain sight

Don't assume an ancestor is "missing" when an otherwise-matching individual lacks one key identifier, like age or birthplace. That one detail may have been reported incorrectly.

1910 Census

Details reported in the 1910 census include names, ages, birthplaces (countries or US states), years married, occupations, and (for women) number of children born and number still living.

STATE Mississippi DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
 COUNTY Lauderdale **THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910—POPULATION**
 TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Brant (Dunbar) NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Meredon
(Insert proper name and, also, name of town, or township, district, precinct, tract, etc. See instructions.)
 NAME OF INSTITUTION X ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 22nd DAY

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, SEPARATION, etc.	LOCATION.	NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.							NATIVITY.			CENSUS.		Whether able to speak English or, if not, give language spoken.	Trade, profession, occupation, etc.
				Sex.	Color or race.	Age at last birthday.	Whether single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated.	Number of years married.	Number of live children.	Place of birth of each person and parents of each person enumerated. If born in the United States, give the state or territory. If of foreign birth, give the country.	Place of birth of this person.	Place of birth of father of this person.	Place of birth of mother of this person.	Year of immigration.	Whether naturalized citizen or alien.		
		<u>Julia</u>	<u>Wife</u>	F	W	23	M	5	0	0	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	1903	English	
		<u>Robert</u>	<u>Husband</u>	M	W	26	M	9			<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	1906	English	
		<u>Mary</u>	<u>Wife</u>	F	W	23	M	9	3	8	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	1902	English	
		<u>John</u>	<u>Son</u>	M	W	7	S				<u>New York</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>			
		<u>Etta</u>	<u>Son</u>	M	W	6	S				<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>			
		<u>Alice</u>	<u>Daughter</u>	F	W	2	S				<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Syria</u>			
		<u>Boaz</u>	<u>Son</u>	M	W	24	M	5			<u>Texas</u>	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>		English	
		<u>Tommy</u>	<u>Wife</u>	F	W	29	M	3	2	2	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>		English	
		<u>Robert</u>	<u>Son</u>	M	W	8	S				<u>Mississippi</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>			
		<u>Car</u>	<u>Son</u>	M	W	8	S				<u>Mississippi</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama</u>			
		<u>William</u>	<u>Son</u>	M	W	31	M	2			<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Delaware</u>		English	

on the same page as these folks. In this and other instances where you're searching for someone other than your target ancestor, of course, it's smart to select someone with a more unusual name, if possible. I've frequently given thanks for names like Ladoiska, Sophianesba and Camillus in my family tree—and especially my ancestors' fondness for names beginning with Z (Zeno, Zillis, Zebulan, Zeriaha, Zilphia ...).

2 Unexpected name changes

Our forebears were much more casual about their identities than we are. People could simply decide to call themselves Jack instead of John, even on official documents like the census, and then change back again 10 or 20 years later. So, for example, three sons of my ancestor Edward Uptegrove dropped the first part of their surname and became simply Groves in the 1810 to 1830 censuses. My collateral relative with the wonderful name Zebulan M. Pike Clough (also spelled Zebulon) at one point must have decided his lengthy name was too burdensome and became just Pike Clough.

Other variations arise because of remarriages. My wife's ancestor Alice Hollingworth, married to James Jones, seemed to vanish from the census after his death. Actually, though, she was merely "hiding" as Alice Jefferson, with a new husband by 1850. More challenging still was the case of my Swedish great-great-grandmother Mary Eckstrom (her married name), whom I finally found in the 1880 census as Mary Van Kirkhoon, remarried to a Belgian gentleman. Swedes and Belgians simply didn't mix in 19th century Moline, except in this one case. (But not for long, I guess: In

an 1885 city directory listing, she was back to Mrs. Eckstrom, noted as "widow.")

Resolving such name variant mysteries usually requires matching up other facts or family members. Minor variations might be overcome by matching an individual's birth year, birthplace and current residence with the similar parts of the name. More complex instances, like my remarriage mysteries, can be solved by comparing other members of the household. Mary Van Kirkhoon had children with the right first names and ages, and she was listed as born in Sweden, not Belgium, in the right year. If you're not certain who the children are, look for a parent's obituary, household listings

Official Census Dates

Decade(s)	Date
1790	August 2
1800	August 4
1810	August 6
1820	August 7
1830-1900	June 1 (June 2 in 1890)
1910	April 15
1920	January 1
1930-2010	April 1

Where to Find Census Records Online

US census records are readily available to researchers and searchable by name online. This makes them among the most helpful genealogical records you'll find. You can search the entire US census by name, or drill down to censuses for individual years, at subscription sites Ancestry.com <ancestry.com> MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> and Findmypast <www.findmypast.com>. FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> has free, searchable censuses indexes for all censuses and images for most. Your library may offer you free access to census records via Ancestry Library Edition or HeritageQuest Online—check the library website or ask at the reference desk.

with the rest of my family. Then she wasn't. She'd shown up in 1830 only because she was a head of household. In 1840, however, she was presumably just a tick mark in the household of one of her children. (With some time and patience, I could probably find her by examining each of those households for an "extra" female age 60 to 70, since she'd be 64.)

In 1850, when I could expect Mary to be listed by name even if not a head-of-household, she had vanished from Alabama. She finally turned up in Ouachita County, Ark., of all places, living with a daughter. Later, Mary would find her way to another unexpected place, Freestone County, Texas, where a son lived. If I'd stubbornly stuck to Alabama in my searching, I'd never have found her.

How do you find ancestors when their places of residence are either erroneous or unexpected? Looking for other household members might help, but not in the case of my migratory fourth-great-grandmother. Here you need to take advantage of census databases' search power. Try a search without places at all. Slowly add places of birth or residence back in to narrow as necessary. Mary's 1850 entry did have her North Carolina birthplace correct, so that helped me separate her from the unrelated New England Cloughs.

For more recent years and for city- or town-dwelling ancestors, try using city directories as a census substitute. A good place to start is Ancestry.com's one-click search of its database US City Directories, 1822-1995 <search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2469>. Check the Exact +/- option to focus on a time span: Type 1900 and choose +/- 5 years, for example, to search directories from 1895 to 1905. The resulting occupational information can help you make sure you have the right person: My great-grandfather William F. Dickinson, absent from both the 1900 and 1910 censuses in Blount or Lee County, Ala., where I'd expect him to be, is an attorney in a 1905 directory in Birmingham (in Jefferson County). You even can use a city directory listing to aid your census search, pointing to where the person should live that year.

5 Untimely deaths
Sometimes an ancestor had the misfortune (for him and for you) of passing away in a census year. Such deceased individuals may not exactly be "hiding," but their passing might deprive you of key decennial data.

Fortunately for genealogists, in 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880, the federal census included questions about persons who had died in the year immediately preceding the enumeration. Many of the surviving Mortality Schedules are indexed and searchable on Ancestry.com <search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=3530>. Data varied from census to census, but in general, the questions covered:

- name
- age at last birthday
- sex
- race
- marital status
- profession, occupation or trade
- state, territory or country of birth of person and parents
- length of residence in county
- month in which person died
- disease or cause of death
- place where disease contracted (if not at place of death)
- name of attending physician

In practice, the definition of "year preceding the enumeration" could be flexible and might depend upon when the census taker actually got around to a household. My fourth-great-grandfather Ephraim Brown, for instance, was missing from the regular 1850 census, the official Census Day for which was June 1. But I found him listed in the mortality schedule, even though he didn't die until September 1850.

Ancestors whose deaths caused them to miss the census in years after 1880 are destined to remain forever "missing" from those enumerations. You might, however, be able to find them in some state and territorial censuses. Not every state or territory took its own censuses, but those that did typically did so in years ending in 5. The frequency and timespan of these state headcounts, as well as the details enumerated and inclusion of mortality data, vary by state. Many are online at sites that have federal censuses, including the free FamilySearch, as well as at websites for individual state archives.

6 Too many matches
Almost as bad as failing to find an ancestor in the census is finding too many possibilities. Your target is likely hiding somewhere among them, but how do you determine which is the right one? This challenge crops up most commonly in pre-1850 searches, which lack names of other family members that could distinguish *your* John Baldwin from those other John Baldwins. You also may hit this roadblock in later enumerations with

ancestors who have common names and are at either extreme of the age spectrum: young singles or elderly widows and widowers, living on their own or boarding with unrelated folks.

Start by trying to match data you do have, whether it's tick marks for pre-1850 households or birthplaces and dates (or those of parents) for later censuses. When you still have several apparent matches, try to determine geographic plausibility and look for relatives (or future relatives, like a later spouse or father-in-law) on the same or adjacent pages. The answer may be no more than a best guess, so you'll want to note it as such in case you revisit in light of new information.

Noncensus records also can help identify your ancestor. I had two Abraham Stow possibilities in early North Carolina censuses, for example, and no more than that name to go on as father of my Joel Stow. One was in Surry County, the other in Lincoln County, and both were of plausible age. Then I found a Surry County marriage record for Abraham Stow Jr. listing Joel Stow as bondsman. I pounced on the Surry County Abraham Stow Sr. and researched him further to prove the link.

Missing or damaged pages

The toughest challenge in census research comes when your ancestors are hiding on census pages that were damaged, missing or destroyed. Except for the 1890 census, which was largely destroyed by fire, it's hard to know when this might be the root of your mystery. Local genealogy guides can inform you about census record losses. It can also be difficult to determine whether the omission occurred on the original census records or in the microfilmed-then-digitized images and index collection you're using online, which may not be complete or accurate.

In seeking my great-grandfather in the 1900 census in Birmingham, I came across an entry for "James P*," born in February 1846 (like my great-grandfather but alas, not him). A black mark, perhaps from tape, obliterated his last name and most of the names below it on the page. James' real descendants might be able to find him by searching without

How do you find ancestors when their places of residence are either erroneous or unexpected? Searching for other household members might help.

a last name, supplying only birth and residence details.

In more extreme cases, significant portions of a federal census itself may be lost—and all listed ancestors with them. This may apply on a local or county level (especially for early censuses) and for nearly the entire 1890 census. In these cases, look for census substitute databases, which compile other records from the same time period, such as city directories, state censuses, tax lists and voter lists. You'll find census substitute databases at major genealogy websites, such as the 1890 Census Substitute database at Ancestry.com <search.ancestry.com/search/group/1890census>.

Missing or damaged pages? Enumerator error? I might never know why I still can't find my great-grandfather in the 1900 and 1910 censuses. Or—who knows?—I might find him tomorrow using some of these tricks. As they say on "X Files," the truth is out there. ■

Contributing editor **DAVID A. FRYXELL** hides out in Tucson.

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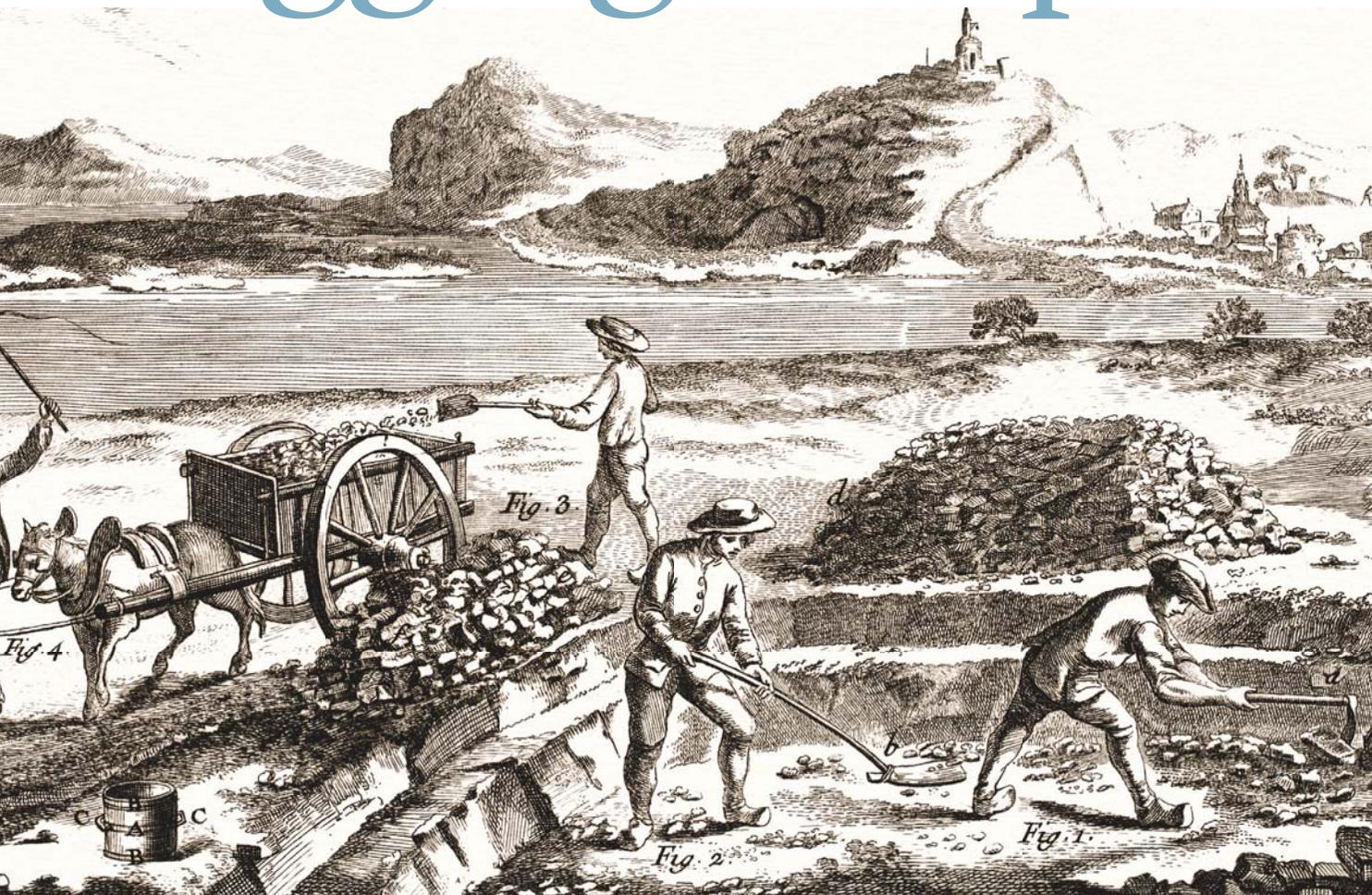
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TIP: Use city directories to find your ancestor's address in the year he's missing from the census, then browse census schedules for that area.

Digging Deeper



Ancestors are hard to find before 1850—records get scarcer and censuses don't name everyone. But you can do it! Follow these eight strategies for discovering your distant roots.

BY SHELLEY K. BISHOP

🦋 **IF YOU'VE TRACED** your family back to 1850 in the United States, congratulations! As you peer deeper into the past, you may find the trail is harder to follow: Where are all the names? Gone are federal census records that list everyone by name and age, replaced by enumerations naming only heads-of-household. Outside of New England, birth and death records become virtually non-existent. Grave markers may be lost or unreadable. Documents have been lost to disasters and the ravages of time.

On top of all this, your ancestor could've moved around in search of land or opportunity, leaving behind only faint,

scattered clues. Compared to relatively prolific paper trails of later years, pre-1850 records can seem few and impersonal: more like a fossil record than an archival one. Yet the truth is that you *can* find your ancestors even without birth, death and every-name census records. You just need to know what documents likely *do* exist—and to be willing to dig for them.

The following strategies can help you identify family members before 1850. Each offers favorite databases for early American research and examples of what you may find. With a little practice, you'll soon be dusting off long-buried details that bring your family's pre-1850s history back to vivid life.

1 Study the region.

Learning about the geography and history of an ancestor's region is the first key to finding him. In the early 1800s, county and state boundaries were still changing in much of the United States. That can affect where you'll find extant records today. Even if your family never physically moved, information about them might be scattered in other jurisdictions that *did* change.

Map out state and county boundary changes on the free Atlas of Historical County Boundaries <publications.newberry.org/ahcbp> and Randy Majors' Historical US County Boundary Maps <www.randymajors.com/p/maps.html>. You also can look for boundary change descriptions or maps in old atlases and county or local histories.

Of course, not everyone stayed put. This was a time of widespread migration as the nation expanded. New states and territories were rapidly being settled. One of the biggest challenges family historians face is tracing an ancestor from where he lived in the mid- or late-1800s (say, Missouri) back to where he was born or lived before that (say, Pennsylvania).

To successfully identify that Pennsylvania hometown, you'll likely first need to learn all you can about him and his family in Missouri. Historical records there may directly identify a family's previous hometown. More often, they provide clues based on the town's settlement patterns and dominant ethnic groups, religion, industry and employers. You'll learn more about these local records below.

Powerful Pre-1850s Records

- bounty land applications
- censuses
- church records
- county histories
- deeds
- diaries and letters
- family Bibles
- grave markers
- guardianships
- land grants and patents
- lineage society applications
- local history books and articles
- maps
- marriage bonds
- marriage registers
- military pension records
- military service records
- newspapers
- probate records
- tax records
- wills

age group. How do the numbers correspond to known family members? Click through and look at the image of the census, to see the names of other householders on the page. They were some of your ancestor's closest neighbors. Are there others with the same surname? Do you recognize any maiden names of females in your family? If so, you'll want to look more closely at this family.

If your ancestor moved around, watch for the names of relatives, neighbors and other locals to appear with him in different locations in earlier or later censuses. In the early 1800s, many people migrated in family groups and settled where others from their old hometown settled.

Reading early census records can be tricky because headers on each page weren't always present or legible. Download free worksheets for every US census at <familytreemagazine.com/freeforms/censusforms>. These worksheets can help you organize your census findings and work with them more easily.

Try to put names to the tick marks by comparing census records with other details you have about the family. For example, a tick mark for an elderly female in a younger man's household may be a mother or mother-in-law. Next, compare census results over decades to reveal developments in a family. A household newly listed under a woman's name suggests recent widowhood. A young couple living near an older family with the same surname may be part of that family's next generation. Follow up in other records to confirm or refute those theories.

2 Make the most of census marks.

US census records from 1790 to 1840 look vastly different from those of later decades. The only person named is the head of household: the landowner or person supporting the family. Though typically the father, this could be a widow, grandparent or other relative. Members of the household are counted by tick marks or numbers indicating their sex and age range, such as "Free white females of sixteen and under twenty-six."

If you know where your family lived, search for a potential head of household in census records on Ancestry.com <ancestry.com>, FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org>, Findmypast.com <www.findmypast.com> or MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com>. Allow for variations, as spellings often weren't standardized. Once you find a candidate, the index will indicate how many people were counted in each sex/

3 Seek vital records and substitutes.

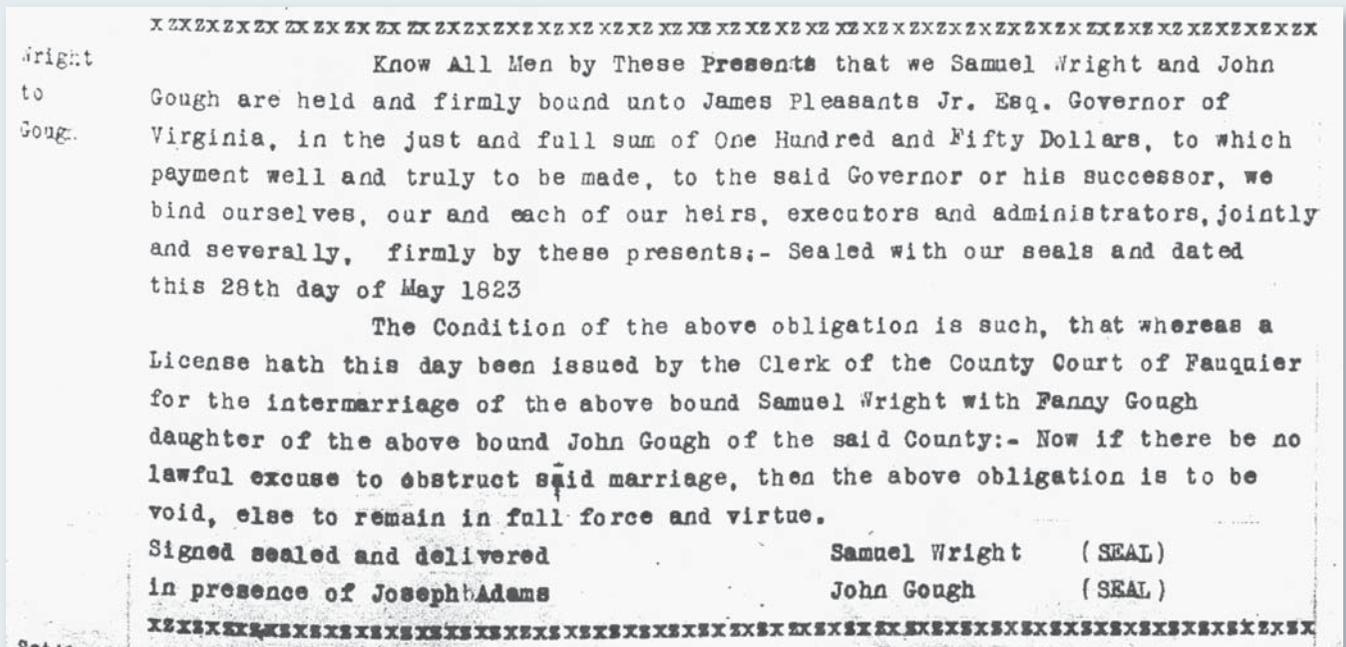
Searching for evidence of a birth, death or marriage prior to 1850 can be a long and discouraging process. In many places, these records simply weren't kept; in others, they're lost or incomplete. Fortunately, some records do exist. Where they don't, substitutes might contain the kind of information you need.

First, see what vital resources do exist for that place and time. Search online and consult a reference such as *The Family Tree Sourcebook* (Family Tree Books) listing available records and contact information down to the county level. Our state and city guides can help, too; look for these at <familytreemagazine.com/store/us-state-genealogy-guides>. The FamilySearch Wiki is another resource <www.familysearch.org/wiki>. Enter the place name in the search box. A search for *Cass County Missouri*, for example, shows it was formed

Magic Bond

This 1823 marriage bond offered assurance from the groom (Samuel Wright) and the father of the bride (John Gough) that there was no legal obstacle to the intended marriage of Samuel and Fanny Gough. The couple probably married within days after the bond was signed. No actual marriage record has been

found, so the bond's date is used as their de facto marriage date, assuming later historical records show them to be living as a married couple. (To spare fragile original records, the county clerk typed this transcript in the 1930s, which was subsequently microfilmed.)



from Jackson County, has no known record losses, and first kept marriage records in 1836. (Check the Wiki for additional record types discussed later in this article, too.)

If your ancestor hailed from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island or Vermont, you may be in luck. Since colonial times, New Englanders typically recorded marriages and births—sometimes for entire families—in their town journals (deaths were less routinely noted). Modern indexes make it possible to find records even if you don't know your ancestor's exact town. Both Ancestry.com and American Ancestors <www.americanancestors.org>, the website of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, offer town record databases. The Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City has microfilmed many town record books. Search the FamilySearch online catalog <www.familysearch.org/catalog/search> by place to see what's available. The FHL no longer loans film for viewing at local FamilySearch Centers, so look for other copies: In the catalog listing, click the link to view the item in WorldCat <www.worldcat.org> and see other libraries that have the film.

Many other states required counties to keep records of marriages long before they began registering births and deaths. Particularly in the Midwest, marriage records often

survive back to the time of the county's formation. Look for searchable collections of county marriage records (many with images of the actual books) on FamilySearch.

Marriage bonds were issued in some eastern and southern states through the mid-1800s. Bonds offered assurance that an intended marriage would be legal. Although bonds don't show the date the marriage occurred, they usually provide the names of the groom and the father or guardian of the bride. Bonds are usually grouped with other marriage records in databases. See an example above.

Churches often recorded births, marriages, deaths, burials and family relationships in membership and sacramental records. The availability of church records depends on the place and denomination. While established congregations often kept good registers, frontier settlements typically relied on itinerant preachers. To learn more about finding church records, consult the September 2016 *Family Tree Magazine*.

In places where civil or church records don't survive, search for other types of records that might provide evidence of births, deaths, and marriages. Grave markers are a good place to start, along with associated cemetery records. Look for headstone information at Find A Grave <www.findagrave.com> and BillionGraves <billiongraves.com>. Family Bibles,

diaries and letters can also be valuable. Check with relatives, local societies and repositories, and in the Archive-Grid <beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid> website, which links you to libraries' online finding aids. Then move on to other possible sources of vital information, described below.

4 Follow the money.

Estate records are among the most reliable indicators of kinship for our early ancestors. They're always worth seeking out. (If your ancestor didn't own land or sufficient personal property, however, his death may not have triggered an estate settlement.) Someone—usually an heir, but sometimes a creditor—had to initiate the probate process, which could be set in motion with or without a will.

The probate process generated a variety of court records that can shed light on the family, such as:

- **WILLS:** These may name the deceased person's spouse, children, and/or other relatives, along with witnesses.
- **ADMINISTRATION LETTERS AND BONDS:** These name the administrator or executor of the estate, the sureties, and sometimes the person's date of death.
- **INVENTORY AND SALE:** The assessment of the person's property can suggest his occupation and economic status; those buying his possessions may be relatives.
- **PROBATE PACKET OR FILE:** This might contain due bills, receipts, claims, accounts and other papers full of clues about a person's life and origins.
- **FINAL ACCOUNT OR DISTRIBUTION:** This states the final value of the estate, and might list the heirs.
- **GUARDIANSHIP PAPERS:** These were created when minor children of the deceased inherited property of sufficient value to require protection until they came of age.

Probate records are often still at the courthouse where they were created. Published county or statewide indexes can help you locate those you need. Some probate records are microfilmed and even digitized on websites such as Ancestry.com and FamilySearch. In fact, Ancestry.com hosts an enormous collection of wills and estate records <ancestry.com/will-probate-records>, with over 170 million documents from all 50 states (not comprehensive for all locales and time periods).

Tax records also can help with your research, though more indirectly. Studying personal property tax records over a period of years can reveal when someone died or moved away, as well as when a young man came of age to pay taxes. Look for microfilmed tax records at the state archives or the FamilySearch online catalog.

5 Track the land.

Your ancestors' land transactions can yield a surprising amount of information about them. Deeds usually state the place of residence for both the buyer (grantee) and seller (grantor). This can help

Estate records are among the most reliable indicators of kinship for our early ancestors.

you track migrations from one place to another. In addition, deeds often name the seller's wife, because she was entitled to a certain amount of her husband's property under dower laws. If she was a widow, the deed will usually name her late husband. You may find deeds where property was sold for a dollar or simply "for love and affection"—a sure sign of a gift, typically from parent to child.

Deeds can reveal family details that may not have turned up in probate records. For example, some siblings who inherited property jointly might have created quit-claim deeds, whereby they sold their interest in the property to one sibling who wanted to keep the home. If children or grandchildren sold a family property, the person they inherited it from may be named in the deed. Because deeds didn't have to be recorded immediately, you may find one that contains valuable clues to inheritance many years after the original landowner died.

In most localities, deeds are recorded at the county or town level and remain at the courthouse. FamilySearch has microfilmed many county deed indexes and deed books; check the online catalog to see if yours is among them.

Don't forget federal land records. Settlers who bought public land from government offices received a patent. Early land patent files have minimal personal details; others have more. Millions of indexed images are on the General Land Office Records website <gloreCORDS.blm.gov>. Print a copy of the patent, then order the corresponding file from the National Archives using NATF Form 84, available at <archives.gov/forms>.

6 Explore military service.

As you develop a profile of your early American ancestor, consider whether he might've served in the military. Many communities formed local militia units for protection, and additional companies were raised during times of war. Generally speaking, men born from 1726 to 1767 were eligible for service in the Revolutionary War. Those born from 1762 to 1799 may have served in the War of 1812. Various types of records created from these conflicts could help with your family history.

Begin your search for military records on Fold3 <www.fold3.com>. Select the war you're interested in, then search by name and filter the results by state. Look for these records:

- **SERVICE RECORDS** identify a soldier's unit, rank, dates of service and muster locations. They typically contain little



TIP: If civil birth, marriage or death records don't exist, look for church records and other vital record substitutes.

files of interest for \$10 to see their supporting documentation. Ancestry.com hosts a database of older applications to the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR); follow up with the SAR research library <www.sar.org/sar-genealogical-research-library>. The US Daughters of 1812 <www.usdaughters1812.org> has an Ancestor Database and record copying service. State chapters of some of these organizations may offer additional resources.

7 Read between the lines.

Published county and town histories may offer clues to fuel your research, particularly if your ancestor's children and grandchildren remained in the area. These books were popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and often contain accounts of early settlers. Many out-of-copyright books are now available online at sites like Google Books <books.google.com> and Internet Archive <archive.org>. Search for *history of* and the county or town. Take the information you find with a grain of salt, as few histories disclosed their sources.

Newspapers were a staple of most sizable cities from colonial times, but finding surviving copies can be problematic. Check the US Newspaper Directory, 1690-Present at Chronicling America <chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> for libraries that hold papers from your area. Also try searching the free Chronicling America digitized newspapers database, and subscription databases at GenealogyBank <www.genealogybank.com> and Newspapers.com <www.newspapers.com>. One caveat: Don't expect to find a detailed obituary for your pre-1850s ancestor, unless he or she was a prominent citizen or lived into the late 1800s. Instead, look for community social news or a brief marriage, court, death or estate sale notice.

Local and state historical and genealogical societies have long published articles on records, events and families in their areas. Many of those publications are more accessible than ever before, thanks to the Periodical Source Index (PERSI) at Findmypast <www.findmypast.com/persi>. Since this isn't an every-name index, try searching by place rather than by surname. If a digitized version of the article isn't available on the site, request a copy at the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center website <www.genealogycenter.org> (under Services, click Article Fulfillment Form).

To identify any local histories you may have missed, search WorldCat <www.worldcat.org>. Under Advanced Search, enter *history* and the name of the town and state. Browse individual search results or click on pertinent subject headings in the left-hand sidebar.

8 Pull it all together.

Sometimes, even after considerable effort, you still can't find a record that directly answers your questions. When that happens, it's time to see if the indirect evidence points to a particular theory. Creating a timeline of events in chronological order can help you determine whether all your information is consistent, and see potential gaps. More than anything else, though, summarizing everything you know about your ancestor—and how you know it—in writing helps you gather your thoughts and see connections you might otherwise miss. Ask yourself:

- What conclusion does the evidence I've found suggest?
- Did I find anything that contradicts it?
- What can I do to confirm this theory?
- Who else in the family can I research to learn more?

That last question is an important one. Faced with a particularly hard-to-solve problem, consider an ancestor's relatives, in-laws and friends. Records about these folks may name your ancestor or reveal something important about her life. You may find it worthwhile to repeat these eight steps for them. Dig more deeply into *their* pre-1850s lives, and you may better expose the roots of your own family tree. ■

Ohio genealogist **SHELLEY K. BISHOP** follows the trails of clients' ancestors as part of her business, Buckeye Family Trees <www.buckeyefamilytrees.com>.

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UNSUNG HEROES

If discovering the superwomen in your family tree is among your New Year's resolutions, you'll love these underused resources for finding female ancestors.

by COURTNEY HENDERSON

Just like superheroes, our female ancestors led, in a sense, two lives. There's the mild-mannered woman who history has fed us: the dutiful wife and mother, content in meeting the demands of home and family and conforming to the role society has insisted she play. But, unlike superheroes, this more compliant alter ego is actually the one donning the mask.

In the past, a woman's legal status became *feme covert* (literally a "covered woman") upon marriage. She not only gave up her name, but her rights as well. As her identity became absorbed into that of her spouse's (in official documentation, anyway), so too did any record of her individual accomplishments.

In an article for *The Journal of American History*, "Of Pens and Needles: Sources in Early American Women's History," author Laurel Thatcher Ulrich points out, "Women 'covered' in surviving documents were visible in ordinary life... [they] were everywhere, in gardens and fields, kitchens and taverns, on horseback and in canoes, in stagecoaches and at ferry crossing, in church pews and at the front lines of armies."

This list could go on. But what of her accomplishments, activities and life trials? What of the sorority sister? The divorcée? The businesswoman? The social reformer? The patient?

Do records of her exist? Perhaps—if you know where to look. The typical, easily accessible records most genealogists access on a regular basis—censuses, church, vital and so on—often aren't enough. Women are likely under the guise of their married names in these records, if they're mentioned at all.



ILLUSTRATION BY THE SPORTING PRESS

Do records of her exist? Perhaps—if you know where to look.

Therefore, we must look to other sources of information to uncover important clues about her life and times. The following list covers resources you may not have considered using to find women in your family tree.

STATE AND COUNTY HISTORIES

Published histories describe a wider geographic area than other resources. And, fortunately for researchers, they've been created for hundreds of years. English counties recorded historical and topographical information as early as the late 16th century. Contents varied, but most consisted of the genealogies of county

Five officers of the Women's League sit for a photograph in Rhode Island, c. 1899. This photo was supposedly included in "The Exhibit of American Negroes," a display organized by educator Thomas J. Calloway at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris. The exhibit was designed to highlight African American progress.

families and lordship descendants. Colonists brought the practice with them to America. Some publications were specific to women and covered entire states.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Parents' names
- Maiden name
- Place of birth, death or marriage
- Descendants

WHERE TO SEARCH

You can find many titles on WorldCat <www.worldcat.org>, or read them on Google Books <books.google.com>. Some searchable examples available on Google Books include *Mothers of Maine* by Helen Coffin Beedy (Thurston Print) and *A History of Adams County, Ohio* by Nelson Wiley Evans and Emmons B. Stivers (self-published).

DIRECTORIES AND MEMBER LISTS

Sure, you've probably checked city and telephone directories before. But

you should also research these similar publications for evidence of your female ancestors.

Who's Who

Publishing biographies of "distinguished Americans" since 1898, *Marquis Who's Who* can be a great resource for genealogists. Founder Albert Marquis stated that the directory's objective was to "chronicle the lives of individuals whose achievements and contributions to society make them subjects of widespread reference interest and inquiry." Although the first few entries are usually individuals in the public eye, many are just everyday citizens. *Marquis Who's Who* has also published a women-only directory, *Who's Who of American Women*, since 1958.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Occupation
- Place of birth
- Education
- Career
- Awards
- Memberships
- Hobbies and special interests

WHERE TO SEARCH

A subscription to the *Marquis Who's Who* online database <www.marquiswhoswho.com/pages/online-database> includes a feature called *Who's Who in American History*, with 180,000 life stories from 1607 to today. (If you'd rather not subscribe, you may be able to access the database for free at your local library.) You may also be able to pick up a secondhand print copy of an old edition on Amazon <www.amazon.com> or eBay <www.ebay.com>.

Professional and trade directories

As Gena Philibert-Ortega states in her article "Genealogy Tip: Using Directories to Find Your Female Ancestor," <

In New York City's Madison Square Park, members of the American Red Cross' Madison Square Auxiliary organized a daily lunchtime event in which working women knitted clothing for WWI servicemen, c. 1918.



tip-using-directories-to-find-your-female-ancestor.html>, the idea that women never worked outside the home in the past is a huge misconception.

Women took jobs for many reasons, and cities all over the country distributed female-specific business directories beginning in the early 20th century. Boston published one as early as 1903, and Washington, DC listed 3,000 women in its 1931 directory. (Trade-specific directories, especially for medical and legal fields, had been around since the late 18th century.)

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Occupation
- Place of business

WHERE TO SEARCH

If believe your female ancestor worked for a company or owned her own business, check your local library for this valuable resource. Be sure to also check for directories of female-heavy professions such as nursing, midwifery, and teaching.

INSTITUTIONAL RECORDS

Although not pleasant to think about, these records can be a valuable resource when searching for female relatives. The details contained in these documents vary by location and time period. As ever, be on the lookout for maiden names and family member names listed. It also helps to familiarize yourself with old medical terminology. An excellent list can be found at <www.genealogytrails.com/main/illnessdefinitions.html>.

Insane asylum records

Some women who ended up in institutions had sound medical reasons to be there. Many, on the other hand, did not. Ladies could be sent to insane asylums by their spouses or families for anything ranging from postpartum depression to menopause to mere disobedience.

Keep in mind that hospitals sometimes changed names. One facility in Cincinnati, for example, was "Commercial Hospital and Lunatic Asylum" from 1822 to 1851, then "Longview Asylum" and finally "Longview State Hospital."

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Date of admission
- Age
- Name
- Marital status
- Occupation
- Birthplace
- Duration of insanity
- Cause of insanity

WHERE TO SEARCH

Many records are held by state and local historical societies, and some have been transcribed. Genealogy Trails has a fantastic resource for tracking down these societies <www.genealogytrails.com/main/statearchives.html>. Blacksheep Ancestors <www.blacksheepancestors.com> has an index of patients for selected states available online:

Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. And you can find some international records at <www.olivetreereganealogy.com/Lunatics>.

Tuberculosis sanitarium records

Prior to the discovery of antibiotics, tuberculosis hospitals were established in the late 19th and 20th centuries as a means to treat a variety of long-term illnesses, although tuberculosis was the most prominent. (Note: Although the meaning is essentially interchangeable, some hospitals used *sanitarium* while others opted for *sanatorium*.)

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Name
- Age
- Birth date and place
- Date of admission
- Date of discharge or date of death
- Medical condition

WHERE TO SEARCH

As with insane asylum records, tuberculosis sanitarium records are mostly maintained by historical societies. Begin by narrowing down the name of the hospital your relative may have been admitted to. Then, check at the state or local level for records.

Some hospitals were state-run, and patient records may not be available to the public. If this is the case, try seeking out hospital annual reports



When the men in their communities left home to fight in World War II in the early 1940s, these women in Soviet Russia stepped in to farm the land.

they were provided with daycare, education and healthcare.

While the most famous example is Chicago's Hull House, settlement houses were established throughout the United States. Contents of records vary greatly. Contact the specific library or archive holding the collection for more information.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- List of house residents
- Resident evaluations
- Meeting minutes
- Reports prepared by staff on children and adults participating in house-sponsored clubs and classes

WHERE TO SEARCH

The University of Illinois at Chicago holds most of the records for Hull House specifically. The collection includes scrapbooks, clippings and lists of associates and residents. Visit <researchguides.uic.edu/hull-house> for more.

Other settlement house records availability varies by state. Two examples include the "Minneapolis Federation of Settlements records" collection <archives.lib.umn.edu/repositories/11/resources/2422>, and Boston's "Guide to the South End House Association records, 1909-1944" collection <beatleyweb.simmons.edu/collectionguides/CharitiesCollection/CC014.html>.

NEWSPAPER SECTIONS

Newspapers are a standard go-to for any genealogical research. Marriage and birth announcements, obituaries, and property notices are all valuable sources. But when it comes to tracking down female ancestors specifically, you may have to dig a bit deeper.

or bulletins at local libraries instead. For example, the Arkansas Tuberculosis Sanatorium published the monthly *Sanatorium Outlook* bulletin, which listed the names of arriving and departing patients.

Also check the hospital and medical records in collections at the Digital Public Library of America <www.dp.la>.

Eugenics Record Office records

Popularized in the early 20th century, the misguided field of eugenics sought to "improve" human genetics through the exclusion of specific genetic groups. The Eugenics Record Office in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, was the movement's research headquarters. Often referred to as the ERO, researchers there were tasked with gathering biological information on the American population.

The Archives at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory website states the ERO was "devoted to the collection and analysis of American family genetic and traits history records," including family study files. These files include individual analysis cards, pedigree charts and other related forms. The sheer amount of genealogical information gathered is astounding, some

going back to the early and middle 1800s. (Below is just a partial list of the statistics collected.)

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Full name or full maiden name
- Birth date and place
- Marriage date and place
- Total number of sons and daughters
- Diseases and illnesses
- Surgical operations
- Education
- Religious affiliation
- Age at death
- Cause of death
- Height and weight
- Eye, hair and skin color

WHERE TO SEARCH

You can find a list of collections and which institutions hold them at <library.cshl.edu/special-collections/eugenics>.

Settlement house records

The goal of the settlement movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was to connect the middle class to low-income families through shared living space. Settlement houses were established in poor neighborhoods, where volunteers from higher socioeconomic circles ran them. Families lived together under one roof, and

tip

When researching using unconventional records, maintain patience and persistence. Although you can learn about these collections online, the records themselves may not be digitized. Make note of what you're looking for, clues you've uncovered so far and what you're trying to find, then contact the holding library or archive.

Women's pages

According to Dustin Harp, author of *Desperately Seeking Women Readers: U.S. Newspapers and the Construction of a Female Readership* (Lexington Books), these special sections devoted to women's interest focused on the "Four F's": family, food, furnishings and fashion.

The women's section usually ran on Saturday or Sunday and (depending on the publication) included recipes, sewing hints and ladies' club news. It's worth checking these sections for contributors or names mentioned. The gossip and society news sections usually featured local wives, brides and daughters of the area's prominent men.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Full name or maiden name
- Location
- Hobbies or interests

WHERE TO SEARCH

Look at Saturday and Sunday editions of papers in your ancestor's area. Identify publications using Chronicling America's U.S. Newspaper Directory <chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/titles>, then keyword digitized copies of that paper on sites such as Newspapers.com <www.newspapers.com> and GenealogyBank <www.genealogybank.com>.

Unclaimed mail

Beginning in the early 1800s, local post offices would advertise unclaimed, unpaid "dead letters" in the newspaper. In the days prior to prepaid postage, post officials hoped the recipient would see his or her name listed in the newspaper, pay the postage due, and collect the letter.

Although initially successful, by 1845 advertising costs significantly outweighed the postage recuperated. Dead letters held by post offices greatly decreased with the introduction of including a return address on the envelope in the 1850s.

Note that these notices mentioned

the specific addressee by name—man or woman. That makes unclaimed mail notices a rare example of an early female ancestor being mentioned by her own name as opposed to her husband's.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Full name or maiden name
- Location

WHERE TO SEARCH

Search in digitized newspapers for sections titled, "A List of Letters," "Letter List," "Letters for You," and so on. These columns were usually printed in smaller, local newspapers.

Notices repudiating wives' debts

"For more than 300 years," notes Hilary Sargent in an article for the Boston Globe <www.boston.com/culture/relationships/2015/02/09/all-fair-in-love-and-classified-ads-three-centuries-of-public-spouse-shaming>, "newspapers ran advertisements from men publicly announcing their wives had left them, and that they would no longer 'be responsible for her debts.'" As early as 1656, newspapers printed these notices, and the practice continued well into the 1980s.

Although pointless from a legal standpoint, this public airing of one's dirty laundry can be a valuable (and sometimes entertaining) resource for genealogists.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Full name or full maiden name
- Husband's name
- Year of divorce or separation
- Location

WHERE TO SEARCH

Look for these notices in the classified ads section, sometimes under the heading "Special Notices." They may be worded: "I will not be responsible for any bill contract by my wife" or "I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by my wife," followed by the wife and husband's name. Very early examples will use the phrase "eloped from my bed and board."

Others simply state the man posting the notice will not be responsible for any debts contracted in his name by anyone other than himself.

FEMALE CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS AND SISTERHOODS

The ladies' club movement gained popularity in the 1800s as progressive-era social reform began to sweep the nation. Women believed they had a moral duty to sway public policy and formed societies to address these concerns. Organizations and sisterhoods took up causes such as temperance, child labor and rights for African Americans. Chapters of organizations were usually established at the city or county level. As with most record collections, contents vary widely by archives. Check with the institution directly for specific information.

Young Women's Christian Association

The American branch of the YWCA was founded in New York City in 1858. The YWCA offered housing, education and support with a "warm Christian atmosphere" to both single women and families alike.

DETAILS

- Minutes and reports (local and national)
- Photographs
- Notes, clippings and outlines

WHERE TO SEARCH

Beginning in 2003, the YWCA donated

over one million photographs, publication pages, and rolls of microfilm to the Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. <bit.ly/YWCAfindingaid>. Thanks to a grant from the Council on Library Information and Resources these records have been digitized and are available for researchers. For more information, visit <libraries.smith.edu/news/2019/06/historical-ywca-records-are-now-available-through-special-collections>.



Women's Christian Temperance Union

With its mission to create a “sober and pure world” through abstinence, purity, and evangelical Christianity, the WCTU was influential and powerful organization in its day. Founded in 1874, it led the charge for the prohibition of both alcohol and tobacco in the United States.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Membership books
- Roll calls
- Minutes and reports

WHERE TO SEARCH

WCTU records may be held at city and county levels, or with state archives. The Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College holds a large collection of WCTU records. Visit <archives.wheaton.edu/repositories/4/resources/239#> for details and contact information.

National Association of Colored Women

When the NACW (also known as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs) was established in 1896, it adopted the motto “Lifting as we climb,” a response to a society determined to portray African American women in an unfavorable light. Famous founders of the NACW included Harriet Tubman, Margaret Murray Washington and Mary Church Terrell, but total membership

numbers soared to 300,000 by 1924. Was your ancestor one of them?

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Meeting minutes
- Attendee names
- Various correspondence

WHERE TO SEARCH

Bowdoin College in Maine holds the “Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895–1992” collection which includes subject files, meeting and convention notes, and correspondence. Search for that collection title at <library.bowdoin.edu>. Search city- and state-level libraries and archives for records of those areas' clubs.

Daughters of Rebekah

Usually referred to as “The Rebekahs,” this group was founded as a female auxiliary of the fraternal order Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Like the IOOF, it is a service-oriented organization that promotes both personal and social development. Membership in the Rebekahs (and other similar sisterhoods) reached an all-time high in the early 20th century, with over a million members reported in 1923.

POSSIBLE DETAILS

- Dates of membership
- Rank
- Offices held

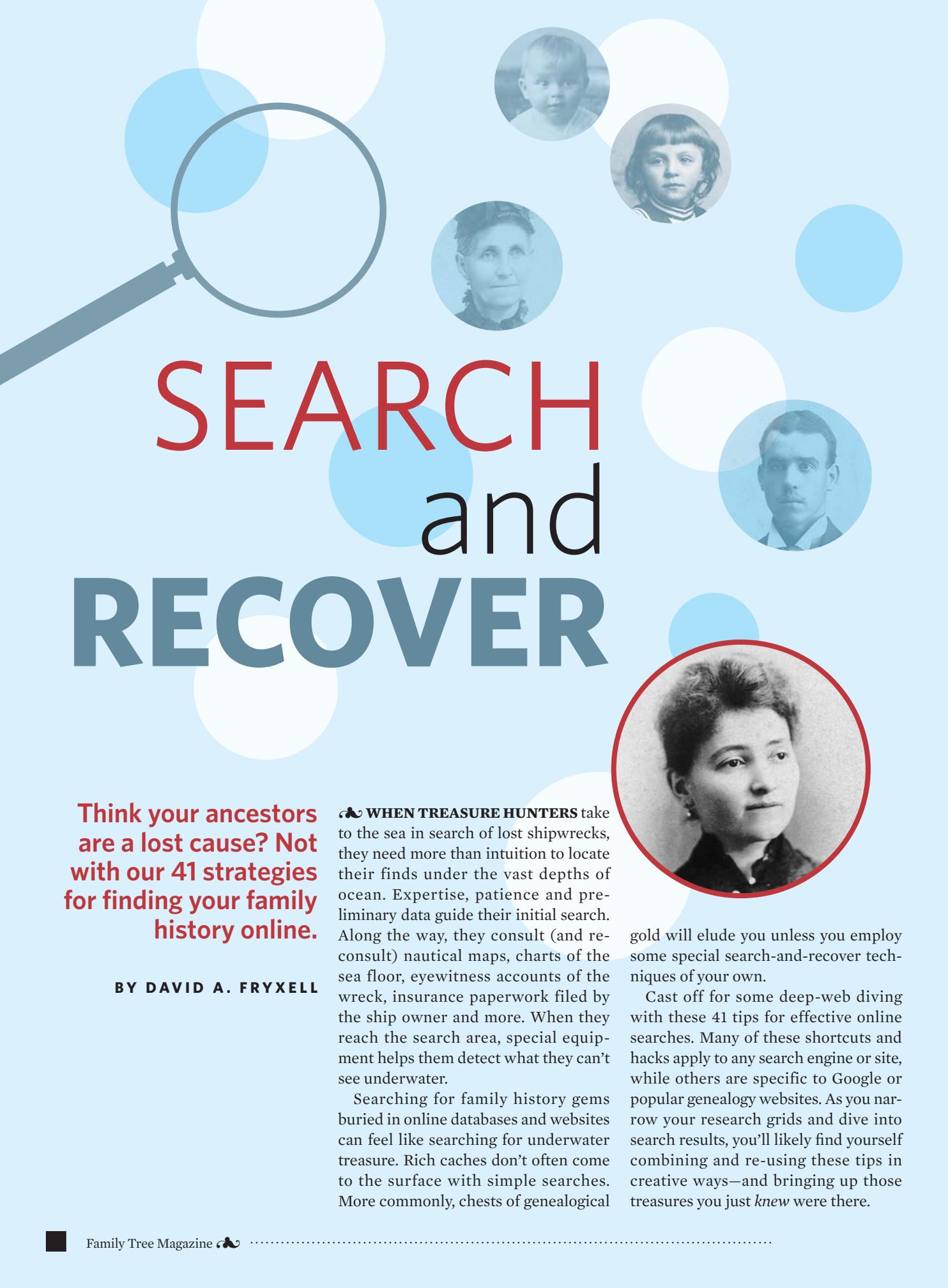
Four members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program leave their B-17 Flying Fortress. During World War II, more than 1,000 women completed the WASP program, which trained women to fly for various noncombat purposes: testing planes, training pilots and ferrying aircraft.

WHERE TO SEARCH

A page on the Independent Order of Odd Fellows website addresses genealogists specifically <www.odd-fellows.org/history/genealogy-research> and notes records for membership are held at Jurisdiction (Canadian province or US state) level. To obtain specific record information, write to the Jurisdiction your ancestor belonged to, and include the following information: name, town of residence, years of residence and year of death.

Make no mistake: Unmasking your female ancestor and revealing more of her “true identity” won't take the outlandish measures of a supervillain. But it will require some extra effort. ●

Courtney Henderson, digital editor of *Family Tree Magazine*, lives in Northern Kentucky and comes from a long line of fierce females.



SEARCH and RECOVER

Think your ancestors are a lost cause? Not with our 41 strategies for finding your family history online.

BY DAVID A. FRYXELL

🔍 WHEN TREASURE HUNTERS take to the sea in search of lost shipwrecks, they need more than intuition to locate their finds under the vast depths of ocean. Expertise, patience and preliminary data guide their initial search. Along the way, they consult (and reconsult) nautical maps, charts of the sea floor, eyewitness accounts of the wreck, insurance paperwork filed by the ship owner and more. When they reach the search area, special equipment helps them detect what they can't see underwater.

Searching for family history gems buried in online databases and websites can feel like searching for underwater treasure. Rich caches don't often come to the surface with simple searches. More commonly, chests of genealogical

gold will elude you unless you employ some special search-and-recover techniques of your own.

Cast off for some deep-web diving with these 41 tips for effective online searches. Many of these shortcuts and hacks apply to any search engine or site, while others are specific to Google or popular genealogy websites. As you narrow your research grids and dive into search results, you'll likely find yourself combining and re-using these tips in creative ways—and bringing up those treasures you just *knew* were there.



1 Use advanced search.

For sites that offer it, choose advanced search options. You can find Google's Advanced Search page, which no longer gets a link on the main page, at [google.com/advanced_search](https://www.google.com/advanced_search). Go advanced at genealogy websites, too: At Ancestry.com [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), for example, selecting Show More Options expands the search options from basic name, place and birth year to include other life events, family members, keywords, race/ethnicity and gender. Note that here, as at most sites with advanced options, the choices vary by category. Immigration and travel searches, for instance, can include arrival and departure data.

2 Enclose phrases in quotation marks.

This works on many genealogy-specific sites as well as search engines such as Google [google.com](https://www.google.com) and Bing www.bing.com. The most obvious application of this trick is in searching for names, as in "George Clough." But don't forget to also search for instances when an ancestor's surname comes first ("Clough, George").

3 Add keywords to name searches.

Target your ancestors—especially those with common names—by adding a spouse's name or a location. Try combining the previous quotation-marks trick with a similarly handled spouse's name ("George Clough" "Mary Phillips") or with a place where your ancestor lived ("George Clough" Virginia).

4 Try proximity searching.

Avoid the uncertainty of name order by taking advantage of the operator NEAR. Searching Google or Bing for George NEAR Clough would find "George Albert Clough" as well as "Clough, George Albert." You can even specify the maximum number of words by which these terms may be separated. For example, between two keywords that should appear no more than three words apart, use NEAR:3 in Bing and

Avoid the uncertainty of name order by taking advantage of the operator NEAR.

AROUND(3) or w/3 in Google. (Even without these tricks, Google will give priority to pages that have your search terms closer to each other.)

5 Put the most important search terms first.

Google prioritizes pages that contain your search terms in the order you've typed them. So Virginia genealogy resources will produce more useful hits than searching for resources genealogy Virginia. Similarly, you'll likely target your ancestor's name faster with "George Clough" Virginia than with Virginia "George Clough."

6 Don't sweat the small stuff.

In the previous example, you wouldn't actually need to capitalize Virginia. The only capitalization Google cares about is in Boolean operators (see next tip) such as OR. (And there's no way to force it to differentiate—too bad if you're researching a surname that's also a word, like Low or Seal.) Google also ignores common short words such as the, a, an and on, as well as most punctuation including hyphens (e-mail or email, it doesn't matter). Apostrophes do count, however (we're isn't the same as were).

7 Use other basic operators.

You probably already know that you can omit a Google search term by preceding it with NOT or a minus sign (-). This is the perfect way to avoid results from a place your ancestor didn't live, such as "George Clough" NOT Massachusetts. Other common operators

you can try are OR (which may also be expressed by the pipe symbol | in Google, Bing and Monster) and parentheses to group search terms as you would in a math equation. For example, Montana birth records AND (history or genealogy) would return matches for Montana birth records history and Montana birth records genealogy. Note that you don't need to type AND (or +) in Google—it's just assumed.

8 Take advantage of "stemming."

Alas, Google dropped support for the tilde (~), which automatically searched for synonyms as well as the term it preceded. However, Google does use a similar technique called "stemming" that can be useful for genealogy searches. This means it searches not only for the word you type but also for variations stemming from it: married might also return hits for marries and marriage, for example. Not sure whether the stemming captured all variants? Try your own "stemming" searches and see if you get different results. (Note that you can prevent stemming by enclosing words in quotation marks.)

9 Search with a date range.

Google lets you specify a numeric range, such as dates, using two dots with no spaces between (1850..1900). Ancestry.com and Archives.com [archives.com](https://www.archives.com) let you search for specific dates with ranges of plus or minus 0, 1, 2, 5 or 10 years. Using the advanced search at MyHeritage www.myheritage.com, you can choose whether a date should match exactly, match within a range (1, 2, 5, 10 or 20 years) or whether to rank all search results by closeness to a date. Findmypast www.findmypast.com searches can range from 0 to 40 years.

10 Let Google or Bing help search within a website.

Frustrated by the limitations of a genealogy site's search capabilities? Unleash the power of your favorite web search engine with a site-specific search

One way to make your searches more location-specific is to use that country's Google site rather than the default US-centric <google.com>.

using *site:* as in *site:rootsweb.com* or *site:usgenweb.org* (no space after the colon). Use this technique for text that appears on a webpage, not to search for indexed information in databases.

11 Search for file types.

You can find PDFs, JPGs and other common file types using the *filetype:* search operator in Google or Bing. Many genealogical organizations publish indexes as PDF documents on their websites, and a search such as *weyer site:hcgsohio.org filetype:pdf* can help you quickly search them.

12 Limit by language.

Not up to translating (even using online tools like Google Translate <translate.google.com>)? Tell your search engine to stick to English results—or to seek out sites in your ancestor's native tongue—using the Language dropdown on Google's Advanced Search page. In Bing, use the operator *language:*.

13 Limit by location.

If your ancestor lived in France, maybe you want to limit your search to French sites (as opposed to French-language sites from other French-speaking countries). Try the Region dropdown on Google's Advanced Search page or use the *loc:* operator in Bing. Another way to make your searches more location-specific is to use that country's Google site rather than the default, US-centric <google.com>. Google runs search engines for most nations, and you'll get slightly different results using them. The UK site, for example, is <www.google.co.uk>. You can find these "native" sites by (of course) searching the regular US Google for *google [name of country]*.

14 Find similar sites to search.

If you've exhausted a favorite genealogy or local history website, see if there are similar gold mines out there. Do a Google search using the *related:* operator in front of the URL you've already mined, such as *related:usgenweb.org*.

15 Use an asterisk in Google.

Although Google doesn't support wildcards within words, you can use a * to take the place of one word (or multiple asterisks for that many unknown missing words). This is a handy supplement to those name searches within quotation marks, to scoop up any instances with a middle name or initial: *George * Clough*. (Note that Bing doesn't seem to recognize any wildcards.)

16 Search with wildcards.

Ancestry.com, FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> and Findmypast let you search with a question mark (?) taking the place of a single character and/or an asterisk standing in for any number of unknown characters, including zero. Each has limits, however, on the minimum number of non-wildcard characters you must use—no searching for *Cl** for Clough, for example. Archives.com and MyHeritage don't support wildcards.

17 Exhaust all name variations.

You probably already know this, but it's worth reminding yourself: Leave no oddball spelling variation or possible typo in your ancestors' names unchecked. In researching my Dickinson line, I try Dickinson, Dickenson, Dickerson, Dickeson and even Dickson and Dixon. The same goes for first names—try nicknames and initials,

alternate spellings, and middle names used as first names. The FamilySearch Standard Finder <www.familysearch.org/stdfinder/NameStandardLookup.jsp> can help with variants to try. So can the Soundex system, but Soundex can miss some spelling variations. See <archives.gov/research/census/soundex.html> for an explanation of how Soundex works and the converter at <bradandkathy.com/genealogy/yasc.html>.

18 Be careful with "exact" check boxes.

Limiting your search results to exact matches can be tempting when you're certain of the data. But this can eliminate whole categories from your results. Collections lacking first names or using only initials, for instance, will be skipped if you search for an exact first name. In particular, don't check Exact for death dates unless you're searching for death records. Earlier records, such as those for births or marriages, may be omitted, since of course they contain no death date.

19 Know when to use AND.

Although Google assumes you intend AND when you type more than one search term, not all sites work that way. The Library of Congress catalog <catalog.loc.gov>, for example, requires Boolean operators (in all caps) to narrow your search. To find wills from Virginia, type *Wills AND Virginia*. For wills from Virginia or West Virginia, type *Wills AND Virginia OR "West Virginia."*

20 Try nameless searches.

Sometimes the only way to find an ancestor online is to search *without* a



TIP: Search without a name on your favorite genealogy site, instead filling in parents' or spouse's names, locations and dates.

name. This is particularly useful for census research, but can also work for vital records. This technique is best for searching a single database, like one enumeration, to limit the flood of hits. Fill in as much as you know—birth year, birthplace, residence—but leave the name fields blank. This trick works in Ancestry.com, Findmypast, MyHeritage and FamilySearch.

21 Search with no surname(s).

If you can fill in enough other details, including given name(s), key dates and places, you often can find ancestors despite transcription errors or spelling quirks. This works particularly well on sites that let you include parents' names and info (try omitting their surnames, too). Again, it's most effective when searching a single source, such as one year's census, lest you be overwhelmed with results.

22 Leave out the location.

Find peripatetic ancestors by searching without places. Maybe your family wasn't where they "ought" to be at some point—they'd joined the Gold Rush or staked a homestead claim. See if you can find them using only names and dates, adding places back in one at a time if you get too many hits.

23 Explore one record collection at a time.

We've hinted at this: While it's convenient to be able to search all of Ancestry.com or FamilySearch or other database sites in a single pass, sometimes you need to focus on one collection. Search each census separately, working back once you've found everyone in a year. This approach—also useful for vital records with separate birth, marriage and death indexes—lets you leave more fields blank and experiment with more workarounds for possible transcription errors, without being deluged by results. At Ancestry.com, search for individual record collections under Search>Card Catalog; at Findmypast.com, look under Search> A-Z of Record Sets.

23

Findmypast's alphabetical collection listing helps you find datasets to search.

24 Work back and forth between record types.

If you're stumped in a census search, try finding an individual in a city directory in the same time period. State censuses, often taken in years ending in 5, can also help. Ancestry.com, with rich collections of both these record types, makes this easy. You can even perform each search in a different browser tab or window, to quickly click back and forth.

25 Work back and forth between sites.

Expanding the previous technique to play one site off against another can speed up your research and uncover facts you might otherwise miss. For example, you might Google a maiden name in quotes paired with the husband's surname, then use the results to search the census in FamilySearch, then try those facts in Find A Grave <www.findagrave.com>. Or maybe you've found a book about your family or their hometown using Google Books <books.google.com>, but not an online edition of the volume there. WorldCat

<www.worldcat.org> can pinpoint the libraries with a copy closest to you; Ancestry.com, FamilySearch or Internet Archive <www.archive.org> might have a free digital version.

26 Retrieve old web pages.

Speaking of the Internet Archive, that site's Wayback Machine <archive.org/web> makes it easy to recapture web pages you formerly found useful for your research but that have since gone offline. It regularly sweeps the Internet and saves a snapshot of all the data found at that point in time—quite possibly including your vanished site.

27 Search in a single step.

Steve Morse's brilliant One-Step Webpages site <www.stevemorse.org> lets you drill down into censuses, passenger lists, vital records and more with a single click. Just fill in your search terms—bypassing multiple-step searches you might encounter on the original site—and jump straight to results. You'll need to be a subscriber to pay sites like Ancestry.com to see full results, but Morse gets you the hits faster with less fuss.

28 Try keyword searches at genealogy websites.

Most major genealogy sites offer the option to search by keyword, but it's easy to forget to take advantage of it. You can fill in ship names, church denominations, occupations, associations (Mason, for example), even titles like Reverend or Doctor to narrow your results and zoom in on the right ancestor. Make sure not to click Exact for keywords if that's an option, though, so you don't miss out on collections without keyword capability.

29 Use names as keywords.

This extreme approach—leaving name fields blank and typing names as keywords instead—sometimes proves effective on sites like Fold3 <www.fold3.com> that scan a lot of “free-form” old documents that lack neat fields for names and other data.

30 Search sideways in your tree.

The principle of “cluster genealogy” holds that your ancestors didn't migrate across the country in isolation, but most often in groups—with family members, friends, co-religionists, neighbors. So if you're stumped in a

search, try going sideways and searching for members of a missing ancestor's “cluster.” Don't limit yourself to immediate family and collateral kin; often neighbors from one census, for example, turn up as neighbors 10 years before in the place they and your family left behind. This approach also can help you sort through similarly named folks: If you're weighing two people with the same name and trying to decide which is “yours,” the one with the same neighbors as in other records is probably Mister Right.

31 Focus on unusual names.

A particularly useful variation on cluster genealogy takes advantage of people you come across with oddball names, even if they aren't your direct kin. Treasure the Zilphas and Jedithans and Florunas in your family tree, especially if you're researching common surnames. Wading through the ocean of John Smiths might be impossible, but if he had a sister Jerusha, you can search for her instead.

32 Dig into collateral relatives.

Sometimes the timing just wasn't right for your direct ancestor to have

created the sort of record you need, but a sibling or cousin at a slightly different time and/or place might be attached to an answer. Suppose your great-great-grandmother died before the family moved to Illinois, or before that state's index of deaths began in 1916. Search instead for her younger brother's death record in Illinois a few years later, which might list his mother's elusive maiden name, your third-great-grandmother.

33 Search for maiden and married names.

Genealogists sometimes overlook the fact that many women lived much of their lives—and usually died—under a husband's surname. Try to learn both, as records created under each name may contain unique clues.

34 Find a Junior or Senior.

Some collections index “Jr” and “Sr” as though they were part of the last name. So if you can't find George Clough Jr., it's worth trying *CloughJr* or *Clough** to see if this indexing quirk is hiding him. On Findmypast (where this can be a problem), try checking “name variants.”

35 Search by relationship.

A good way to round up an ancestor's siblings—or to overcome transcription errors that are obscuring your direct kin—is to search by relationship: Leave the main name and surname fields blank or fill in only the surname, but also fill in the parents' names and/or a spouse's name. This works at Ancestry.com and MyHeritage, but you must specify the type of relationship. At FamilySearch, the Spouse/Parents/Other person field in effect searches the whole household.

36 Narrow the time frame of your results.

Sometimes a search retrieves way too many results and the list includes hits wildly wrong for the period in which your target ancestor lived. But if you don't know or aren't sure of any vital-records dates, you might not want to

The screenshot shows the MyHeritage SuperSearch interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: MyHeritage, About us, Research, Apps, Community, and Support. Below the navigation is a header for "Welcome to SuperSearch™" with "6,898,637,845 historical records". The main search area is titled "Search all records - advanced" and includes a "Hide advanced search" link. The search form is divided into several sections: "Name" with fields for "First and middle name(s)" (containing "Edward"), "Last name" (containing "Norris"), and "Gender" (set to "Any"); "Events" with a "Type" dropdown (set to "Residence"), "Date" fields (Day, Month, Year) (set to "1870"), and "Place" (set to "Hamilton County, Ohio"); "Relatives" with a "Type" dropdown (set to "Spouse"), "First and middle name(s)" (containing "Elizabeth"), and "Last name" fields; and "Keywords" with a text input field. On the right side, there are "Categories" and "Family Trees" sections with various options like "U.S. Census", "MyHeritage Family Trees", etc.

36

Try adding a date in the Any Event field on MyHeritage to narrow the time frame of matching records.

limit your search by them. Try instead filling in a census or residence date (and optionally location) or other year that's in the "sweet spot" of your ancestor's life in the Any option on FamilySearch, Ancestry.com or MyHeritage, or the Other Event blank for Findmypast. That should get rid of the 17th-century hits for your Civil War-era ancestor.

37 Switch database sources.

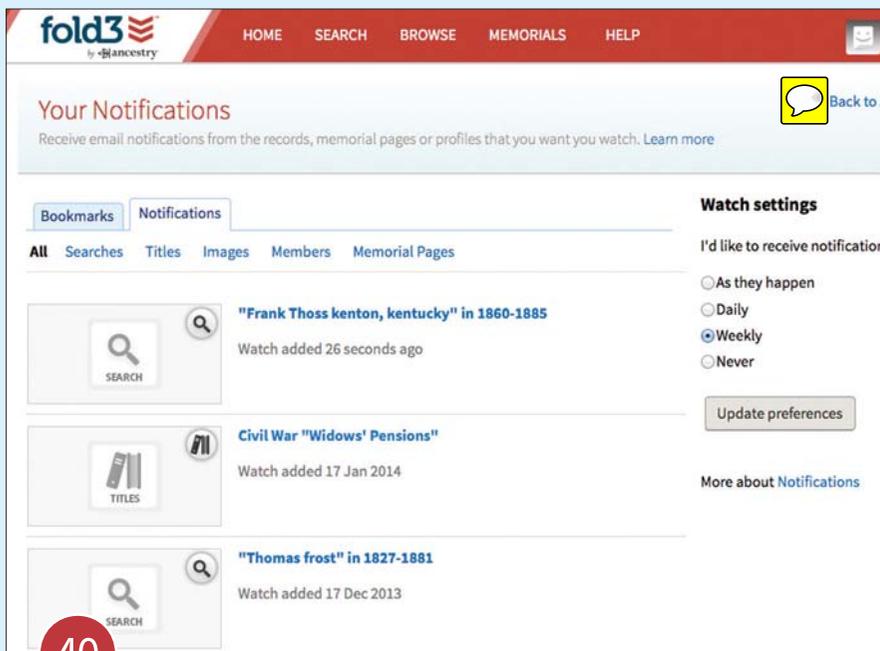
When genealogical data (such as the US census) is available from more than one source, take a search that's frustrating you at one site and try it on the alternate. (The free FamilySearch is a good alternative when subscription sites come up empty.) Different search methodologies or transcriptions might mean that the second resource pops right up with your elusive ancestor.

38 Don't get stuck on a "fact."

You might be certain an ancestor was born in 1863 or immigrated in 1888, or that her married name was Belvedere and her mother was born in Ohio. But if searches on this data keep misfiring, consider the possibility that an ancestor fibbed, fudged the truth, forgot or made a change. Maybe Anne Belvedere shaved a few years off her age at census time, and had taken a second husband you didn't know about. Try searching without each key fact in turn to see if the omission might lead to success.

39 Search someplace else—literally.

Your California kin may have slipped over the border to Nevada to get



40

Use Fold3's "Watch" feature to save your searches on the site and get automatic notifications when matching records are added.

hitched. Or county boundary lines might have changed, putting your North Carolina ancestor's records in a previous parent county. If you can't find your immigrant family at Ellis Island or its predecessor, Castle Garden, consider the possibility that they arrived through a different US port, such as Boston or Baltimore, or even via Canada.

40 Save your searches.

Just because the answers weren't online today doesn't mean they won't be added three months or a year from now. Take advantage of sites like MyHeritage that let you save searches to rerun them, or Fold3's "Watch" feature.

41 Automate your searches.

For that matter, why not outsource your research to the "bots"? Posting your family tree at MyHeritage can get you signed up for regular emails whenever the site finds matches for your ancestors. Ancestry.com hints appear as those leaf icons on your tree; click to explore possible record matches. (Ancestry.com also now sends out hint alert emails.) Create Google Alerts <google.com/alerts> to have Google automatically repeat your favorite searches and send you updates. ■

Contributing editor **DAVID A. FRYSELL** searches the web from Tucson.

MORE ONLINE

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COUNTING UP

Discover your ancestors in online census collections
with these 26 practical search tips.

by RICK CRUME

By my reckoning, US federal census records are the best source of information on American ancestors. Taken every 10 years since 1790, the census reveals names, relationships and occupations—not to mention details on military service, immigration and marriage.

Starting with the 1940 census, you can work your way back through each enumeration to put together a rough outline of your family tree to the early 20th century. The loss of nearly the entire 1890 census was a tremendous blow for genealogists. But get past that gap, and you can continue to mine every-name enumerations back to 1850. While the censuses from 1790 to 1840 list only heads of household, they still provide valuable clues that can lead you to discoveries in other records.

Four huge genealogy websites—yes, the same four we compare beginning on page 18—have the entire collection of US federal census records from 1790 through 1940, complete with digital images of the original records and every-name indexes. (One of them, FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org>, is free.) And if your public library has a subscription to HeritageQuest Online (provided by Ancestry.com), you can go to your library's website, log in with your library card number and access federal census records for free.

The following 26 tips will help you locate your ancestors in the census—despite poor handwriting in some records, the occasional misspelled name and many incorrect transcriptions. Most of these tips are geared toward researching censuses on specific websites, but the first three are universal.



Taken every 10 years since 1790, the census reveals names, relationships and occupations—not to mention details on military service, immigration and marriage.

GENERAL TIPS AND STRATEGIES

1. Try different combinations of search terms.

If searching on first name, last name, birth year and birthplace doesn't work, use different fields, such as the first name and year of birth *combined with* place of residence.

2. Search on abbreviations for given names.

Just in case the search engine doesn't find matches when a name is abbreviated in the original census, try shortened forms of common

names. For example: *Chas* for Charles, *Jas* for James, *Jno* for John, *Robt* for Robert, *Thos* for Thomas and *Wm* for William.

3. Follow up on clues.

When you find dates and places of birth, marriage and death in census records, look for copies of the corresponding records from the county or state for more details. Furthermore, an *Na* in the citizenship column of the census indicates the person was naturalized, so take that as a hint to look for naturalization records and citizenship papers. Likewise, if the census gives a year of immigration or indicates military service, check passenger lists and collections of service and pension files, respectively.

Looking Ahead: The 1950 Census

Mark your calendars: The 1950 census is scheduled to come out on April 1, 2022, 72 years to the day after it was taken. That's still a couple of years away, but you might be curious about what to expect.

The 1950 census asked fewer questions than the 1940 census did. The enumeration recorded responses to just 20 questions, including name, age, address, relationship to head of household, marital status, state or country of birth, occupation and (if foreign-born) whether a naturalized US citizen. A 5-percent sample was asked additional questions, including the country of birth of the person's father and mother and whether the person had served in the US military.

When it was released in 2012, the 1940 census was placed online and made available for free, but indexes took several months to be created. The release of the 1950 census will probably follow the same pattern.

Without an index to the 1950 census, you'll need to know the enumeration district (E.D.) so you can browse records once they're released. To find the E.D. for your ancestor's place of residence, go to the Unified Census ED Finder from Stephen P. Morse and Joel D. Weintraub <www.stevemorse.org/census/unified.html>. Select 1950, a state, county and city or town. Then click Get 1950 ED Number(s).

ANCESTRY.COM

Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com> has the most complete collection of US federal census records and the most powerful tools for searching them. Select Census & Voter Lists from the Search tab, then U.S. Federal Census Collection from the Narrow by Category sidebar on the right. You can search all the federal censuses at once or select a specific year or collection.

4. Save time with hints.

Working in the background, Ancestry.com searches its record collections for census and other records pertaining to people in your Ancestry Member Tree. A green leaf indicates a potential match. Once you verify a match, Ancestry automatically creates a new Residence fact and a source citation, then links them to the record image.

5. Filter your results.

The census search forms include the option to "Match all terms exactly" or to specify how closely each individual term must match. Using the default settings, most of the top matches in a search for *William Fleming Morgan* are just William Morgan without a middle name or initial.



But my relative was usually known as William F. Morgan, so to limit matches to that version of his name, I can enter *William F* in the First & Middle Name(s) box and check just the box for Exact matches on that term. The top three matches appear to be the right guy in the 1880, 1910 and 1930 censuses. On the results page, you can also use the Search Filters sliders to adjust how close the given name, last name, year of birth and place of birth must match.

6. Use a wildcard.

My ancestor John Robertson lived in Worcester, N.Y., from 1826 to 1864. However, he doesn't show up when searching for that name and place in the censuses from 1830 to 1860 even when using the "Sounds like, Similar and Sounded" options to broaden matches on last names. An asterisk wildcard substitutes for zero or more characters, so matches for *Rob*son* could include Robson, Robison, Robinson and Robertson. A wildcard search turns up matches on John Robertson recorded in the 1830 and 1850 censuses of Worcester as John Robinson, the

tip

The National Archives—not the United States Census Bureau—manages the 1790 to 1940 US censuses. For more on how to access these historical headcounts, visit www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/census.

1840 census as "Jno. Robbinson" and the 1860 census as "John Robison."

7. Add keywords.

Searching on a keyword finds matches anywhere in a person's census record transcription, so it covers all the place fields, including the father's and mother's places of birth. Just about everyone with the surname Pennington who was born in New Brunswick, Canada, in the 19th century was a relative of mine, and several migrated to the United States. To find my Pennington relatives in Minnesota, I search on the last name *Pennington* and add Lived In *Minnesota, USA*, plus the keyword "*New Brunswick*" (in

quotation marks to search on the exact phrase). This finds people who were born in New Brunswick or who had at least one parent born there.

8. Add a family member.

You can search the 1870 census with father, mother, spouse or child, and later census years with all those options plus sibling. A 1900 search on *John G. Robertson*, born in about 1845 in New York, produces a match on my relative of that name. From this, I learn he was a fruit-grower with his wife Louisa in San Jose, Calif. Adding Louisa's name to the search (this time, of all censuses) reveals the family in the 1885 state census in Belle Plaine, Iowa.

9. Add parents' birthplaces.

A search of Ancestry.com's US federal census records for my relative William F. Morgan, who was born in 1863 in Pennsylvania, finds him living with his parents and siblings in the 1870 and 1880 censuses of New Brighton, Pa. But later census years show many William Morgans born in about 1863 in Pennsylvania. To zero in, I add

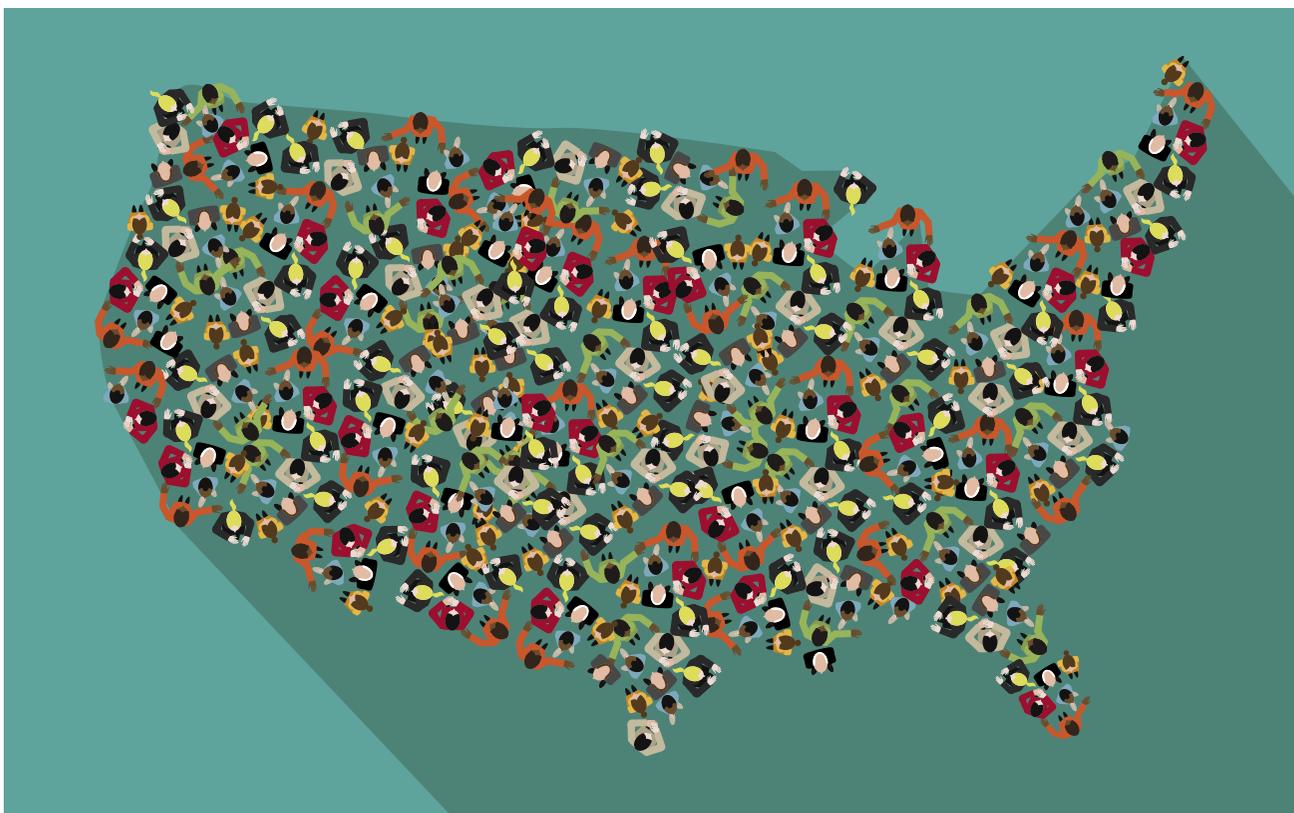
Wales as the father's birthplace and *Pennsylvania* as the mother's to the 1930 census search form, both requiring exact matches. Among the results is a widowed locomotive engineer living in Los Angeles in 1930, which I believe to be a match.

10. Browse the census.

If searching the census doesn't work (and you have a lead about where your ancestor lived), try browsing. Begin by choosing a census year. Then select a state, county and locality in the Browse This Collection box, and click on the link for the images. Use the left and right arrows to move from image to image.

11. Search the mortality schedules.

These list everyone who died in the 12 months prior to the 1850 and 1880 federal censuses (i.e., between June 1 of the preceding year and May 31 of the census year), plus a few states in 1885. The 1880 mortality schedule for Brooklyn, N.Y., shows that my relative John F. Robertson died of stomach cancer in February 1880 at age 60.



12. Search the 1890 veterans schedules.

While only a small fraction of the regular 1890 census still exists, the special veterans census taken that year <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8667> has extant records for DC and states alphabetically from Kentucky through Wyoming. Among the records, I find my relative Henry J. Hall, whose listed details include company, enlistment date and discharge date. With that information, I can get copies of his Civil War service and pension files, which will provide many more details on his military service and life after the war.

13. Search the agricultural schedules.

Part of the “U.S. Census Non-Population Schedules, New York, 1850–1880” collection <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1791>, the agricultural schedules include farmers’ names and statistics about their farms. The 1860 agricultural schedule provides details on my ancestor Jonathan Hall’s farm, giving rich information about his life there: acreage (both “improved” and “unimproved”), farm value, livestock inventory and value, and the value of implements and machinery. The listing also tallies the year’s harvest, down to the last bushel of wheat and pound of butter.

FAMILYSEARCH

From the home page <www.familysearch.org>, select Records from the Search tab to search all the indexed records on FamilySearch, including US federal census records. To search an individual census, enter *United States Census* in the Collection Title box under Find a Collection, then click on a title from the matches.

14. Scan selected census years at once.

From Search>Records, click the United States on the map. Then click on United States of America and, under Indexed Historical Records, click on Show All next to Filter by Collection. Scroll down to the collections beginning with the words “United States Census” and select the checkbox for the census year(s) you want to search. For example, you could select the 1920, 1930 and 1940 censuses. Scroll back up to the search form, enter a name and any other search terms, then click search. Results will include entries from only the censuses you’ve selected.



David A. Fryxell’s article “Find Ancestors Hiding in the Census” gives even more strategies for tracking down hard-to-find people in censuses <www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/hiding-in-the-census>.

15. Work from the FamilySearch Family Tree.

Instead of filling out census search forms, go to someone’s profile in the Family Tree and click the Details tab. From the right-hand “Search Records” column, click FamilySearch. This will automatically plug the person’s information in a search form. To view just census results, scroll down to “Restrict Records By” on the left, then check the box for “Census, Residence, and Lists” under Type. Click Update to filter your results.

16. Fill out search forms carefully.

The census searches use generic forms, with some fields that don’t work with census records. When searching censuses from 1790 through 1840, focus on the fields for First Names, Last Names and Residence Place. For later census years, you can also use the fields for Birth Place and Birth Year. Usually, you should specify a range of at least two or three years for Birth Year so you don’t miss relevant matches.

17. Look for relatives *with* relatives.

Because only later censuses asked about relationship to head of household, the option to search with a relationship (spouse, father, mother or other person), works only on the 1880 censuses and later. You can also search these later census years by father’s birthplace and mother’s birthplace. Under “Search with a relationship,” click on Father or Mother and enter the birthplace. When you search on a parent’s birthplace, you can leave the field for the parent’s name blank.

FINDMYPAST

Though perhaps best known for its UK records collections, Findmypast <www.findmypast.com> offers US federal censuses as well. You can find them listed among the site’s full list of record sets <search.findmypast.com/historical-records>.



Great! You've found a bunch of details about your ancestor. Now what? Learn how to interpret information from the census <www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/cracking-census-code>.

18. Scan multiple census years at once.

To search more than one US federal census year at a time, select Census, Land & Substitutes from the Search tab, then the Census subcategory on the left. Click Browse Record Set (next to the Record Set field) and enter *US census* in the Search Filters box. Click on all the years you want to search, then click Apply filters.

19. Use wildcards.

An asterisk can stand in for zero or more characters. A search on *John Robertson* in Schoharie County, N.Y., produces no matches in the 1810 and 1820 censuses, even when I search for name variants. But using a wildcard, a search for *John Rob*son* should return any name starting with Rob and ending in *-son*. Indeed, the search turns up “John Robinson” in the 1810 and 1820 censuses of Middleburg, Schoharie County, N.Y.

20. Add a family member.

A search on Thomas Morgan, born in 1818 in Wales, produces 18 results. To focus on my relative, I click on Advanced Options, enter *Martha* in the Other Member's First Name(s) box and click on View Results. The first one is my second great-granduncle, a 52-year-old grocer born in Wales and living with his wife Martha and their four children in the 1870 census of New Brighton, Pa.

21. Add a keyword.

You can search the 1850 and later censuses by keyword, and it covers the father's birthplace in the censuses of 1880 and later. A search of the 1930 census for *Minnie E. Smith*, born in 1869 in Pennsylvania produces 83 matches. Add the keyword *Wales*, and it zeros in on my relative, apparently the only one whose father was born in Wales. She was age 61 and living with her sister and brother-in-law in Los Angeles.

MYHERITAGE

To search MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> for all the US federal census records from 1790 to 1940 at once, select Census Records from the Research tab, then U.S. Census under “In Census & Voter Lists.”

22. Omit township and county.

When entering a township or a county in the Residence Place box, do not include the words *county* or *township*. Enter *Clay, Minnesota* or *Riverton, Clay, Minnesota*, not *Riverton Township, Clay County, Minnesota*.

23. Take advantage of Record Matches.

A brown icon beside a name in your family tree on MyHeritage indicates that potential record matches, such as census records, have been found for that person. Click on the icon to review and either confirm or deny the match, then (if a match) save to your tree.

24. Explore similar names.

Using the default search options, a search for my ancestor *Tobias Schaubhut* in the whole census collection produces just a few matches, none of which are my ancestor. So I need to revise my search. This time, I select all the options under “match similar names” beneath the last name field, then click the Search button again. That expands the results, including Tobias “Shafwood” in the 1800 census. While the spelling is way off, I'm sure he's my ancestor based on his other details.

25. Add a keyword.

You can search on keywords for any census year (as well as occupation in the 1880 census). Search on my last name *Crume* and the keyword *teamster*, and I find my great-grandfather John Crume, whose occupation is recorded as teamster (someone who drives a team of draft animals such as horses or oxen) in the 1880 census of Mankato, Minnesota.

26. Add a relative.

The advanced search options for the 1880 and later censuses let you search on the name of the target person's father, mother, spouse, child or sibling. Searching for my relative *James S. Robertson*, born in 1853 in New York, I find him and his wife Jennie in the 1880 census of South Worcester, N.Y. The family moved to Minnesota, but I lost track of them around 1900. Add spouse *Jennie* to the 1900 census search, and I find the family in Schuyler City, Neb. ●

Rick Crume began his research years ago, scrolling through census records on microfilm.

THE ULTIMATE GENEALOGY WEBSITES GUIDE

These guides to the eight most useful genealogy websites will help you search better and find the information you need.



BY RICK CRUME

We all know how quickly online resources grow and change. The tips and tricks in these eight guides help you better navigate the key genealogy websites to get solid results that will move your research forward. In particular, the four largest genealogy websites—Ancestry, FamilySearch, Findmypast and MyHeritage—have enormous collections of family trees and historical records. The chart on pages 20 and 21 shows that many of the key resources, such as US federal census records, New York passenger lists and WWI draft registration cards, appear on all four sites. To help you know which site will provide the most help, here is a comparison of the “Big Four.”

Ancestry is the only site with a complete index to all the extant WWII draft registration cards now open to the public. Created in collaboration with FamilySearch, Ancestry’s U.S. Wills and Probate Records <www.ancestry.com/will-probate-records> has images of more than 170 million documents from all 50 states. It’s by far the largest indexed collection of American probate records, though the index doesn’t cover everyone mentioned in the records. Ancestry also has many more historical records than its rivals, plus the largest number of DNA test results.

FamilySearch, for its part, has the FamilySearch Family Tree, a collaborative, worldwide project that strives to have just one profile for each person who has ever lived. It’s a terrific tool to organize, preserve and share your family tree, photos, records and audio recordings. Another collaborative feature, the FamilySearch Wiki <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page>, has articles on thousands of topics, including how to research your family history in many different countries and locate records both online and in traditional sources. FamilySearch is also the only one of the “Big Four” to be totally free.

Findmypast has the National Burial Index for England & Wales, with references to burials in early 19th-century church records. While the other three sites have transcriptions of Scottish census records, Findmypast has images with indexes for all Scottish censuses from 1841 to 1901. (Another pay site, Scotland’s People <www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk>, has those records, too, as well as the 1911 census.) Findmypast also has a huge collection of British and Irish newspapers, plus many from the United States, Canada and other countries.

What sets **MyHeritage** apart is its international focus. Its website and Family Tree Builder software are available in 42 languages. Put your family tree on the site, and you’ll automatically get matches in international record collections and in family trees submitted by users from around the world. You might even find DNA matches overseas, with more than 1 million kits in MyHeritage DNA’s database.

The mini cheat sheets here cover these four megasites, plus three large newspaper sites (Chronicling America, GenealogyBank and Newspapers.com) and one site that focuses on military records (Fold3). Read on to discover new and better ways to dig deeper and find more information about your ancestors.

The “Big Four” Genealogy Websites: Key Resources



	ANCESTRY	FAMILYSEARCH	FINDMYPAST	MYHERITAGE
DNA TEST RESULTS IN DATABASE	More than 10 million	None	Unknown	Over 1.8 million
FAMILY TREES	100 million family trees with more than 12 billion ancestral profiles and 330 million photos	1.18 billion ancestral profiles in the Family Tree, 27.7 million photos	Searching all trees not yet available	43 million family trees with 3.2 billion ancestral profiles
HISTORICAL RECORDS	20 billion	4.4 billion	2 billion	9.3 billion
Census records				
Federal censuses, 1790–1940	★	★	★	★
State censuses	★	★	○	★
California voter registrations, 1866–1910	★	★	○	★
Immigration records				
New York passenger and crew lists, 1820–1957	★	★	★	★
US passport applications, 1795–1925	★	★	★	○
Naturalization records	★	★	★	★
Military records				
Revolutionary War pension applications	★	○	★	★ Index only
Civil War pension index (Union soldiers)	★	★	★	○
Confederate records	★	★	★	★ Only a few
WWI draft registration cards	★ 1917–1918 (first, second & third registrations)	★ 1917–1918 (first, second & third registrations)	★	★
WWII draft registration cards	★ 1942 (fourth registration)	★ 1942 (fourth registration; incomplete index)	○	○
Probate records				
Wills, probate records and indexes	★ More than 170 million wills and probate records from all 50 states	★ Many probate records, mostly un-indexed	★ Only a few	★ Only a few
Vital records				
State birth, marriage and death records and indexes	★	★	★	★
Social Security Death Index	★ 1935–2014	★ 1935–2014	★ 1935–2012	★ 1935–2014
Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936–2007	★	○	○	○

	ANCESTRY	FAMILYSEARCH	FINDMYPAST	MYHERITAGE
CANADA				
Censuses	★ 1851–1921	★ 1851–1911	★ 1851–1911	★ 1851–1921
Quebec vital and church records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968	★	○	○	○
GERMANY				
Church records of baptism, marriage & burial	★	★	★ Only a few	★
GREAT BRITAIN				
Church records of baptism, marriage & burial	★	★	★	★
English & Welsh civil registration indexes back to 1837	★	★	★	★
Census records, 1841–1911	★ 1841–1911	★ 1841–1911 (indexes only, 1901–1911)	★ 1841–1911	★ 1841–1911
1939 Register for England and Wales	★	○	★	★ Index only
Probate Registry index for England and Wales	★ 1858–1966, 1973–1995	★ 1858–1957	★ 1858–1959	★ 1858–1943
Scottish census transcriptions	★ 1841–1891 (transcriptions)	★ 1841–1891 (transcriptions)	★ 1841–1901 (with images)	★ 1841–1861 (transcriptions)
National Burial Index for England and Wales	○	○	★	○
IRELAND				
Catholic church records	★ 1655–1915	○	★ 1589–1916	○
Indexes to civil registration of births and deaths	★ 1864–1958	★ 1845–1958	★ 1864–1958	○
1901 and 1911 censuses (links to the National Archives of Ireland's website)	★	★	★	★
BOOKS AND JOURNALS				
NEWSPAPERS				
	★ Many from the United States, plus some from Canada, Europe and Australia. Ancestry owns a separate site, Newspapers.com.	○	★ Many from Great Britain, Ireland, the United States, Canada and elsewhere	★ United States and Australia
RESEARCH GUIDES AND HELP				
	★ Free message boards < www.ancestry.com/boards > and free research guides < support.ancestry.com/s/article/Free-Research-Guides >	★ More than 88,000 articles in the Research Wiki < www.familysearch.org/wiki >	★ Brief guides under the Help tab	○

Ancestry

SEARCH TIPS

➔ Create an Ancestry Member Tree to simplify searching for records. Just click on a name in your tree's pedigree or family view, then click the Search button. You also can click Search from a relative's profile page.

➔ If you have an Ancestry online tree, you can fill out search forms automatically (see below). As you type in the First & Middle Name(s) box on a search form, you'll be prompted to select a tree (if you have more than one) and a name from your

tree. The search form will be filled in with information from your tree.

➔ Carefully examine ancestor hints in your tree before accepting them. Hints cover only about 10 percent of Ancestry's historical record collections, so you also should search the site's databases.

➔ Search specific record collections or categories to better target your search and make results more manageable. Use the Card Catalog and the Search dropdown menu to find promising records. For example,

Martin C. Theilmann was a notorious swindler near San Francisco. A global search for his name finds California voter registers, city directories and an 1891 newspaper article about his arrest for mail fraud. Then I viewed a list of California-specific records by selecting All Collections from the Search menu, looking under Explore by Location, and choosing California. The category California Wills, Probates, Land, Tax & Criminal, has a database called Prison and Correctional Records, 1851–1950. Searching it shows that M. C. Theilmann, a 47-year-old bookkeeper born in Denmark, began serving an 18-month sentence in San Quentin on Oct. 26, 1891. It also gives a physical description.

➔ To capture ancestral records that don't exactly match what you've been told or are hard to read, use flexible search options including date ranges, sounds-alike name filters, and search wildcards (* stands in for zero to five characters; ? stands in for one character).

ONLINE TREES

➔ You can create a public or private online tree with a free basic registration, and invite other people to collaborate on it with you. You need a paid membership to view most of Ancestry's historical records and attach them to your tree, but a few records on Ancestry are free.

➔ Download any records you attach to your tree during a free-access offer, as the records will become subscription-only when the offer ends. Or if you sync your tree with RootsMagic or Family Tree Maker software, records and information in your tree will automatically be backed up on your hard drive.

Search

First & Middle Name(s)
Martin Christensen
 Exact...

Last Name
Theilmann
 Exact...

Place your ancestor might have lived
City, County, State, Country

Birth Year
1844
 Exact +/-...

Search Show fewer options ^ Match all terms exactly

Add event: Birth Marriage Death Lived In Any Event More v

	Year	Location
Birth	1844 <input type="checkbox"/> Exact +/-...	Denmark <input type="checkbox"/> Exact to country
Marriage	1875 <input type="checkbox"/> Exact +/-...	Salinas, Monterey, California, United States <input type="checkbox"/> Exact to...
Death	1908 <input type="checkbox"/> Exact +/-...	Oakland, Alameda, California, United States <input type="checkbox"/> Exact to...

Add family member: Father Mother Sibling Spouse Child

Spouse	First & Middle Name(s) Lillie Dell <input type="checkbox"/> Exact	Last Name Bowers <input type="checkbox"/> Exact
Child	Cora	Theilmann

FAST FACTS

<www.ancestry.com>

Subscription

- US records: \$19.99/month, \$99/six months
- US & international records: \$34.99/month, \$149/six months
- DNA test: \$99

Main features

- DNA testing with integrated family trees, historical migration data and information about genetic traits
- Online family trees with hints to others' trees and major record collections
- Historical records from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Mexico and Australia

➔ You'll get hints to matching ancestor profiles in others' trees, but only those that are attached to sources on Ancestry. Most profiles without Ancestry sources don't show up in search results. If you start a tree by uploading a GEDCOM file, those profiles won't be searchable on Ancestry unless you attach sources from the site.

➔ Ancestry online trees are indexed infrequently, so it could take many months for your new tree or changes to an existing tree to show up in others' searches on Ancestry.

DNA TESTING

➔ If you link your DNA results to your public tree on Ancestry, it'll be easier to determine how you're related to matches. The site also can use your tree data to place you in DNA Circles (groups of matches whose trees have the same ancestor) or send you New Ancestor discoveries (hints to existing DNA Circles you match).

➔ To link a tree, go to your DNA home page and click Link to Tree, then select a tree (or click Start Tree if

you don't yet have one). Find yourself in the tree and click Link DNA results. To change the link, click Settings on your DNA home page, then click Edit under Family Tree Linking.

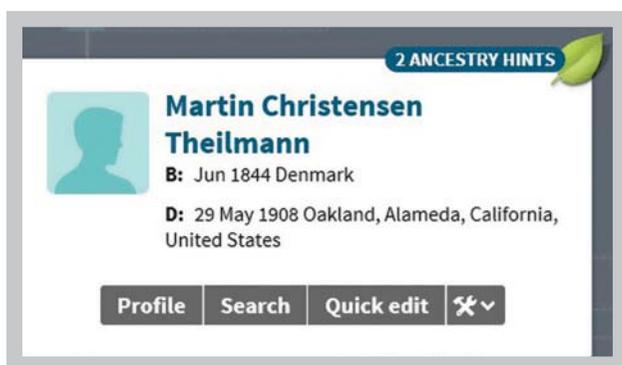
➔ You need a paid Ancestry membership to view DNA matches' trees and surnames, be placed in DNA Circles and get New Ancestor Discoveries. You don't need a paid membership to view and contact matches or to get ethnicity estimates.

GETTING HELP

➔ Search Ancestry support articles at <support.ancestry.com/s> and view customer service contact information at <support.ancestry.com/s/contact-us>.

➔ Find Ancestry on Facebook at <www.facebook.com/AncestryUS> and Twitter at <twitter.com/ancestry>.

➔ The Ancestry Channel on YouTube has more than 1,000 how-to videos from Ancestry and third parties. Subscribe at <www.youtube.com/user/AncestryCom>.



Chronicling America

BASIC SEARCH TIPS

➔ The Search Pages tab gives you basic search options. You can search on one or more terms and limit the search by state and range of years. A search on an uncommon last name, Shaubut, produces more than 600 matches—all references to my relatives. Use the options at the top of the results page to limit matches to Minnesota newspapers from 1883 to 1883 (just one year), then hit the Go button to narrow results to seven. One of them, a Swedish-language newspaper published in St. Paul in January 1883, has a death notice for my ancestor Elisabeth Shaubut who died in Mankato at age 86. I used Google Translate <translate.google.com> to translate it.

➔ Use quotation marks to search on a phrase. A search on *Elisabeth Shaubut* produces only the match in the Swedish-language newspaper, but a search on a different spelling, *Elizabeth Shaubut*, turns up a death notice in an English-language newspaper. According to it, she died at age 85 and had been a resident of Mankato since 1856.

➔ If you're stuck, be sure to try alternate spellings of a name. Note: Chronicling America doesn't support wildcards.

ADVANCED SEARCH TIPS

➔ The Advanced Search tab gives you more search options and makes it easy to search on multiple terms. John H. Pennington, often known as J. H. Pennington, left Minnesota in 1881 and moved around a lot, but I've been able to track him down using newspapers. Entering *J. H. Pennington* in the Phrase search box and a range of years from 1881 to 1909 produces more than 200 matches, most of which are the wrong guy.

FAST FACTS

<chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

Subscriptions

None (free)

Main features

- Digitized US newspapers from 1789 to 1963
- US newspaper directory, 1690 to the present

➔ To revise the search, click on the Advanced Search tab. By adding terms closely associated with your search target, you can focus your search on the most relevant articles. J. H. Pennington lived in Colombia for a while and had a series of wives and affairs. Adding the terms *Colombia bigamy divorce* in the box for Any of the Words and clicking the Search button narrows the matches to just a handful. One of the results, an article in the Dec. 23, 1895, *San Francisco Call*, says that J. H. Pennington was “a fine, military-looking gentleman, who had money to spend freely” and was “a visitor at all the exclusive clubs.” In Colombia, he married the daughter of a rich planter, but her parents soon discovered that he still had a wife in California. Charged with bigamy, he escaped to New York.

The Colombian government sought his immediate extradition. As this example shows, newspaper archives can add a lot of color and context to your family history.

THE NEWSPAPER DIRECTORY

➔ To locate copies of newspapers published in your ancestors' hometowns, click on US Newspaper Directory, 1690–Present. You can browse by title or search on place of publication, years, language and other options. If a library has a “microfilm service copy” of a newspaper, it might be available on interlibrary loan. Check with your public library.

➔ The directory doesn't indicate if a newspaper is online. Before you order a microfilmed newspaper on interlibrary loan, try to determine if it's online anywhere. Check the major newspaper sites, such as GenealogyBank <www.genealogybank.com> and Newspapers.com <www.newspapers.com>, as well as online newspaper directories, such as Online Historical Newspapers <sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite> and Wikipedia's list of online newspaper archives <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_online_newspaper_archives>.

FamilySearch

SEARCH TIPS

➔ You can't search everything at once on FamilySearch, so take time to explore the site. Hover your mouse cursor over Search at the top of any page to see resources and search options, including the following resources.

➔ Choose Records to search historical records from around the world. To view a list of individual record collections, including browse-only record images that haven't yet been indexed by name, look near the search form for a link to Browse All Published Collections.

➔ Choose Family Tree, then click the Find button to search profiles in the collaborative Family Tree. It's designed to avoid duplication and have just one profile for each ancestral person.

➔ Choose Genealogies to search millions of family trees that users

FAST FACTS

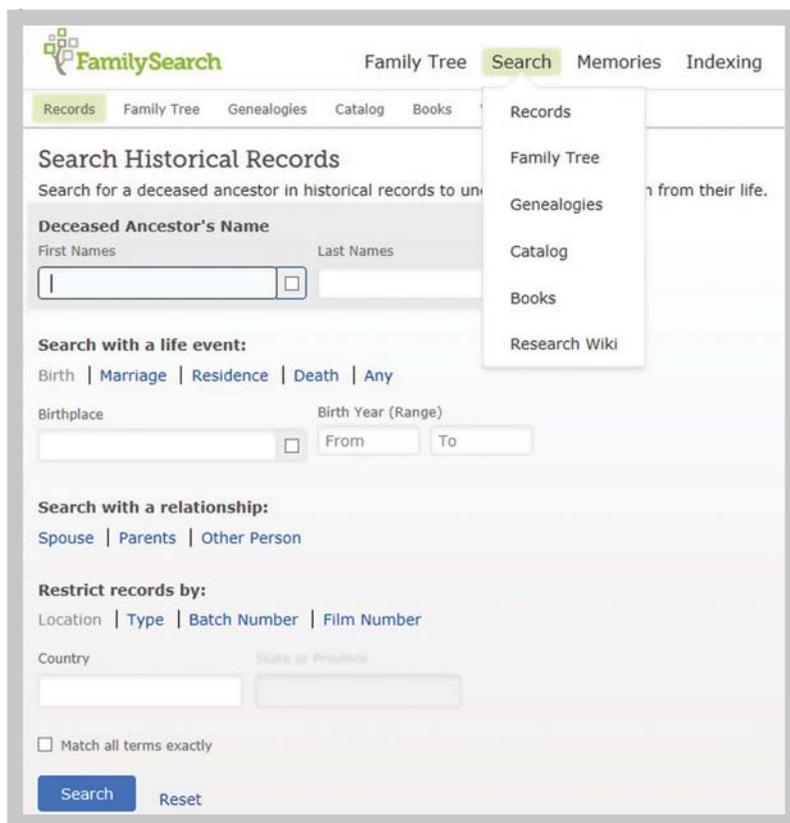
<www.familysearch.org>

Subscriptions

- Public: free, registration required
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints members (access to digitized items that are otherwise restricted for viewing in a FamilySearch Center): free, registration required

Main features

- FamilySearch Family Tree with user-contributed photos and documents
- Historical records from the United States, Canada, Europe and elsewhere
- User-contributed genealogies
- Digitized family history books
- Research Wiki of how-to articles



have uploaded. Keep in mind these trees aren't independently verified.

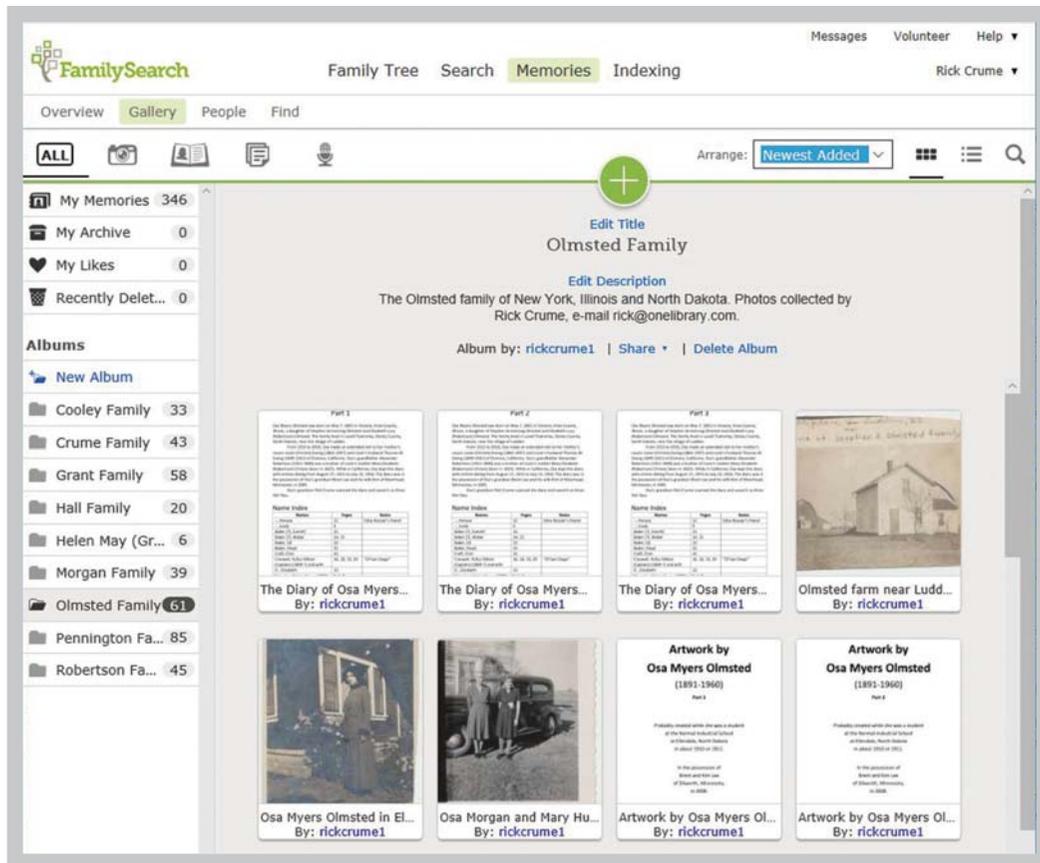
➔ Click Catalog to search for descriptions of records, books and other genealogical materials held at the Family History Library and sometimes at branch FamilySearch Centers. Start with a place search for towns, counties and states where your family lived. A camera icon indicates catalog entries that link to digitized versions of the item on the FamilySearch website—including records that aren't yet searchable via the Records search.

➔ Choose Books to search the text of more than 350,000 digitized family histories, county histories, gazetteers and other genealogy publications. Some books are viewable from home; for others, a message will direct you to access it from a computer at a FamilySearch Center.

MORE FAMILYSEARCH TOOLS

➔ Click Memories on the FamilySearch home page to organize, preserve and share digitized family photos, documents, stories and audio in FamilySearch memories. Upload images and annotate them with dates, places and descriptions. Tag faces in your pictures, and they'll be linked to the corresponding persons' profiles in the Family Tree.

➔ Memories works with PDF, JPG, TXT, MP3, PNG or TIF files, of up to 15MB each. I scanned my grandmother's diary, added an introduction and an index of names, and used Adobe Acrobat to combine all those pages into three PDF files. I split the PDF into three files under 15MB, then linked them to my grandmother's Family Tree profile and to the profiles of all the people mentioned in the



diary. I've also scanned autograph albums, an autobiography, family Bible pages, letters and Civil War pension files. I saved them all as PDF files, uploaded them to Memories and linked them to profiles in the Family Tree. Now they'll be accessible to anyone researching those people.

➔ You can organize your uploaded files into albums in your Memories Gallery and share links to individual Memories and albums. See my Olmsted family album at <www.familysearch.org/photos/gallery/album/391553>.

➔ To add ancestors to the Family Tree, choose Tree from the Family Tree dropdown menu. You'll be prompted to add yourself, your parents and so on. The site will search

to see if each person is already in the tree (note that anyone can change any relative's profile in the tree). On a person's page, click on the Time Line tab to see life events, add new ones, and view their locations on map. Click on the Show button to select the types of events and relationships to display here. This helps you understand your ancestor's life and spot missing events and possible errors.

➔ Have fun with family information and photos at FamilySearch Discovery <www.familysearch.org/discovery>. Compare-a-Face, for example, analyzes pictures of you and your ancestors to determine whom you most resemble. You also can record a story and (coming soon as of this publication) add yourself to historical photos.

GETTING HELP

➔ For questions about using the FamilySearch website, search the Help Center <www.familysearch.org/ask/landing>. View FamilySearch contact information, send a message or start a live chat at <www.familysearch.org/ask/help>.

➔ To access more than 88,000 articles about how to research in countries around the world, search the completely free Research Wiki <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page> for a place, topic or record type.

➔ To find a local FamilySearch Center staffed with knowledgeable volunteers, visit <www.familysearch.org/locations>.

Findmypast

SEARCH TIPS

➔ Get hints for historical records. Simply create a family tree on Findmypast or import a GEDCOM file. Findmypast automatically provides hints to potential matches for your ancestors in its records database.

➔ Eventually, Findmypast will make it possible to search other users' family trees. Until that long-awaited feature is finally implemented, you might turn to Findmypast's sister site, Genes Reunited <www.genesreunited.co.uk>, which has more than 236 million names in family trees, many with connections to Great Britain and Ireland.

RECORD COLLECTIONS

➔ Zero in on the records most likely to pertain to your ancestors. To find a relevant collection, select A-Z of Record Sets from the Search tab. Under Showing Record Sets From, select a country or select World to display an alphabetical list of all

FAST FACTS

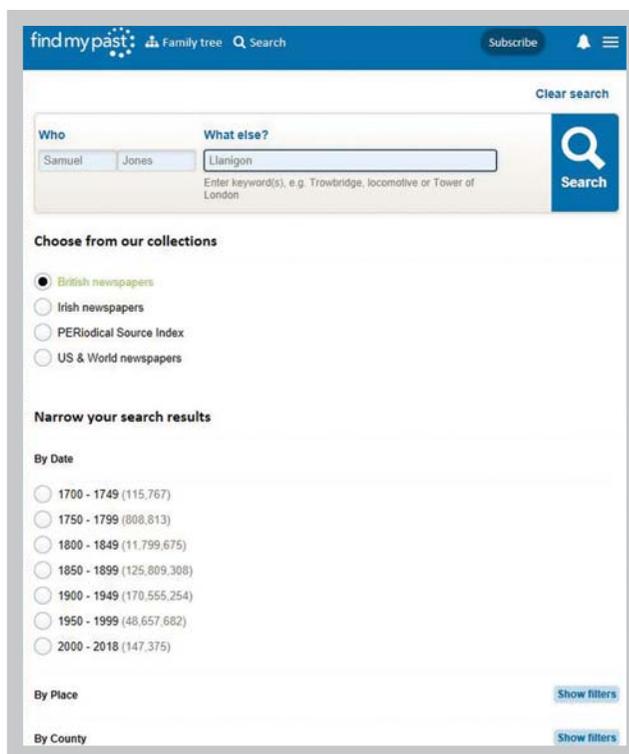
<www.findmypast.com>

Subscriptions

- Essential British & Irish (including US, UK and Irish vital records): \$14.95/month or \$129/year
- Ultimate British & Irish (the above, plus UK and Irish military records, British military records, and wills and probate records): \$19.95/month or \$179/year
- Pay-per-view credits: 100 credits for \$14.95; 300 credits for \$37.95; 900 credits for \$82.95
- DNA test: \$99, through Findmypast's partner Living DNA

Main features

Historical records and newspapers from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and elsewhere



record sets. For instance, to find collections from Norfolk County, England, first show record sets from England. Below that, a box appears where you can filter the record sets by county. Click Show All to display all the counties, then select Norfolk. The matches include collections that are national in scope, as well as collections that focus on Norfolk County.

➔ Use keywords to more quickly find collections. For example, to find collections specific to Norfolk County, select record sets from England, enter *Norfolk* in the search box at the top of the page, and press enter. This displays collections from England with Norfolk in the title.

➔ A global search doesn't produce matches in the Newspapers & Periodicals category, so you need to search in that category separately. Try searching the Newspapers records category for a name, plus a place of residence or another term closely associated

with your relative. My ancestor Samuel Jones, for instance, lived in the parish of Llanigon, Breconshire, Wales, so I clicked on Newspaper records, selected the British newspapers collection and searched on his first and last names plus *Llanigon* as a keyword. The 18 matches include an article announcing an auction of the belongings of the recently deceased Samuel Jones.

LIVING DNA TIE-IN

➔ Findmypast has a partnership with Living DNA, a genetics firm whose DNA test identifies specific regions in Great Britain and Ireland where your ancestors lived. Click the DNA tab on Findmypast.com, then on the link for the free DNA upload. Upload your raw DNA results from any of the major companies to get free matches when Living DNA's Family Networks service launches. You can later upgrade your account to get an ethnicity estimate.

Fold3

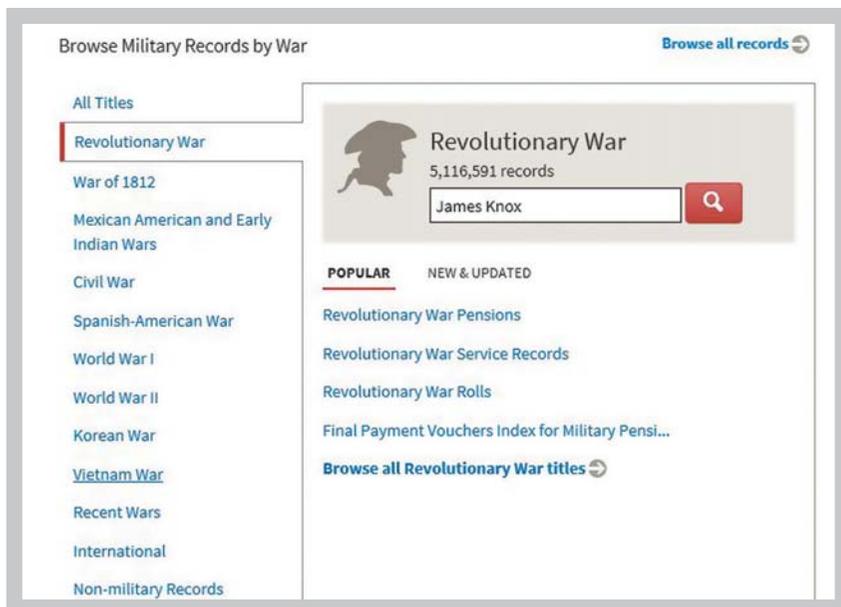
SEARCH TIPS

➔ You can search all of Fold3 for free, and you can view some records for free. To see a complete list of Fold3's record collections, click the Browse tab, then View Title List in the upper right-hand corner. Free collections are marked with the word Free in green. Click on "the" or in a circle for more information on a collection. For example, Fold3 has digitized about three-fourths of War of 1812 pension files, and they are free to view at <go. fold3.com/1812pensions>. Other free collections include all international titles, such as British Army WWI service and pension records and Australian service records for World Wars I and II.

➔ You can get free access to Fold3 at subscribing libraries and FamilySearch Centers. Find a FamilySearch Center at <www.familysearch.org/locations>.

➔ Use indexes to look for records that haven't been digitized. For example, Fold3 is currently digitizing original military records at the US National Archives, and that project might take years to complete. In the meantime, check Fold3's digitized index cards for the War of 1812 and Civil War pensions. If the records you need haven't been digitized yet, order copies of the original pension files directly from the National Archives <www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records>.

➔ Annotate records. When you find a record of interest, use the plus button in the image viewer toolbar at the top. Select the part of the image you'd like to annotate. Then choose name, date, location, transcription or comment from the options at the top and fill in the corresponding information. For example, if a record refers to a



FAST FACTS

<www.fold3.com>

Subscription

\$7.95/month or \$79.95/year; discounts for Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com subscribers

Main features

US military records from the Revolutionary War to the present

woman by her married surname, you could add her maiden name. These annotations become searchable, and others interested in that record can contact you through the site. (Note that the plus button on the right enlarges the image.)

FOLD3 AND ANCESTRY

➔ Ancestry owns Fold3, and you can get a discount on a combined membership to Ancestry, Newspapers.com Basic and Fold3.

➔ Many resources that require a paid subscription on Fold3 are also on Ancestry. Both services have the

same key military records, including Revolutionary War pension and service files; indexes to service and pension files from the War of 1812 and the Civil War; and draft registration cards for World War I and World War II (fourth registration, 1942).

➔ Key records on Fold3 but not Ancestry include: Union and Confederate Civil War service records, Civil War "Widows' Pension" files, and FBI cases files from 1785 to 1972. Fold3 has an index and images for the WWII draft registration cards from the first registration in 1940 ("Young Men," ages 21 to 36), while Ancestry has just the index. The Civil War service and pension files and the WWII draft registration cards are long-term digitization projects and not yet complete. Fold3's indexes are also much more complete than Ancestry's. Fold3's Civil War "Widows' Pensions" collection indexes not only the names of the soldier and widow or other pensioner, but also children and other dependents. Fold3 also indexes all the names in Revolutionary War pension files, such as wives and children.

GenealogyBank

SEARCH TIPS

➔ Wildcard searching on GenealogyBank is unreliable, but you can use the Boolean operator *OR*. Think of keywords closely associated with your target person and use them with *OR* to find the most relevant matches. In the case of John H. Pennington, two such words are *divorce* and *bigamy*. A search on the first name *John H*, the last name *Pennington* and the keyword *bigamy OR divorce* for the range 1880 to 1909 produces five matches. (Without *OR*, the search would include only results that have both keywords.)

➔ GenealogyBank has partnered with FamilySearch to index obituaries. You can search obituaries on either site, but the indexes are different. The GenealogyBank index covers only the obituaries themselves, but the still-incomplete FamilySearch index (called “United States, GenealogyBank Obituaries, 1980–2014” <www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2333694>) includes other names mentioned in them, such as those of surviving relatives. Search each using different information: GenealogyBank on the deceased’s name and to view the full obituary, and the free FamilySearch collection to find other names in the obituary.

➔ GenealogyBank has many newspapers that have an ethnic focus, including some foreign-language titles. You can limit your search to newspapers published for a particular ethnic group. Scroll down almost any page on the site and, under Genealogy Resources, click one of the ethnicity-specific options (African-American Newspapers, German-American Ancestry, etc.). You’ll see a search form with boxes for first and last names. Click on Advanced Search to add keywords or a date range.

FAST FACTS

<www.genealogybank.com>

Subscription

\$19.95/month or \$69.95/year

Main features

9,000 newspaper titles from all 50 states, dating from 1690 to the present

➔ If you have a date and place but can’t find the records you’re looking for, consider browsing individual newspapers. Go to the home page, select Newspapers by State from the Browse menu then choose a state and newspaper. Enter a common word, such as *the*, in the keyword box. Enter a date range like 06/03/1809 to 06/10/1809, then click the Search button. Sort results by Oldest First so they’re in chronological order. Display an article with the date you want to browse in a new window. On the left, click Pages to List all pages in this issue. To browse the whole issue, you might start by clicking on Page 1. To go to another page, you have to click on Pages again and select the page number. When you’re done

with that issue, close the window. To search another date, go back to your search results.

USING COLLECTIONS

➔ Hover over Collections at the top of a page, and you’ll see several options. Among them, you can search subsets of GenealogyBank’s historical newspaper database: birth records, marriage records, passenger lists and historical (1704–1977) obituaries. Choose one of these options, and your search results will be limited to articles tagged as that type(s). Note that these Collections don’t include all birth records, marriage records, passenger lists and obituaries in the database’s newspapers, and some articles are tagged incorrectly. You’ll still want to search the entire newspaper archive to cover all your bases.

➔ You can also search for more recent obituaries. Click the Collections tab and select recent newspaper obituaries (1977–present) to search more than 250 million obituaries. Since the database updates daily, some obituaries are listed a day before they actually appear in newspapers.

The screenshot shows the GenealogyBank search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: Search, Browse, Collections, and Help. On the right, there are links for My Folder and Rick. The main search form has the following fields and options:

- FIRST NAME: JH
- LAST NAME: Pennington
- Exact Name Search:
- DATE RANGE OR DATE: 1880 TO 1909
- Use a specific date:
- KEYWORDS: bigamy OR divorce
- Exclude these keyword:
- STATE: All States (dropdown)
- CITY: All Cities (dropdown)
- NEWSPAPER: All Newspapers (dropdown)
- COLLECTIONS: All Collections (dropdown)
- Search button: Search
- Simple Search link: Simple Search <

MyHeritage

SEARCH TIPS

➔ To manually search the historical record collections and family trees on MyHeritage, select Search All Records from the Research tab to open SuperSearch. To narrow your search, select a category on the right, such as census records or family trees.

➔ Select Collection Catalog from the research tab to search specific groups of records. Use the filters along the left-hand side to drill down to the records collection you want to search.

FAMILY TREES

➔ Sync your family trees. Maintain your family tree on MyHeritage, use the free Family Tree Builder software on your computer or keep your tree on a mobile device—or all three.

FAST FACTS

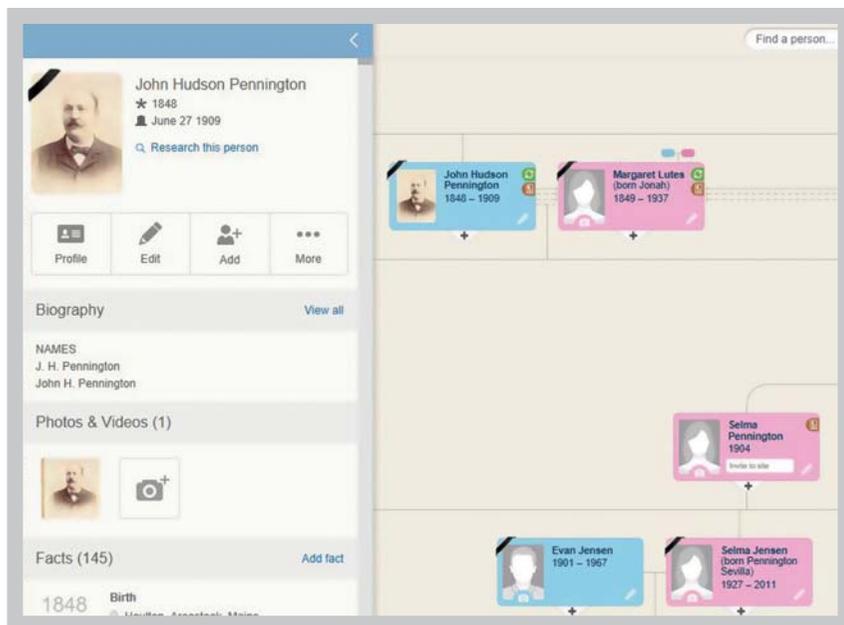
<www.myheritage.com>

Subscriptions

- Premium (2,500 people in tree, Smart Matching and advanced DNA features): \$109/year
- PremiumPlus (the above, plus unlimited people in family tree and access to historical records): \$179/year
- Data (250 people in tree, plus access to historical records): \$159/year
- Complete (all of the above): \$249/year
- DNA test: \$79

Main features

- DNA testing
- Online trees with hints to family trees and major record collections
- Historical records from the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia



Whichever combination you choose, you can synchronize your online and offline family trees so they're always up-to-date. For instance, use Family Tree Builder to add photos, sources or new names to the file on your computer, and all the changes will be reflected in your online tree on MyHeritage. Likewise, changes in your online tree will sync to your Family Tree Builder file.

➔ Search directly from your family tree. With just a click or two, you can search the historical record collections and family trees on MyHeritage for someone in your online tree. Just click on a name to open the person's profile then click on Research this Person.

➔ Receive record hints. MyHeritage works in the background to find matches in historical records and family trees for people in your Family Tree Builder software and on your MyHeritage family tree. A green icon beside a name indicates Smart Matching has found matches in other family trees, and an orange icon indicates Record Matching has found matches in historical records. For example,

Record Matching found John H. Pennington in the 1880 census with his first wife in Minnesota. After confirming the match, I extracted his information to my online family tree.

DNA TESTING

➔ Upload your DNA results from other companies. If you or a relative have already taken a DNA test with AncestryDNA, Family Tree DNA or 23andMe, you can upload the raw DNA data to MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com/dna/upload> and get DNA matches for free. However, you'll need to pay a one-time fee (or have the right subscription) to unlock ethnicity estimates and other features.

➔ Search, filter and sort your DNA matches. Click on the magnifying glass icon to search for a name. You can search on a first, middle or last name—or a combination of them. The search covers both your DNA matches and their family trees. Click on Filters to limit your matches by various criteria, such as ethnicity or location (where your match lives now) and matches who've uploaded a family tree.

Newspapers.com

SEARCH TIPS

➔ Instead of searching on each alternate spelling of a name, use wildcards to cover all of them at once. A question mark replaces a single letter, so a search on *Eli?abeth* finds both Elizabeth and Elisabeth. An asterisk replaces zero or more letters, so *Rob*son* finds Robson, Robison, Robeson, Robinson and Robertson.

➔ Save time by using the Boolean operators *AND*, *OR* and *NOT* to combine several searches into one. Instead of doing separate searches on the different forms of John H. Pennington's name combined with the various countries where he lived, I can cover them all in one query: ("*J. H. Pennington*" *OR* "*John H. Pennington*") *AND* (*Cuba OR Honduras OR Colombia OR "South America"*). You can further limit your results by filtering by date.

FAST FACTS

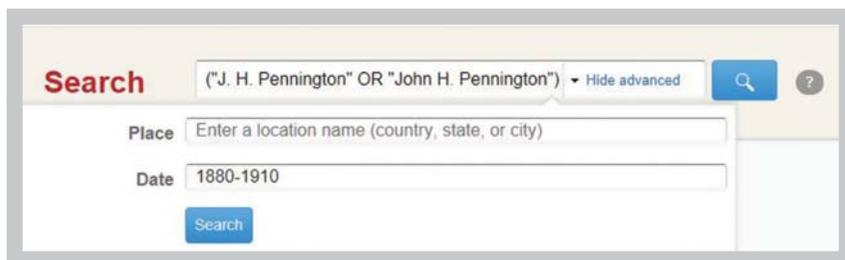
<www.newspapers.com>

Subscriptions

- Basic: \$7.95/month, \$44.95/six months; discounts for Ancestry.com subscribers
- Publisher Extra (includes select newspapers from 1923 and later): \$19.90/month or \$74.90/six months; discounts for Ancestry.com subscribers

Main features

- US newspapers back to 1690, plus some from Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and Panama



➔ Research multiple kinds of newspaper records. Newspapers are the best source for local news, and if your ancestors were involved in a scandal, they probably made the headlines.

➔ Filter by location. The advanced search form (click "Add more info" from the home page) has a "Paper Location" box where you can enter the newspaper's place of publication. You can enter a city, state, county or country name in that box. When you enter a place-name in the Paper Location box, a list of matching places appears. Select a place to search all the papers on Newspapers.com published there. If the place you want doesn't appear in the pop-up list, then Newspapers.com doesn't have papers from that location.

➔ Searching for newspapers by county could be especially useful if Newspapers.com doesn't have a paper from the town where your ancestors lived. Newspapers in other towns in the county might have carried news items that mention your ancestors.

OBITUARIES

➔ Jam-packed with names, dates, places and biographical details, obituaries are worth targeting. You might easily find an obituary for someone

with an uncommon name. A search on *Ella Waffle Mosher* (her given, maiden and married names) produces 937 matches. Filtering the matches to Illinois, where she was born, whittles them down to 70, and a quick perusal of them turns up her obituary in a 1954 issue of the Galesburg Register-Mail.

➔ When searching for the obituary of someone who had a common name, you might have to add another term, such as the spouse's name or a place of residence. You could also limit matches to the year of death, if known. Also, try adding terms common in obituaries, such as *obituary*, *death*, *died* and *funeral*. If you know where the person lived, focus on newspapers published in that city or county. Search on the name as a phrase (surrounded by quotation marks) and try different forms of the name. A man might be referred to by his initials ("*E. R. Mosher*") and a woman might appear under her husband's name ("*Mrs. Enoch R. Mosher*") or even his initials ("*Mrs. E. R. Mosher*").

➔ If a search doesn't turn up an obituary and you have a date and place of death, try browsing page by page. Sometimes the OCR (optical character recognition) used to convert newspapers to searchable text misreads letters. ●



MISTAKEN IDENTITIES



It's easy to mix up your relative with someone else's in old records. But you can avoid an ancestor identity crisis when you follow these seven strategies.

BY SHELLEY K. BISHOP

🐾 **“MANY BAGS LOOK** alike. Please check your claim ticket.”

This familiar message, posted on airport baggage claim belts throughout the world, reminds us how easy it is to confuse similar-looking items. Your bag may be the identical size, shape and color—even the same brand—as someone else's. So it's essential to spend a few moments to make sure you've got the right one before hauling it home.

The same concept applies to sorting through genealogical records of people with similar names, ages and localities. Simply picking up someone who looks right in a single record can lead to a trail of confusion. If only our ancestors came with claim tickets.

Some of the factors that make it hard to determine whether an individual in one record is the same individual in another record include:

- common names
- irregular and variant name spellings
- inconsistent ages and birthplaces in genealogical records
- lack of vital records
- county boundary changes
- migration to new areas
- lost or destroyed records

Female ancestors can be especially challenging to identify. Married women tend to show up in far fewer historical records than their husbands, brothers and fathers, and details about their lives may be hard to come by. Unknown maiden names, uncertain dates and places of birth, and the use of nicknames can complicate your efforts to determine whether “Mary Robinson” is or isn't a different person from the “Polly Robeson” who's named in separate records from the same place.

Fortunately, you can create your own set of ancestor IDs—ways to distinguish *your* relatives from others who look

like them. Use these seven time-tested strategies to confirm you're adding the right people to your family tree and avoid problematic and time-consuming mistakes.

1 **Resist the urge to merge.**

The growing abundance of online family trees offers a tremendous resource for genealogists, but the quality and reliability of information varies greatly. While some trees connect names and facts to reliable sources, many others lack documentation. The same mistakes may be repeated as people merge trees or copy and paste data, so it's crucial to understand how to evaluate and use what you find.

Online family trees come in two basic varieties: individual and collaborative. Individual trees start with one person, branching upward through his or her ancestors. These include the trees you'll find at Ancestry.com <ancestry.com>, MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com>, and Findmypast.com <www.findmypast.com>, as well as postings to the World-Connect Project at RootsWeb <wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com>.

Collaborative trees take a wiki-style approach, reflecting the combined submissions of multiple users. Anyone can add, remove or change information. Examples include the Family Tree at FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org>, in addition to WikiTree <www.wikitree.com>, WeRelate <www.werelate.org> and Geni <www.geni.com>.

Regardless of the type, seasoned genealogists urge caution when approaching online trees. Look for sources and attached records to back up the events and relationships they claim. How does this compare with the research you've done? What can you find to verify the information? Just because something is found in 12 trees doesn't mean it's right. Both individual and collaborative trees may contain errors, omissions and redundancies.

GOING TO THE SOURCE

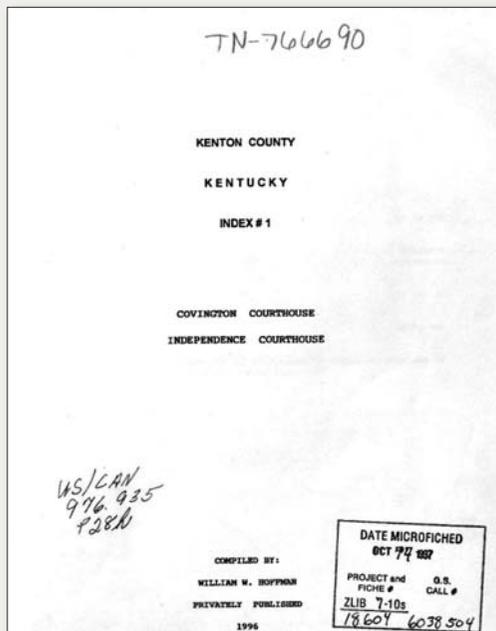
How do you go from your ancestor's name in a printed or online index to the original record—which likely has more (or different) identifying details? Just follow this seven-step system.

1 Find an index entry for your relative in an online database, printed or digitized book, or elsewhere. We found a listing for the marriage record of Louis Thoss and Elizabeth Teiple by searching the digital book collection on FamilySearch.org <books.familysearch.org> (many also are searchable through GenGophers.com <www.gengophers.com>).

	HANNAH EGAN		CIN.	21	1ST		OHIO	IRE	IRE
155	LOUIS THOSS	5/15	5/18	COV.	26	*	WIRE WKS KY	GER	GER
	ELIZABETH TEIPLE		C-F	COV.	19	*	OHIO	GER	GER
155	GEORGE H. ARLINGHAUS	5/15	5/23	CIN.	27	*	CARPENTR KY	GER	GER
	ANNA M. KIPP		COV.	23	*		KY	GER	GER

2 Identify the name of the database or book so you can cite the source of the indexed information in your genealogy files.

According to this book's title page, it's called *Kenton County Kentucky Index #1: Covington Courthouse, Independence Courthouse*, compiled and privately published in 1996 by William W. Hoffman and microfiched by FamilySearch on Oct. 14, 1997.



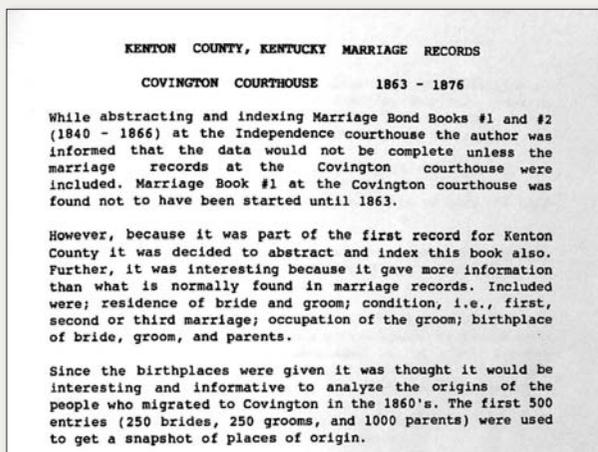
MARRIAGE RECORD BOOK #1, KENTON COUNTY, COVINGTON, KY

NAME	DATE ISSUE	DATE of m.	RESIDENCE	AGE	COND.	OCCUP.	BP	BP F.	BP M.
155 HENRY S. DRYER	5/2	5/4	NEWPORT 2	21	*	1st MAR. BUTCHR KY	GER	GER	GER
MARY A. COOK			COV.	21	*	KY	IRE	KY	IRE
155 JOHN H. ELLIS	5/5	5/5	C-P	26	*	CARPENTR KY	ENG	IRE	IRE
GERTRUDE D. FARNSWORTH			COV.	16	*	FL MI	KY	KY	KY
155 HENRY HEUTEMAIN	5/4	5/5	COV.	25	*	CHAR MWR GER	GER	GER	GER
ELIZABETH BRENDKAMP			COV.	25	*	HANOVER =	=	=	=
155 JAMES M. CLOUD	5/4	5/4	BOONE	30	*	FARMER KY	TN	KY	KY
LILLIAN M. BRASHER			COV.	21	*	KY	KY	KY	KY
155 HENRY NIEHUS	5/4	5/5	COV.	27	*	LABORR GER	GER	GER	GER
ELIZABETH REHLING			COV.	22	*	KY	GER	GER	GER
155 JASPER VENNHOFF	5/8	5/9	KENTON	31	*	CLERK PRUSSIA	=	=	=
ALICE LAUBERT				25	*	KY	IRE	KY	KY
155 ROBERT T. SHAW	5/8	5/9	OHIO	29	*	1ST TELIGRAPH KY	KY	KY	KY
LIZZIE WILSON			KENTON	22	*	KY	KY	KY	KY
155 JAMES N. VEAZEY	5/8	5/8	CIN.	22	*	FLOHIST OHIO	NY	OHIO	OHIO
ELLA M. GILPIN			CIN.	22	*	OHIO	PA	PA	PA
155 THEODORE KOLLENBORG	5/8	5/9	COV.	37	2ND	LABORR PRUSSIA	=	=	=
MARY KRUSE			CIN.	40	*	GER	GER	GER	GER
155 Wm. G. BRIDGEMAN	5/9	5/9	COV.	21	1ST	TOBACCO MO	MO	TN	TN
REBECCA P. OLIVER			C-M	19	*	KY	PA	PA	PA
155 JOHN SCHMIDT	5/10	5/23	COV.	21	*	CLERK KY	GER	GER	GER
MARY CATHERINA WILLENBRINCK	C-F	COV.	19	*	OHIO	GER	GER	GER	GER
155 Wm. T. McMAHON	5/11	5/11	COV.	52	2ND	DOCTOR OHIO	MD	PA	PA
MARY TRACY			COV.	42	*	OHIO	VA	OHIO	OHIO
155 OMER ALLEY	5/13	5/13	IN	27	1ST	FARMER IN	VA	IN	IN
INDIANA PELSOR				24	*	IN	OHIO	OHIO	OHIO
155 ALBERT A. DIETRICH	5/13	5/14	COV.	35	*	LABORR PRUSSIA	=	=	=
ELIZABETH WEGMANN			COV.	41	2ND	GER	GER	GER	GER
155 JOHN BUCKLEY	5/13	5/14	CIN.	23	*	LABORR NY	IRE	IRE	IRE
HANNAH EGAN			CIN.	21	1ST	OHIO	IRE	IRE	IRE
155 LOUIS THOSS	5/15	5/18	COV.	26	*	WIRE WKS KY	GER	GER	GER
ELIZABETH TEIPLE			COV.	19	*	OHIO	GER	GER	GER
155 GEORGE H. ARLINGHAUS	5/15	5/23	CIN.	27	*	CARPENTR GER	GER	GER	GER
ANNA M. KIPP			COV.	23	*	KY	GER	GER	GER
155 JAMES M. STRAWBRIDGE	5/15	5/18	COV.	22	2ND	PRINTR KY	OHIO	PA	KY
MARY C. O'CONNOR			COV.	22	*	KY	OHIO	PA	KY
155 CHARLES D. DARRACH	5/16	5/18	PHILA.	22	1ST	ENG. PA	PA	PA	PA
MARTHA A. E. TEARNE			COV.	20	*	ENG	ENG	ENG	ENG
155 CHARLES BOGENSCHUTZ, J.	5/17	5/18	COV.	22	*	MOULDR KY	GER	GER	GER
CATHERINE WEBER			COV.	29	*	OHIO	GER	GER	GER
155 JOHN LAUBNER	5/17	5/18	LUDLOW	43	2ND	MACHINST OHIO	GER	GER	GER
ANNIE WILLIAMS				33	*	OHIO	OHIO	OHIO	OHIO
155 BENJAMIN T. BRYAN	5/18	5/18	MD	24	1ST	FARMER KY	VA	IL	IL
ARMILDA S. OLVEN			KENTON	21	*	KY	VA	VA	VA
155 JOHN FRED. WEBER	5/19	5/19	COV.	21	*	BAKER OHIO	GER	GER	GER
JENNETTIE HUNGLER			COV.	21	*	OHIO	GER	GER	GER
155 ELISHA G. COBERLY	5/20	5/20	OHIO	23	*	TEACHER OHIO	OHIO	OHIO	OHIO
LAVERNA CLARK			OHIO	22	*	OHIO	OHIO	OHIO	OHIO

PAGE 155

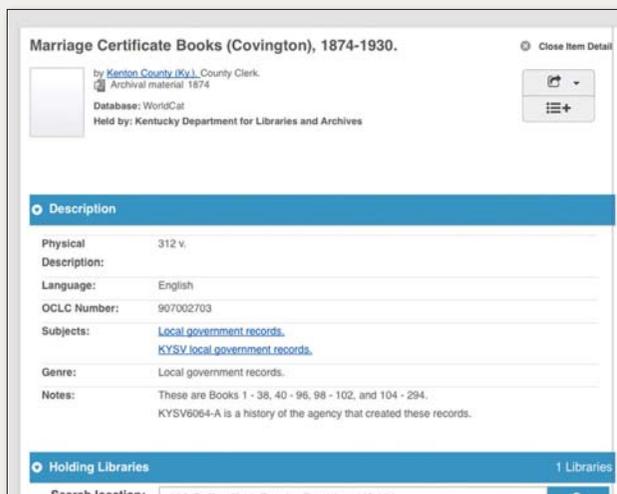
3 Examine the index for details about the location of the record you're interested in: book number, page number, certificate number and date of the event—information that would help someone find the right record.

This index covers Marriage Record Book #1 from Kenton County, Ky. According to the index, the listing for Louis Thoss and Elizabeth Teiple is on page 155. Their license was issued May 15, and they were married May 18. Now, to find that license and certificate.



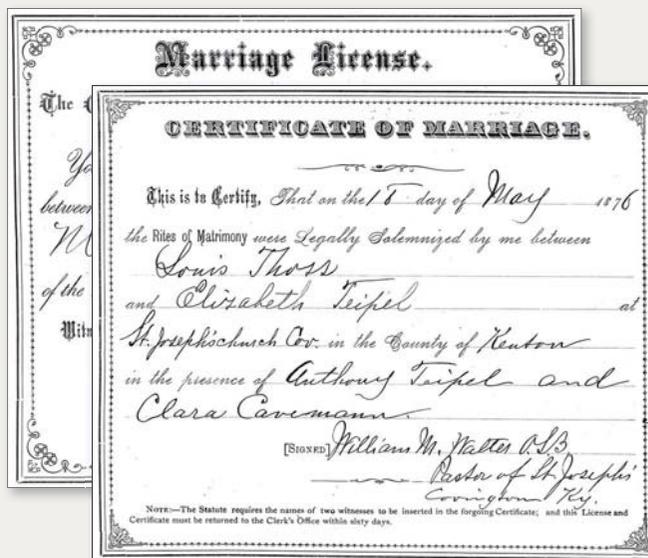
4 Check the index for information on the location of the original records. You might find it in an introduction to a printed index or the search page of an online database. *Kenton County Kentucky Index #1* states that Marriage Book #1 is at the courthouse in Covington, Ky.

6 Send your request according to the repository's instructions. The KDLA website has a downloadable Marriage Record Request form to print, complete and mail with a \$15 out-of-state patron fee.



5 Next, check genealogy websites such as Ancestry.com <ancestry.com> and FamilySearch.org for collections that might include the original record. You could be lucky. If not, confirm the name of the office where you should send your request by calling or searching the web.

We searched for *kenton kentucky marriage records genealogy*. This led us to a FamilySearch wiki page indicating that the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives <kdla.ky.gov> (KDLA) has a large collection of early marriage records. Searching KDLA's online catalog revealed that the archive has Marriage Book #1.



7 If the record doesn't arrive in the time period the repository suggests, you can call or email to inquire about the status of your request. We received the marriage license and certificate within a few weeks. We noted that the certificate gives May 15 as the ceremony date, different from the May 18 in the index, and it names witnesses.

Those trees are fertile ground for one thing, though: clues. They can prompt you to investigate theories you hadn't thought of. Perhaps you didn't consider that your ancestor could've been drafted for the Civil War, had a possible brother in Illinois, or might've married again. These hints can open your eyes to new databases and suggest other places and events to research. Dig further. If a record is available, examine it carefully before attaching it to your ancestor. If not, can you find some other record?

By navigating slowly, person by person and record by record, you're much less likely to veer off onto the wrong path. You'll also get to know your ancestors better, and pick up on small details that you would've overlooked by simply merging someone else's tree with your own. Those details can make a big difference in picking out your relatives from the crowd.

2 Venture beyond the index.

Published indexes to records, such as books listing all the births recorded over a span of years, are terrific leads to information. So are their online counterparts: databases without attached images. It's exciting to flip to the back of a book, find your great-grandmother's name, turn to the page and discover when she was born. It's equally thrilling to type her name into a search engine and watch the results pop up. But if you're depending on the index or database alone, you're missing the best part.

An index or database entry merely indicates that a record exists. Unless the record itself was destroyed, it's waiting to be found, and now you have the means to locate it. Don't sell yourself short and risk making a mistake by merely entering the birth date in your family file or notes and moving on. Go get the prize.

You'll usually find information about the records used to create an index in the front of a book. With a database, look for a section called "About" (Ancestry.com) or "Learn More" (FamilySearch.org). You might discover the records are available on another website, at a state archives, or on microfilm from the Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City. To order FHL microfilm for delivery to your local FamilySearch Center, see <www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Introduction_to_LDS_Family_History_Centers>. See the Going to the Source sidebar for a demo of using an index to find original records.

Once you have the record in hand, extract every detail. You'll probably find it contains more information than the

index or database provided. A child's birth record might state the father's name and birthplace, mother's maiden name and birthplace, their residence and the father's occupation. Take note of these identifiers. How do they compare with what you've found in census and other records? A detail like the father's occupation may seem insignificant at first, but could prove to be just the ticket for setting him apart from others with the same name.

Checking original records also helps eliminate look-alikes. Remember, indexers may have struggled with poor handwriting, faded pages and unfamiliar names. Say you find two Joseph Walkers in a marriage database. You obtain both marriage records, and discover one actually appears to be for Joseph Wilkins. Sure enough, there's a Joseph Wilkins and a Joseph Walker in the census, too. Now you can set Wilkins aside and concentrate on the remaining Walker marriage with more confidence.

3 Create a chart or timeline.

By now you might be wondering how to organize all this data you've been gathering. Rather than leave it swirling around in your head or buried in your files, compile it into a chart, spreadsheet or timeline. This gives you a quick, grab-and-go reference to use as you're researching and drawing conclusions about your ancestor's life.

Charts are flexible aids for analysis. You might simply make notes regarding the records you've found or zoom in on a specific problem. Many genealogists use charts to compare and contrast information from different sources. They're especially helpful for determining if all the records collected actually pertain to the same person or not. A chart could compare a series of census records, a set of property deeds, city directory listings or any combination of records.

A timeline is a chart of events arranged in chronological order. To create a timeline, set up a table or spreadsheet with lots of rows and six columns:

- date
- event
- location
- names and ages of people in the record
- notes and comments
- source(s) of information

Begin filling in the events of your ancestor's life—anchoring events like birth, marriage and death, as well as others like census enumerations, land purchases, births of children, city directory entries, and naturalization. Before long, you'll have a concise and orderly synopsis of your work.

Timelines can be as simple or complex as you like. For greater detail, make entries about parents, siblings and in-laws. You can also add pertinent historical events such as wars, floods or the construction of a railroad through town. These things can help put your ancestors into historical



TIP: When creating an ancestor's timeline, add major historical or local events, such as epidemics, wars, natural disasters or immigration waves.

There's a fine line between an assumption and a theory, but it's an important one for genealogists to draw.

context. For more about timelines, see <familytreemagazine.com/article/personal-timeline>.

Once your timeline's finished, you'll be able to see at a glance where your ancestor lived at a given time, what he was doing, who was with him and anything else that struck you as noteworthy. Those between-the-census years will begin to take shape. You might notice patterns, identify gaps or reveal conflicting information you need to resolve. As your ancestor comes into clearer focus, you're more likely to see clues in circumstantial evidence that can help answer questions about him. And you'll be much less prone to confuse him with someone else.

4 Map it out. Visualizing the places your ancestor called home is a powerful tool in establishing his identity. In addition to showing where he lived, maps can illuminate *how* he lived. Was the area along a river used for transportation? Was it near a fort or on the outskirts of a city? Did mountains or other obstacles form a natural barrier to travel?

Boundary changes over time affected which courthouse your ancestor went to and where you'll find records today. City, county, state and territorial boundaries were in constant flux throughout much of the 18th and 19th centuries. Fortunately, these changes have been well documented. *The Family Tree Historical Maps Book* (Family Tree Books) <shopfamilytree.com/family-tree-historical-maps-bk> is a handy resource for genealogists that shows changes in US states over time. Two websites that portray shifting state and county boundaries are the Newberry Library's *Atlas of Historical County Boundaries* <publications.newberry.org/ahcbp> and MapofUS.org <www.mapofus.org/united-states>.

Just when you've become comfortable with one locality, you might find your family members uprooted and migrated somewhere else. Pinpoint the new place on a map to see what kind of journey they undertook. Two towns in different states may be hundreds of miles apart—or sit on opposite banks of a river. Was the climate and terrain in the new location similar to that of the old one, or did your ancestor have to adapt to an entirely different environment?

Maps not only show you distance and direction, but also suggest possible routes and methods of travel. Consider both when and where they moved. By studying historic roads, canals, and railways in conjunction with maps, it's possible to get an idea of how your ancestor got from Point A to Point B.

Modern road maps showing political boundaries are a good place to start, but don't stop there. Look for historical maps and atlases, as well as topographical or geological maps, railroad maps, township maps, Sanborn insurance maps, surveys, and town plats. Local maps and atlases might even identify your ancestor's land by name. To find maps, try the David Rumsey Map Collection at <www.davidrumsey.com>, or Google the place name along with the keyword *map*.

5 Follow the network.

Cell phone providers know their customers rely on networks of friends and family. Our ancestors didn't have cell phones, of course, but their networks played an important role in their lives. Friends, relatives, neighbors, church members, business associates and shopkeepers formed a community people lived within and relied upon. Exploring this community is one of the best ways to solidify your ancestor's identity.

Certified genealogist Elizabeth Shown Mills, author of references such as *Evidence Explained*, 3rd edition (Genealogical Publishing Co.), coined the phrase "FAN club"—friends, associates and neighbors—to illustrate this concept. Others call it cluster research. By any term, it's a valuable strategy for success, especially in dealing with common names, migration mix-ups and brick wall problems.

Start by making a list or spreadsheet of names *other* than the primary person found in records you've obtained. Who witnessed your ancestors' marriages, naturalizations, deeds and wills? Baptism records might give the names of sponsors or godparents, typically relatives or close friends. Who administered his estate, posted bonds or bought things at his estate sale? Identify all the in-laws you can, particularly husbands of his sisters and daughters. Now you have a core group of associates to add to his profile.

Move to your ancestor's first census record. Look at the households at least a page before and after his (the tougher the research problem, the more names you'll want to gather). Do the same for other census records. What similarities and overlaps do you see?

Once you've compiled your list, use it to propel your search. If your ancestor's name is common, try researching an associate's unusual name. If you're trying to track your kin back to a previous location but aren't sure you've found the right one, look for his friends there. The old saying "A man is known by the company he keeps" is good to bear in mind. Your ancestor's migration path may have followed—or paved the way for—that of his neighbors. By tagging and embracing others in his network, you increase your chances of a positive ID.

6 Beware making assumptions. As you're searching for information about your ancestor, it's natural to make some assumptions about her. Maybe you found her in the census at 6 years old and assume she was born in the same vicinity. Sometimes these assumptions are helpful because they can point you to particular records. But in many cases, assumptions box you in to a narrow set of options. What if her family moved to that place when she was 2?

Consider also that any record, even one created at the time of the event, might be wrong. People fudged their ages on marriage licenses, passenger lists and military enlistments. They guessed about things they didn't know, such as where a parent was born. They put the names of adoptive or stepparents in place of biological parents. They filled out family record pages in Bibles based on memory and passed-down stories.

In short, no record is guaranteed to be error-free or complete. Tread carefully when making an assumption, especially one based on a single source. Say you've found your great-grandfather in the 1880 census with his wife and three children. Does that mean she was the mother of all

the children? Not necessarily. The census only reports their relationship to the head of the household. You might develop a theory that the couple married before the first child was born, but you can't say for sure yet.

There's a fine line between an assumption and a theory, but it's an important one for genealogists to draw. An assumption *restricts* your thinking with preconceived notions. A theory *focuses* your thinking in a probable direction, but allows you to remain open to other possibilities. To successfully identify your ancestor, shed your assumptions and work your theories. Which brings us to the final strategy.

7 Play devil's advocate. Tough cases of ancestor identity verification often come down to two or three possibilities. Some common examples include:

- Which of the three men in the county who are named Thomas Williams is your ancestor?
- Was Robert Evans or Isaac Evans the father of Sarah Evans?
- Do all the records you've found belong to the same person, or were there two Nicholas Millers in the same town?

If the steps outlined above haven't given you a clear answer, your next recourse is a process of elimination. Research each possible person extensively and try to rule one out. Perhaps one Thomas Williams proves to be far too young to be the one in your family tree. Another was born in Ireland, whereas your ancestor was German. The last man standing is your likely target.

Writing is another powerful tool for distilling your thoughts. Write out your theory as though defending it. Itemize the evidence that supports your conclusion and how you reached it, noting your sources. Experienced genealogists call this a *proof summary*. If you found contradictory information, also explain how you resolved it.

Now take a look at your summary with a critical eye. If you have a genealogy buddy or belong to a local society, have someone else read it, too. Where are the holes? Could someone shoot down your conclusion? Have you really searched for *all* types of evidence, even newspapers and local records that haven't been microfilmed? Consider hiring a researcher or contacting a society where your ancestor lived to obtain these elusive resources.

Claiming the right ancestors out of a jumbled pile of choices is a skill anyone can develop. Don't just grab the first one you see who seems to fit. By using these seven strategies, you can be certain of making accurate identities, leading to more research success and a flourishing family tree. ■

Ohio genealogist **SHELLEY K. BISHOP** identifies clients' ancestors as part of her business, Buckeye Family Trees <www.buckeyefamilytrees.com>.

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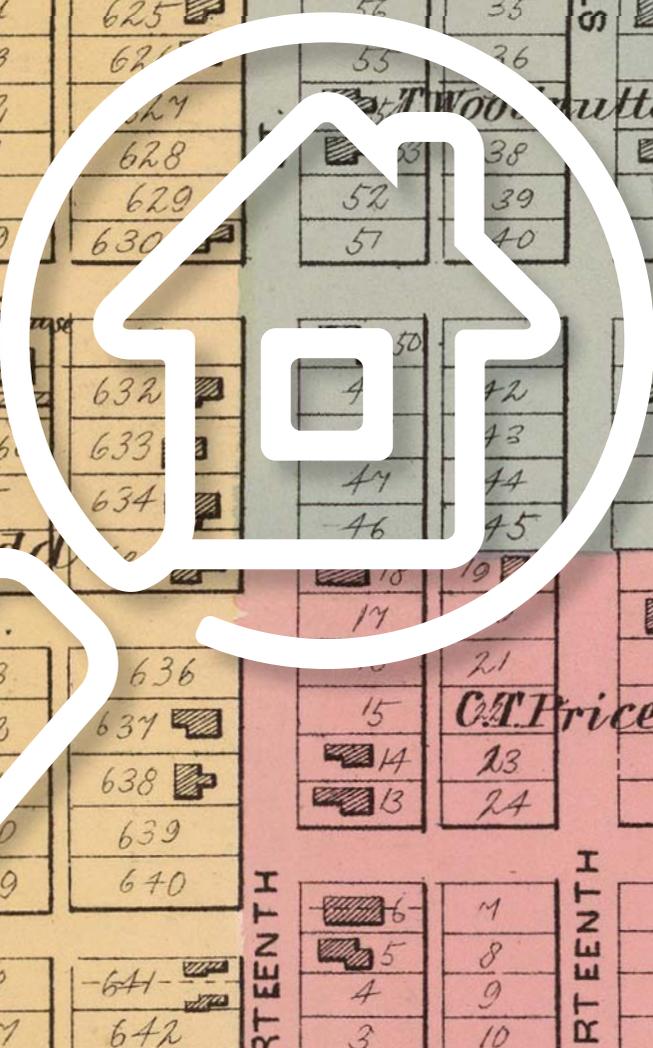
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MOVING TARGETS



Did your ancestors drop off the map? Maybe it's not because they moved, but because boundaries shifted or street names changed. We'll help you use old maps to solve place problems.

BY RANDY MAJORS AND SUNNY JANE MORTON

SO YOUR ANCESTORS appear to have disappeared. From the census, where they'd been consistently listed for decades. From the J section of the city directory. From tax lists that recorded your family's payments for years.

You may eventually find your kin somewhere else and piece together an explanation behind their move. On the other hand, your family might still be exactly where you last saw them, but something else changed: the city or county boundary, the street name or their address. To figure out which scenario applies to your situation, ask yourself four questions about the place where your family lived and the

neighbors who resided nearby. Once you determine whether it's your family or their address that was the moving target, you'll be able to track down that census, city directory, tax or other record you need.



Are you looking in the right state and county?

Let's say you find a relative listed in Brooke County, Va., in the 1840 census. You look for an address for the Brooke County courthouse to order her marriage record, only to find that no

Breaking Boundaries

When you need to know which county your ancestor's address was in at a given time—such as when he moved into his house or married—search the Historical US County Boundary Maps tool. To use it, type a present-day address (or even just a town and state) and a date or year into the boxes at www.randymajors.com/p/maps.html. Hit Go. You'll get an interactive, present-day Google Map overlaid with county boundaries as of the historical date you've specified.

Above the map, the county name as of your specified date is shown, along with the most recent law or change that led to the boundaries you're viewing. If you want to see a full timeline of all the counties (and states) your spot on the map has ever been a part of, just check the box beneath the map labeled Show Complete County Change Chronology. Complete County Change Chronology.

such county exists in Virginia. That's because Brooke County was among those that seceded from Virginia in 1862 to form West Virginia.

Boundary changes have occurred with surprising frequency in counties, colonies and states. In 1712, for example, Carolina split into North and South Carolina. About 20 years later, Georgia was carved from South Carolina. If you lived in northern Massachusetts in 1820, you would've woken up one morning to find you lived in the brand-new state of Maine. Several states have disputed their common borders, including Ohio and Michigan, and Iowa and Missouri.

As territories evolved and young states grew, their county boundaries changed and multiplied. Ohio had nine counties when it became a state in 1803; today it has nearly 10 times that number. California has more than doubled its original 27 counties, revising most of its boundaries since achieving statehood. County boundary changes persisted well into the 20th century in many states. To a lesser extent, they still happen today: Broomfield County, Colo., was created in 2001.

You have several options for learning the boundary history of a particular place, from researching the original legislation that established counties to reading state or county history books. But the easiest way is to consult a boundary reference tool online. The Newberry Library's Atlas of Historical County Boundaries <publications.newberry.org/ahcbp> compiles all boundary changes chronologically and geographically. Unfortunately, its handy interactive map has been disabled for some time; a new version is being tested. A newer online tool called Historical US County Boundary Maps <www.randymajors.com/p/maps.html> utilizes that atlas' data and lets you look up the boundaries of a certain place as of an exact date, overlaid on a present-day Google map.

2

Are you looking in the right locales?

US cities and towns have changed boundaries even more than counties and states, as they annexed land, separated themselves from surrounding counties and renamed themselves. But you'll research those changes a little differently. For one thing, there are so many *more* locales. Today's maps show nearly 20,000 incorporated places in the United States, and that doesn't include now-abandoned places. Furthermore, a single state may have several places with the same or similar names—a city, county and multiple townships all called Hamilton, for example. And once you've identified the right town, there's no single online tool that maps all municipal boundary changes.

Look first for place clues in genealogical documents. Confirm the name and type of locale (such as a town, city, village, township or military district). Note whether the

If you can't find your family's home in a given census or city directory, their neighbors may be able to point you in the right direction.

county is mentioned, as well as any nearby towns that may help you find it on a map. US census listings typically have the city, county and state written across the top of each page. Digitized city directories may include this information in the front pages.

Obituaries, military enlistments, probate records and other records may mention a locality's name but not fully describe where it is. Look it up in the Geographic Names Information System <geonames.usgs.gov>, a master database of present-day and obsolete places, including landmarks such as knobs, arroyos and mines. You may discover several options for a locale within a single state. Take it a step further by consulting US Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps back to 1879 at the USGS National Geologic Map Database <ngmdb.usgs.gov/maps/TopoView/viewer>. Here, you can visually explore both man-made and natural landmarks on downloadable high-resolution maps.

If you've found an ancestor's property, use deed or patent descriptions to identify the town's original name and gather other location clues. A few municipalities and counties have online databases of deeds and property descriptions, but most don't (or they may include only recent transactions). You may be able to research deeds in microfilmed indexes and deed books. To find these, run a place search of the FamilySearch online catalog <www.familysearch.org/catalog/search> and look under the Land and Property heading. Click to borrow the film for a fee through your local FamilySearch Center (if you're lucky, the catalog will link you to digitized records on the FamilySearch site). If you don't find microfilm for your ancestor's town or county, check with the local



TIP: Good sources for online maps include state and university library websites, the Library of Congress <www.loc.gov> and the David Rumsey maps collection <www.davidrumsey.com>.

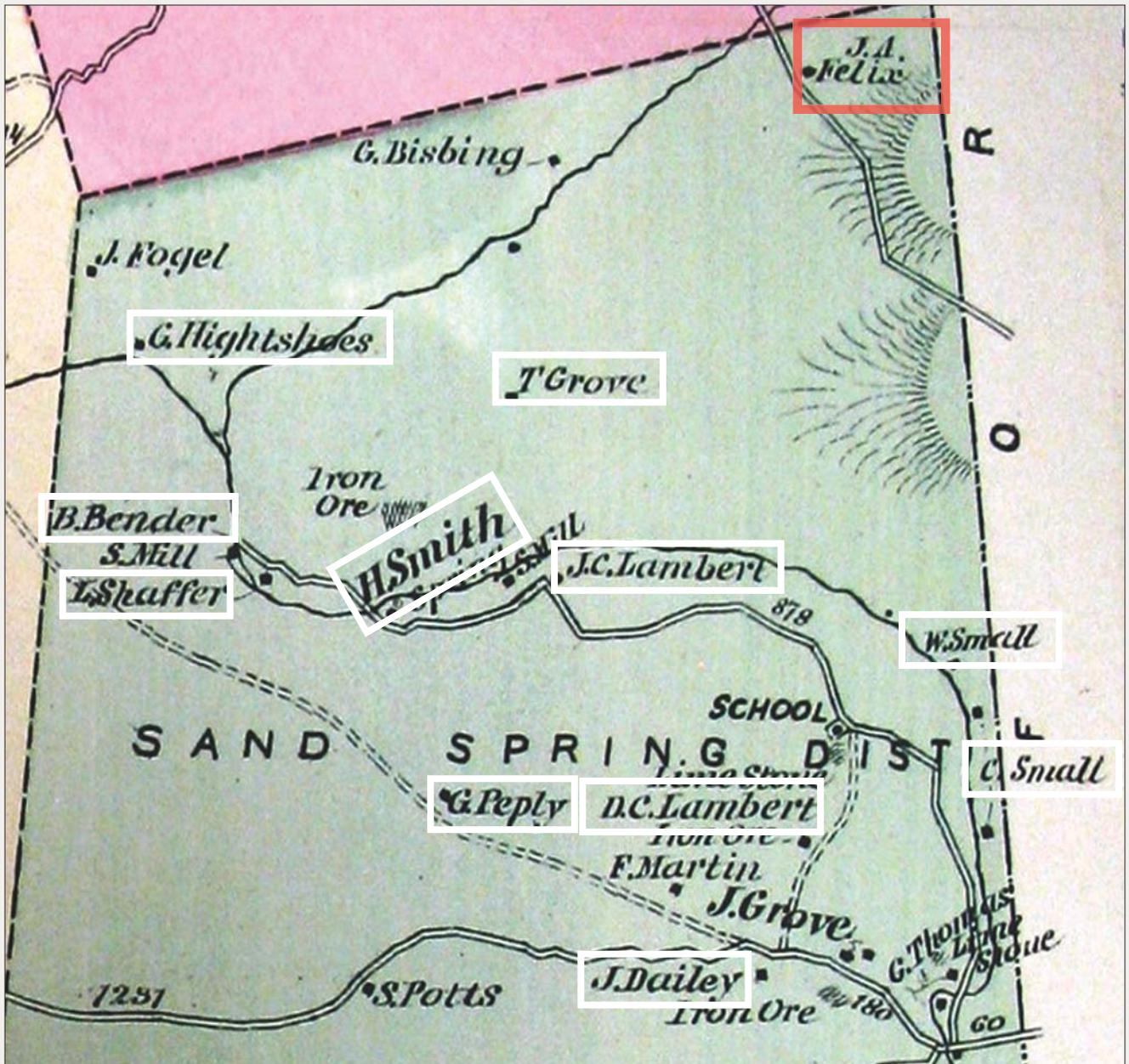
Match-Making

Comparing records and maps from similar time periods can help you confirm your map (or your record) is correct, identify individuals named in a record, and visualize the neighborhood. Here, for example, the landowner names on the 1876 map from Shade Township, Somerset County, Pa., overwhelmingly overlap with the names of heads-of-household in the 1880 US census (the matching names are bold in the list at right). This confirms that the John A. Felix listed in the census is the same as the J.A. Felix on the map (and isn't any of the other John Felixes who appear in local records).

Heads of Household in the 1880 Census

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ■ J. Daley | ■ H.H. Smith* | ■ George Beaner |
| ■ G. Bebley | ■ Henry Smith* | ■ Tobias Grove |
| ■ David C. Lambert | ■ Hiram Lambert | ■ George A. Beaner (or Bence) |
| ■ S.B. Martin | ■ John Manges | |
| ■ Benjamin Bender | ■ Joseph Lambert | ■ John A. Felix |
| ■ Gid Heightchue | ■ William Small | |
| ■ Levi Shaffer | ■ Chancy Small | |

* either man could be the H. Smith on the map



County Atlas of Somerset, Pennsylvania (FW Beers & Co.), 1876, digitized at AncestorTracks.com <ancestortracks.com>. Used with permission.

Case Study: The House on Bryant Street

When a friend moved into an old Victorian-era house in Denver, he wanted to learn its history: When was it built? Who lived there? What was the neighborhood like? It couldn't be that hard to figure out, right? My interest in genealogy and maps came in handy. It turns out that the street name, address, city and county had all changed, while the house itself—as you'd expect—remained in the very same spot. Here's how I sorted it all out.

County assessor records show that the home at 3349 Bryant Street was built in 1890. But local historians and research at the Denver Public Library's Department of Western History and Genealogy <www.denverlibrary.org> told me this date probably was an estimate. So my first goal was to determine the actual year.

The deed's legal description describes the property as Lot 32, Re-subdivision of Block 27 of Potter Highlands. A county website <www.denvergov.org/maps/map/subdivisions> links to a digitized subdivision (or plat) map from 1887. It shows Lot 32 fronting Third Street, not Bryant Street. When did that change happen?

Moving forward in time, I found a circa 1897 assessor's map showing Block 27 fronting Bryant Street, with "3rd St" crossed out: evidence that Bryant used to be Third.

The next step was finding Sanborn fire insurance maps, but the house's location always seemed to be just off the map's edge. Fortunately, the Denver Public Library has the 1905 *Baist's Real Estate Atlas*, which shows building footprints. Lot 32 and adjacent lots have brick houses, represented by pink boxes. So my friend's Victorian was there by 1905.

I would've looked up residents and their addresses in the 1890 US census, except almost all those records were lost to fire. Instead I turned to the 1900 census and used Stephen P. Morse's One-Step Unified Census ED Finder <stevemorse.org/census/unified.html> to find the enumeration district for 3349 Bryant Street. Browsing to the home's listing, I found Hannah Ziegenfuss renting the place with a son, daughter and boarder.

Colorado lacks state censuses after 1885, so city directories were my next step. Hannah

1887



1897



lived at 3349 Bryant in 1899 and 1898. But in the 1897 directory at Ancestry.com, a keyword search on *3349 Bryant* found nothing. Then I recalled that the street was named Third at the time, not Bryant.

But I couldn't find anything for 3349 Third or 3rd in the 1897 directory (which also showed the Ziegenfuss family in another part of the city) or earlier editions. Then I learned that the neighborhood was originally part of the City of Highlands, which Denver annexed in 1896. Highlands had its own street names and different address ranges. County boundary research showed this house was part of Arapahoe County in 1890 (not Denver, as it is today). Arapahoe County offices may hold additional resources.

Next I tried a different tactic: triangulation, or using two known reference points to locate a third. In the 1898 city directory, I looked up the residents of the houses on either side of

3349 Bryant. Alfred H. Lomax lived at 3345 Bryant. Going back another year, I found Alfred H. Lomax at 2029 Third in Highlands. (Remember how Third Street in Highlands became Bryant Street in Denver?) I repeated this step with the other neighbor. In the 1898 city directory, a keyword search on 3353 *Bryant* reveals resident William O. Vinacke. Going back one more year put him at 2033 Third Street in Highlands.

Given that 2029 and 2033 Third Street in Highlands each had the same occupants as 3345 and 3353 Bryant Street a year later, I could surmise that the house known today as 3349 Bryant Street, Denver, was originally 2031 Third Street, Highlands. City directories listed a series of renter-occupants in this house clear back to 1891.

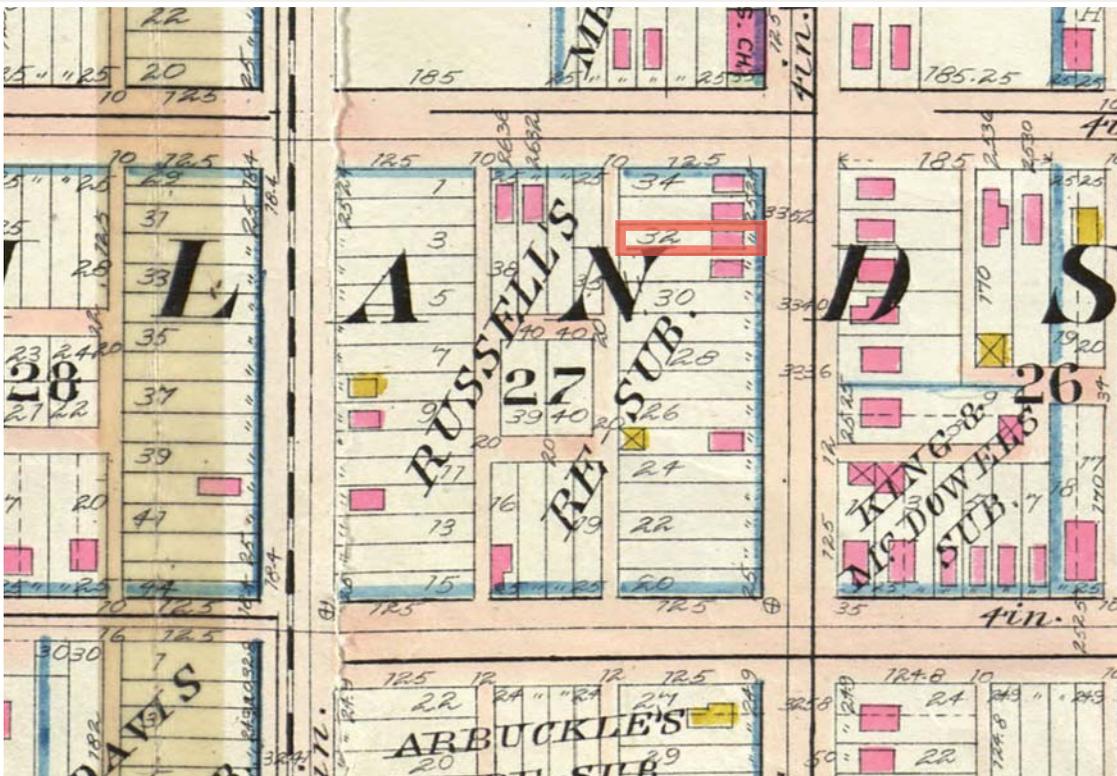
There was no 2029, 2031 or 2033 Third Street in the 1891 city directory. So was my friend's house built in 1891? Likely not. Information in directories could be

up to a year old by the time the area was canvassed and the data published. (Recall that the change from Third to Bryant occurred between the 1897 and 1898 directories, even though Highlands was annexed to Denver and the street names changed in 1896). A deed search, which might shed further light, has so far proven fruitless, but it's safe to deduce that my friend's house was built—or at least first occupied—in 1890.

The estimated date of 1890 in the county records appears to be the actual date built. And now my friend knows that the history of his house includes early residents from a college professor to a music teacher to a stone mason. He thinks it's pretty cool that, although his house is still in the same place, it started life as 2031 Third Street, Highlands, Arapahoe County, Colo., in 1890. Everything has changed except for the state name.

» Randy Majors

1905



Boist's real estate atlas of surveys of Denver Col. (Baist, G. Wm.), 1905, Plate 9, Digitized image at Denver Public Library <digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15330coll2/id/14550>.

historical society. You may need to research deeds in person or hire a local researcher. See our deeds research guide at <shopfamilytree.com/research-strategies-land-deeds-u4009>.

If your ancestor acquired land from the federal government, search the millions of digitized land patents at the General Land Office Records website <glorerecords.blm.gov>. Properties are described by county and by township, range, aliquots (a legal land description) and section (a mapping system used to survey public lands). In many patent entries, you can click a box to see the description on a modern map. Look at the patent image to see whether the owner was a resident of another place at the time of purchase.

Once you've identified a town, research its boundaries at a given time to make sure you're looking for your family in the right local records. This is especially important in New England, where many genealogical records are kept on the town level. Outside New England, you still may find local records of value: birth and death records that predate statewide vital recordkeeping, tax and voters' lists, city directories, neighborhood-level maps and more.

Pay special attention to the boundaries of towns that are now part of a major metropolis. As cities have grown into each other over time, they may have merged, been annexed into one another or experienced significant land loss or gain. For example, the former cities of Auraria and Highlands are now part of Denver, Colo. New Orleans only had seven wards in 1805; by 1874, it had 17. If the city has a shoreline, look closely at that, too. You may find evidence of receding or filled-in shorelines that would've impacted your ancestor's property.

In rural areas, old maps may identify property owners. Search for such maps at the Library of Congress <loc.gov/maps> under the Landowners subject, in local libraries and historical collections, at major genealogical libraries and even on major genealogy websites (case in point: the US Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918 database at Ancestry.com <search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1127>).



Did the street name or address change?

By now, it's clear that you can trust very little to remain unchanged on old maps. Street names and house numbers in cities are no exception. Many cities standardized their street naming and numbering practices in the late 1800s or early 1900s, renumbering houses to fit the grid. Neighborhoods that were annexed to a nearby city sometimes changed their names and numbers. Main thoroughfares are renamed—to this day—in honor of local heroes or to accommodate popular tastes. Development can reroute roads or break them up into sections and lead to renaming. Streets and even entire neighborhoods might be cleared for highways and other projects.

If you're trying to trace an address backward in time through name changes, try these steps:

■ **FIND THE PROPERTY DESCRIPTION** in the deed recording the property transfer. Look for the lot and block number and subdivision name. Older deeds very often didn't list street addresses.

Searching Records by Address

Censuses and city directories are prime sources for information about an address and its residents. But it takes the following steps to get from an address with no name attached to a listing in a census or city directory:

1. USE AN ONLINE ENUMERATION

DISTRICT TOOL. Censuses are organized by state, county, town and enumeration district (ED). Go to the online Unified Census ED Finder <www.stevemorse.org/census/unified.html> and select the census year you need.

2. FIND THE RIGHT ED FOR THE ADDRESS. Choose the state, county (which you've determined from the Historical US County Boundary Maps website), and city or town, if applicable.

Fill in the house number and street name as of the selected census year. If the deeds or maps you've checked show cross streets near your address, choose them to narrow your results. Run the search.

3. BROWSE THE CENSUS. Click on EDs in your search results to see options for viewing census pages. Or go to your favorite genealogy website and browse the census by selecting the state, county, town and ED. Censuses in 1880 and later typically give a street name and house number for most areas, so you can confirm you have the right listing. In earlier censuses, use the resident's and neighbors' names to determine if you have the right place.

4. KEYWORD-SEARCH CITY DIRECTORIES. In particular, check in

years when census records aren't available. Start with Ancestry.com's enormous subscription collection of city directories <search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2469> (free to access if your library offers Ancestry Library Edition). Search by name or use the keyword field to search by address. Note that the keyword field isn't forgiving about variant spellings, so try, for example, Third Street, Third St, 3rd Street and 3d St. *Avenue* may be abbreviated *Ave* or *Av*. Study several pages of the directory to see how addresses are formatted, and check the front pages for abbreviations. Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase ("223 Belmont").

If you lived in northern Massachusetts in 1820, you would've woken up one morning to find you lived in the brand-new state of Maine.

■ **LOOK FOR OLD PLAT MAPS** created by the local or county assessor showing property ownership, lot boundaries, block names and neighborhood developments. Ask for these at town or government offices, local historical and genealogical societies and libraries. Search online in your favorite web browser with the city, state and the phrase *plat map*. Browse major online map collections such as David Rumsey Map Collection <www.davidrumsey.com> and the Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection <www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>.

■ **CHECK SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS** (find a large collection at <www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn>) or historical atlases such as Baist's real estate atlases (search for *Baist real estate atlas* and a city name) to see building structures and possibly street addresses.

■ **LOOK FOR A GUIDE TO LOCAL STREET NAME CHANGES** in the local history or genealogy section of your local library, or an online database such as that hosted by the New Orleans Public Library <nutrias.org/facts/streetnames/namesa.htm>. Local genealogical society websites often have information on changes, and you may find them detailed in city directories published that year.

■ **ONCE YOU HAVE AN ADDRESS, SEARCH US CENSUS RECORDS** by street name and house number, following the step-by-step instructions in the box on the previous page. This can help you find elusive ancestors in the census; see whether other relatives lived there previously or subsequently and learn more about the history of the home.



Can the neighbors help?

If you can't find your family's home in a given census or city directory, their neighbors may be able to point you in the right direction. First, note the names of your family's neighbors in previous or later censuses and city directories. For the latter, keyword-search for the address in digitized directories or consult the criss-cross listings (if the directory has them), which are arranged by address. Then search for the folks next door and see if your family is near them. You may find that your relative's name was written or

indexed differently than you'd expect. You may also learn that someone else lived in their home at the time, or that the home doesn't appear to exist.

The Match-Making sidebar shows how you might compare the neighbors in two different record sets—in this case, a map and a US census listing—to confirm they refer to the same set of people. Several men named “J. Felix” lived in Somerset County, Pa., at the same time. The number of neighbors names appearing in both the 1876 map and the 1880 census helps confirm that the J.A. Felix on the map is the same as the John A. Felix in the census.

These strategies and principles all come together in the earlier case study from Bryant Street. In that case, maps led the way to street and address changes, with neighbors' names providing the final clues. That complicated research path eventually led to the home's front door—right where it was supposed to be. ■

SUNNY JANE MORTON is a *Family Tree Magazine* contributing editor who lives on Lake Erie, the country's “North Coast.” Colorado-based **RANDY MAJORS** <www.randymajors.com> created the Historical U.S. County Boundary Maps online tool.

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GOING EAST

Our expert shares six common obstacles for Eastern European genealogy—and how to overcome them.



by LISA A. ALZO

They say genealogy is a journey, not a sprint. But for those of us trying to trace ancestors back to Central and Eastern Europe, the journey seems to cover unpaved, bumpy terrain with endless obstacles. As a person with ancestors from several Eastern European countries, I can tell you: The hurdles are real. But they're not insurmountable. You can overcome name changes, migrating places and language barriers. I'll share six of the most common obstacles to discovering your roots in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and other countries of Eastern Europe—and more importantly, how to get past those problems and cross the family history finish line.

1 PLAYING NAME GAMES

Eastern European names are complex and downright challenging. It could be you don't have a consistent or correct spelling. Or you might have the right name, but can't seem to find it in an index. Name stumpers can be the result of an unfamiliar language, accent and handwriting; name changes; or the use of nicknames. As for immigrant ancestors from other places, the name that North American records call your Eastern European ancestors may or may not be the name he or she used back home. Use these strategies to help determine your immigrant ancestor's original name and how it might appear in US records:

- **Consider phonetics and alphabets.** Your ancestor's native language—whether Polish, Czech, Slovak, Latin, Hungarian, German or Russian—plays an important role when deciphering names. The Polish, Czech and Slovak languages have letters not in the English alphabet, and their pronunciations can trip up English speakers. This might result in an incorrectly transcribed name that stymies your searches in genealogical indexes and databases. For example, the Polish letter *Ł* (and the lowercase *ł*) is pronounced like an English *W*. It may be transcribed as an *L* in English, or the *l* may be transcribed as the similar-looking *t*. Similarly, the Polish *q* is pronounced *ahn* but often is transcribed as an *a* in English.

A helpful read is “Mutilation: The Fate of Eastern European Names in America” by William F. Hoffman (download a PDF at <pgsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Mutilation.pdf>). It discusses how phonetics impacted Czech,

In 1905, when this map was published, Austria-Hungary was the largest nation in Eastern Europe and included Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Romanians and Italians. Most of Poland was under Russian rule, as was Finland.

German, Polish, Slovak and Russian names when translated or pronounced in English. Also look up surnames and given names on Behind the Name <behindthename.com> for variants by country. Look for more surname clues at the Guild of One-Name Studies <guild-dev.org/index_A.html> and Eastern European-focused sites such as Moikrewni.pl <www.moikrewni.pl/mapa>, KdeJsme <kdejsme.cz>, and Origins of Last Names (Slovakia and Hungary) <www.pitt.edu/~votruba/qsonhist/lastnameslovakiahungary.html>.

- **Try alternate Soundex systems.** Many indexes that genealogists search use the Russell Soundex system to find records with variant surname spellings. That includes census and passenger list indexes. But if a website you're searching gives you the option, try alternative Soundex schemes such as Daitch-Mokotoff, which is designed to better handle Eastern European surnames. Learn more about Daitch-Mokotoff at <jewishgen.org/infofiles/soundex.html#DM>.

- **Look for nicknames, middle names and native first names from the home country.** Your Uncle Bill or Aunt Stella may have been born Bolesław or Stanisława. A person named Ludwig might be called Louis, Lewis or Lou in records—or all of the above. Try searching the web for the name and words like Polish (or Czech or Slovak) nicknames or diminutives. The page at <en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Polish_given_names>, for example, shows Polish given names, common nicknames and English equivalents.

- **Familiarize yourself with the script used in records from the time.** This will help you understand how handwriting could affect the way a name was transcribed. Look at the letters in other, easier-to-interpret names. Does a handwritten *P* resemble an *F*? Does a *J* look like a *Y*? This will help you find variations to try when searching databases and print records.

- **Make a timeline.** Variant name spellings can make it hard to tell if a record is for your ancestor. How do you know you've found the right

Perhaps you've determined the exact name of your ancestor's hometown, only to be thwarted when you can't locate it on a modern-day map.

Jakub Novotný? Make a timeline of all you've learned about him, so it's easier to see if his location at a given time matches a new record you've found. You can do this on paper, in your genealogy software or online tree, or with a utility such as Twile <twile.com>. You also can use your ancestor's family members to "anchor" him. Look for names of his parents, siblings, spouse or children in records with him—especially if one of them had an uncommon name. For instance, Jakub's sister Bohumila will be easier to ID in records, and you'll know you have the right family when you find the two names together.

• **Surnames may be wrong, but DNA doesn't lie.** A Y-DNA test can show when two same-named men are related, and estimate the number of generations back to their most recent common ancestor. Family Tree DNA <familytreedna.com> is the only major testing company offering Y-DNA tests; check its website for surname studies. Those with Czech roots will want to read about the Czech American DNA study at the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International's website <www.cgsi.org>, which has a listing of surnames that have participated in the study. More on DNA ethnicity estimates below.

2 **PARSING PERPLEXING PLACES** Determining an immigrant ancestor's town or village of origin is critical to your research success once you cross the ocean. Orienting yourself to the geographic area of research is always essential to genealogy, but probably even more so for those with Eastern European ancestors because of the area's complex history and shifting borders. The

tip

US immigration officials didn't change immigrants' names (or encourage them to do so). The article by Marian Smith at <ilw.com/articles/2005,0808-smith.shtm> explains how this myth arose—and why our ancestors often "Americanized" their own names.

homeland of your ancestors was most likely a multicultural society, evidenced by the number of languages in which records are written.

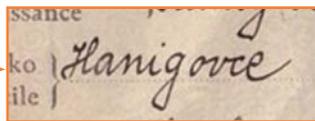
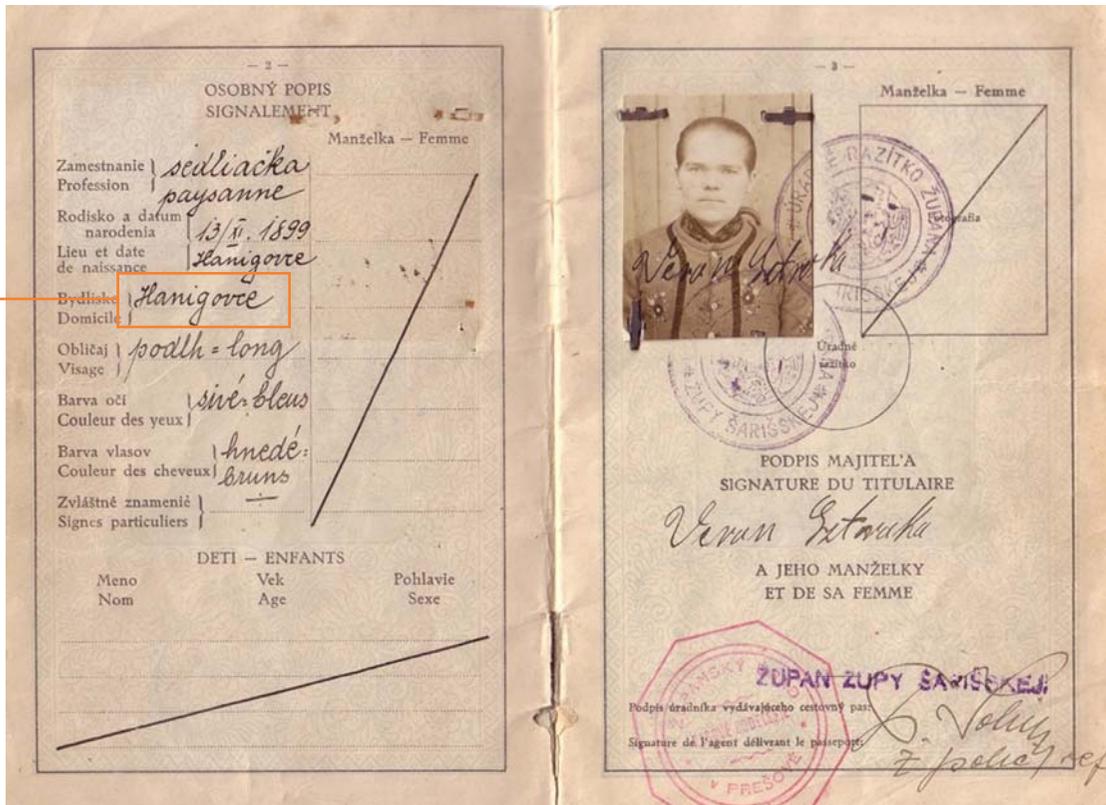
Just as with surnames, American record-keepers didn't usually change Eastern European place names intentionally. "Most immigrants were illiterate," Hoffman writes, "and probably didn't have a clue what *powiat* or *kreis* or *uyezd* they had lived in." Those Polish and German terms are administrative subdivisions comparable to counties and districts. "If, somewhere along the line an official made a mistake copying this information on a form, they couldn't correct him."

Hoffman adds that some immigrants left to avoid military conscription, debt or criminal charges; they might cover their tracks by giving vague or incorrect information about their origins. A lack of familiarity with Eastern European geography also contributed to distorted place names being passed down to modern researchers in family papers, on passenger lists and passports, and in vital records.

To sort out perplexing place names, tap into tools such as maps, atlases and gazetteers (geographical dictionaries that list places alphabetically, with descriptions of administrative divisions, population statistics and other information).

In the JewishGen Communities database and gazetteer, do sounds-like and partial-word searches if you don't know the spelling. You can search all Eastern European countries, or by specific country. For each locality, the search results will display the place's name(s) over time and in different languages, with the native name in bold. This tool can help you locate Eastern European towns whether or not you have Jewish roots. But it's not always 100 percent reliable for determining alternate place names. You may discover that some alternate forms of a town or village name are missing.

It helps to view digitized maps published around the time your ancestors lived in an area using the David Rumsey map collection <www.davidrumsey.com>, Foundation for East European Family History Studies Map Library <feefhs.org>, and Topographic Maps of Eastern Europe



Verona Sztarka's 1922 Czechoslovakian passport shows her place of residence (*bydlisko*) of Hanigovce. This village, located in the Prešov region of what's now Slovakia, might be called Hönigsdorf in German or Hönig in Hungarian.

<easteurotopo.org>. Check for print or microfilm maps at large genealogical libraries such as the Allen County (Ind.) Public Library <acpl.lib.in.us> and the Family History Library in Salt Lake City <www.familysearch.org>. To learn the county and district, main parish churches and religious makeup of the population, look up places in online gazetteers. Two that Eastern European genealogists commonly use are the 1877 *Dvorsák Gazetteer of Hungary* <kt.lib.pte.hu/cgi-bin/kt.cgi?konyvtar/kt03110501/0_0_1_pg_1.html> and the *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego (Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Countries)*, published between 1880 and 1902 <dir.icm.edu.pl/Słownik_geograficzny>.

The Family Tree Historical Maps Book: Europe <familytreemagazine.com/store/family-tree-historical-maps-book-europe> reproduces maps from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries to help you visualize how Eastern European boundaries changed over time. I also like *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Eastern Europe* by Dennis P. Hupchick and Harold E. Cox (Palgrave Macmillan) for its insight into political changes.

3

SPANNING GEOGRAPHY GAPS

Perhaps you've determined the exact name of your ancestor's hometown, but you can't locate it on a modern-day map. Places might be renamed because of political changes. For example, Eperjes, Hungary, became Prešov, Czechoslovakia, in 1920 (it's now in Slovakia). The historic Hungarian town of Herczegfalva became Mezőfalva after World War II. A village might be incorporated into a larger, adjacent town or city. You might see different hometowns listed in an ancestor's documents, as for my Slovak grandmother. Her domicile was Hanigovce in some papers, but Milpoš in others. From gazetteers and the book *Nazvy obcí Slovenskej Republiky (Names of Villages, Slovak Republic)* by Milan Majtan, I learned that Milpoš was a hamlet of Hanigovce until 1950, when it became its own village (see <milpos.sk>).

Pogroms and religious violence, particularly during the Holocaust, depopulated hundreds of Jewish neighborhoods and villages. Widespread upheaval after World War II included Operation Vistula, the forced resettlement of Ukrainians in Southern Poland (Galicia). Some villages became

Keyword Searching

Learning a few key words can help you understand Polish baptismal records like this 1790 Catholic Church register, written in Latin. It's available online from FamilySearch.

RELIGION (options include Catholic or not Catholic; the church was charged with recording all births, even for those of other religions)

HOUSE NUMBER

DAY AND MONTH

NAME

SEX (male, female)

LEGITIMATE

ILLEGITIMATE

PARENTS (father, mother)

GODPARENTS (name, status)

1790. Dies & Mensis.	Numerus Domus.	Nomen.	Religio		Sexus		Parentes.		Patrini.	
			Catholica	Acatholica	Mas	Foemina	legitimus Thori.	illegitimus Thori.	Pater.	Mater.
Die 23. Mensis Februarij.	7.	Marianna	-	-	1	1	Mathias Pacholczak Rusticus de Villa Grabowa Pater	Regina nata Paren- te Jaczak Mater.	Vincentij Nyncek + Marianna Dudzianka +	Rusticus de Villa Grabowa Rustica de eadem Villa
Die 20.							Franciscus	Salomda nata Paren-	Josephus Domanski	Rusticus de Villa

If you can identify the column headings in this record, you'll understand that Marianna Pacholczak was born Feb. 23, 1790, to Mathias, a peasant from Grabowa, and Regina (born Jaczak). Her godparents were Vincent Nyncek, also a peasant from Grabowa, and Marianna Dudzianka, from the same place ("de eadem villa").

defunct due to development, such as the construction of the Starina Reservoir in Eastern Slovakia's Snina District. Starting in 1981, it prompted the evacuation of seven villages.

Sometimes, a place name's prefix or suffix was removed or added over time (Velky Lucska becomes Lucska, now in Slovakia). See <iabsi.com/gen/public/place_name_terminology.htm> for a list of common place-name prefixes or suffixes, and their meanings. Or it might turn out that the place name you found isn't a city or town at all, but a different geographic term for a region, state, province or other area. Sometimes, these areas have well-defined boundaries; other times, they're only vaguely defined. And many Eastern European countries, including Austria,

Germany, Hungary and Poland, have rearranged and renamed their counties over time. This often obscures old regional names that were well understood by the immigrants of the time, but may not appear on modern maps. For example, Cechy is the Czech name for Bohemia, which once was the western part of what's now the Czech Republic). Siebenbürgen was a name for Transylvania, which is now central Romania.

The same geography tools that helped you pinpoint a place name also can get you over this hurdle. Interactive tools such as Google Earth <google.com/earth> let you overlay historical maps onto present-day ones, so you can see where a town is today. JewishGen's Communities Gazetteer <jewishgen.org/communities/loctown.asp>

provides community or village names in various languages, and includes political jurisdictions over time. It shows exact latitude and longitude coordinates, as well as direction and distance from major cities, the country in which the locality sits today, and other details.

4

BREAKING DOWN DNA

So you took a DNA test and your ethnicity estimate shows 95 percent Europe East. What does that mean?

While it takes some dedicated study to grasp the full power of using genetic genealogy to connect with cousins and solve research problems, we'll go over some basic points. First, your ethnicity estimates aren't necessarily exact. Instead, they're merely percentages of your autosomal DNA that the testing company's algorithm associates with its reference population from a particular geographic area. Changing borders and migratory populations, like those in Eastern Europe, can make it difficult for geneticists to determine which DNA characterizes which population group.

Furthermore, each testing company uses different reference populations and ethnicity breakdowns, so ethnicity results will vary by company. At press time, the major DNA testing companies reported on the following categories that relate to Eastern Europe. Use the web address provided to see the geographic areas each category includes:

- **23andMe:** Southern European, Eastern European, and Ashkenazi Jewish <23andme.com/ancestry-composition-guide>
- **AncestryDNA:** Eastern European, European Jewish, and Finnish and Russian <ancestry.com/dna/ethnicity/eastern-european> (see our January/February 2018 issue for information on place clues in your AncestryDNA "DNA Story")
- **FamilyTreeDNA:** Sephardic Jewish, Ashkenazi Jewish, Finland, West and Central Europe, Southeast Europe, and East Europe <familytree dna.com/learn/user-guide/family-finder-myftdna/myorigins-population-clusters>
- **LivingDNA:** Northeast Europe and the Baltics, Southeast Europe, Germanic, and Western Russia <www.livingdna.com/family-ancestry>
- **MyHeritage DNA:** Ashkenazi Jewish, Balkan, Baltic, East European, and Finnish <www.myheritage.com/help-center#/path/DNA/Ethnicity-Estimate>

DNA companies continually improve their ethnicity analyses to show heritage from more

regions. It's also important to note that because you inherit autosomal DNA randomly from your ancestors, some people on your family tree—usually, starting about four generations back—aren't represented in your autosomal DNA. This also explains why your sibling's ethnic breakdown can look different from yours: She may have inherited a couple of your Irish third-great-grandmother's chromosomes that you didn't get. And her DNA matches who are descended from that same ancestor won't be on your match list.

Ethnicity prediction is an evolving science, and in the future, it may be possible to more closely identify the source of your Eastern European DNA. In the mean time, focus on your genetic matches for family tree research, and increase your understanding of ethnicity estimates using the information your testing company provides.

5

THE RECORDS WALL

When you're researching Eastern European genealogy, record-finding obstacles increase once you get back to your ancestral village. Among the most valuable genealogical sources for these ancestors will be church and civil vital records created by clergy (mostly Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christian), Jewish congregational scribes or civil registrars. These are records of births, christenings, marriages, deaths, and burials, and they provide names, relationships, and the dates and places of births, marriages and deaths. In most cases, civil registration began only in the late 1800s. Jewish congregational records usually date from the early 1800s, and church records might date from the early 1600s or even earlier. For some areas, you also can research censuses, military and nobility records. But boundary changes, record loss and privacy laws, can make it difficult to track down and get access to records of your ancestors.

Start with FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org>, which has a large collection of digitized records from Eastern European countries. You



Examine Eastern European church records with us at <familytreemagazine.com/premium/eastern-european-church-records>. You can view a limited number of premium articles on our website each month, or get full access with a Premium subscription <familytreemagazine.com/store/family-tree-premium-membership>.

can search many of them online from home by registering for a free FamilySearch account. Some collections are restricted based on FamilySearch's agreement with the archives that houses the original records, and you may have to go to a local FamilySearch Center to view these records. Find a location near you at <www.familysearch.org/locations>.

You'll also find records and advice elsewhere online. I've listed some of my favorite Eastern European records sites in the box below, and provide lots more guidance on how to use them in my book *The Family Tree Polish, Czech, and Slovak Genealogy Guide* (Family Tree Books) <familytreemagazine.com/store/the-family-tree-polish-czech-and-slovak-genealogy-guide>.

If you're still striking out, consider hiring a professional researcher in your ancestor's area, who knows the local archives and the language. Search for a qualified researcher in the online directories of groups such as the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International <cgsi.org>, Polish Genealogical Society of Genealogists in America <pgsa.org>, Association of Professional Genealogists <apgen.org>, and the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists <www.icapgen.org>.

Eastern European Genealogy Websites

Czech Genealogy for Beginners

<czechgenealogy.nase-koreny.cz>

Federation of East European Family History Societies

<feefhs.org>

Geneteka (Poland) <geneteka.genealodzy.pl>

GenTeam (Austria) <genteam.at>

Hungaricana (Hungary) <hungaricana.hu/en>

Hungary Exchange <hungaryexchange.com>

Jewish Records Indexing: Poland <jri-poland.org>

JewishGen <www.jewishgen.org>

Portafontium (Bavarian-Czech) <portafontium.eu>

Poznan Project (Poland) <poznan-project.psnk.pl>

The Polish State Archives <szukajwarchiwach.pl>



LEAPING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

Records in Eastern Europe are in a mélange of different languages: Latin, German, Hungarian, Polish, Russian. The language of your ancestor's records depends on the time period, religion and ethnicity of the person named in the records, and the administrative language of the nation with jurisdiction over the locality. Many Eastern European towns changed hands several times over their history.

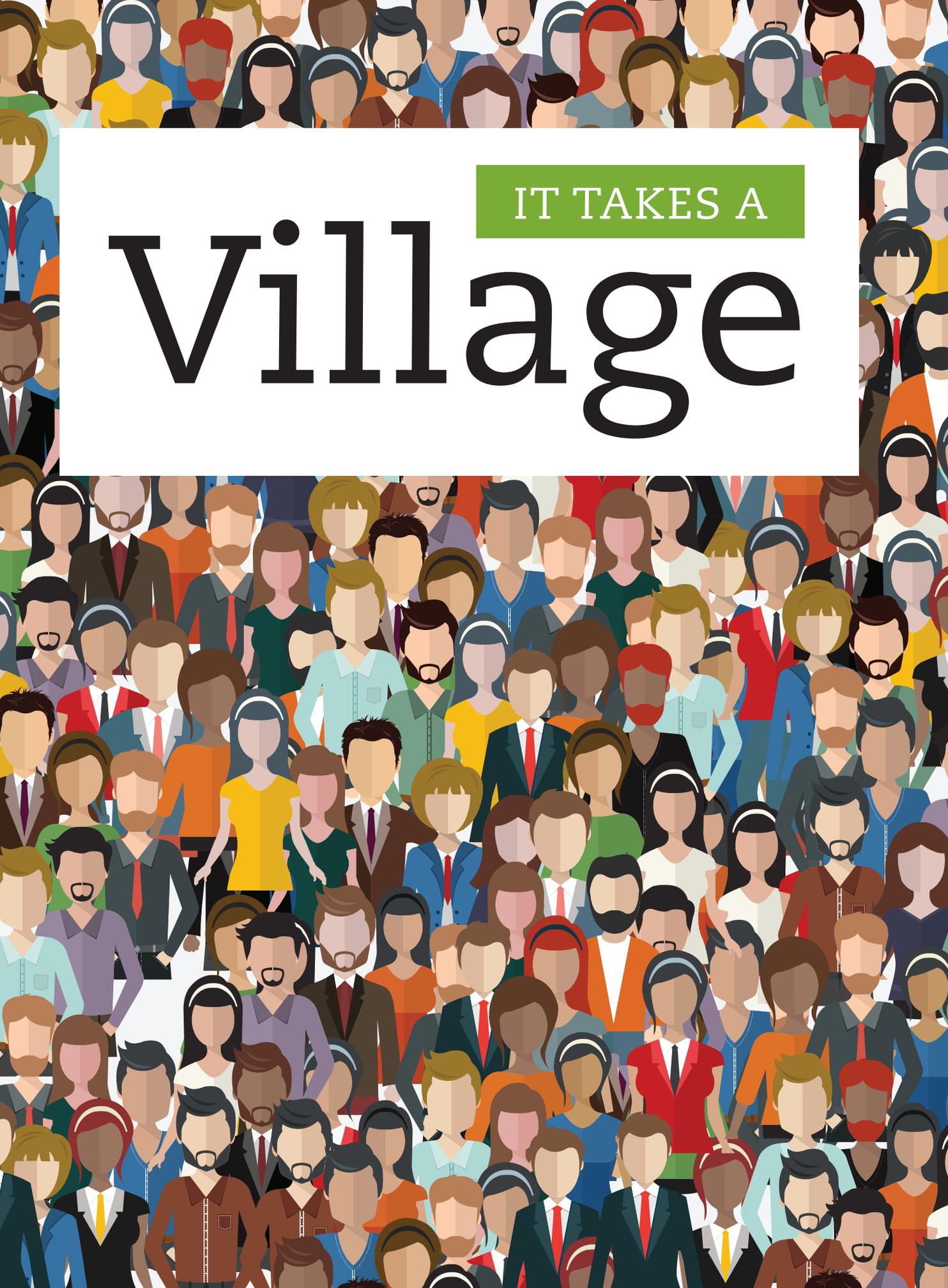
But you don't necessarily need to become fluent in Russian or earn a degree in Slavic languages. Focus instead on learning the basics of the alphabet, as well as dates, numbers and common genealogical terms. The most important record group you'll need help with is church records, primarily baptisms, marriages and burials. Luckily, church book entries generally follow a formula, so you'll be able to pick out the names and relationships.

Early church records were written in a narrative style and read much like a sentence. These records were formulaic, with information presented in a consistent order. In the 1800s, churches began organizing entries into columns. Once you identify the column headings, you'll find that the data contained therein is fairly standard: dates, given names, surnames and place names.

Seek translation assistance for the rest of the entry. Tools such as Google Translate <translate.google.com> can help with basic terms if you can make out the handwriting. Also use word lists on the FamilySearch Wiki <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogical_Word_Lists> and in the book series *In Their Words: A Genealogist's Translation Guide* by Jonathan Shea and William Hoffman (Language and Lineage Press). In Facebook groups like Genealogy Translations <[facebook.com/groups/genealogytranslation](https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogytranslation)>, you can post an image of a document and ask members for help.

Language barriers, perplexing places and other Eastern European genealogy hurdles might slow down your research and send you along a few twists and turns, but they need not stop you. With these tips and your research fortitude, your family tree will continue to flourish. ●

Lisa A. Alzo coaches Eastern European genealogists in Family Tree University courses and her book *The Family Tree Polish, Czech and Slovak Genealogy Guide* (Family Tree Books). Her Slovakian grandmother Verona Straka Figlar arrived at Ellis Island nearly 100 years ago.



IT TAKES A

Village



ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

Broaden your research horizons by studying your ancestor's friends, family and neighbors. This guide to cluster and collateral research will show you how.

by THE EDITORS OF FAMILY TREE MAGAZINE

Think of all the friends, neighbors and coworkers you see every day. How many of them will show up on your family tree one day? Probably just a few, if any. But you're part of a wider community that shapes who you are and the decisions you make just as much as (and sometimes more than) your blood relatives.

This was even truer for your ancestors, who often lived, worked and even immigrated in groups. Taking the extra time to study the individuals who were part of your ancestor's social network can lead you to surprising clues about your ancestors themselves. More importantly, having this wider view of your ancestor's relationships will enrich your research and breathe life into your ancestor's community.

It takes a village to raise a child—and, sometimes, to find an ancestor. Read on for our guide to using cluster and collateral research to study your ancestor's friends, family and community.

WHAT IS CLUSTER AND COLLATERAL RESEARCH?

First, let's get a couple of definitions out of the way:

- **Cluster research** examines the “clusters” of individuals who lived in your ancestor's community. This strategy places special emphasis on the friends, peers, neighbors, coworkers and other community members who were part of your ancestor's everyday life.
- **Collateral research** investigates your non-direct-line ancestors. Though you may not share much DNA with your great-great-grand-uncle, records of him can lead you to records of your ancestor.

Of course, you'll find overlap between the subjects of these research strategies. Your ancestor's siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles likely lived, worked and emigrated near your ancestor. They were your ancestor's “collateral” relatives, but also members of his cluster.



BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

By studying collateral kin and the “clusters” your ancestor belonged to, you’ll learn a lot about your ancestor himself. Or, at least, you’ll get closer to the documents you’re looking for.

For example, if you can’t determine the names of your ancestor’s parents, study records of his siblings. Look in census listings to find names of your ancestor’s siblings, then search for the sibling’s death certificate. Assuming your ancestor and his sibling had the same two parents, the parents listed on such a document will also be relevant to your research. Now, you can find the parents’ marriage certificate—which could lead you to your ancestor’s baptismal record that confirms his parents’ names.

Cluster and collateral research are most useful when you’ve hit a brick wall or are otherwise facing tricky genealogical challenges, such as:

- Missing links to a previous generation or a direct ancestor’s family
- Unknown biographical details
- Difficult-to-trace ancestors, especially immigrants who recently arrived to the United States, women and adoptees
- Individuals who have the same name
- Ancestors born before 1850 for whom few records exist
- Questions about identity, kinship or events (such as immigration, births or deaths)

These strategies can help you in other ways, as well. By looking at the broader scope of your ancestor’s life, you might be able to identify useful trends or add new meaning to your research. For example, perhaps folks alive in your family today were named after an ancestor’s inspiring friend, neighbor or extended family member. Or maybe your family was once part of a vibrant heritage society, and learning about it and its members will show how your family’s rituals, traditions or foods came to be.

Studying collateral kin, in particular, can turn up important information. Perhaps certain physical or mental health issues have appeared across generations of your family. Or maybe you discover that an extended family member worked in a similar profession, or endured financial or social hardships similar to those you’ve faced. By studying more individuals, you can make more of these connections to your family’s past.

Getting Friendly

At a loss for where you can learn about your ancestor’s friends, specifically? Look to records from these organizations, events and communities, which Lisa A. Alzo outlined in her article “Buddy System” from the March 2011 issue of *Family Tree Magazine*:

- Neighborhoods
- Weddings and funerals
- Church records
- Bars, pubs and taverns
- Schools
- Recreational sports teams

Read more online at <www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/buddy-system>.

WHERE TO SEARCH

Certain records mention multiple people and, thus, are more likely to include other members of your ancestor’s community. These strong sources for cluster and collateral research include:

- Censuses, which are organized geographically and group families and neighborhoods together
- City directories, which act like a snapshot of a community in time and will include local businessowners and tradespeople, plus your ancestor’s business partners
- Vital records, which include witnesses, informants and sponsors (all likely to be your ancestor’s relatives or close friends)
- Newspapers, particularly obituaries, birth/



death/marriage/anniversary notices and social/gossip columns

- Wills and probate records, which name heirs and next-of-kin as well as other surviving family members
- Land transfers, which may mention heirs or previous owners
- Military records, especially pension records (which mention next-of-kin) and applications for bounty land (which may include testimonials from those close to a servicemember)

Make sure that, as you review these records, you look at images of original documents whenever possible. In sources like census returns, you'll want to see your ancestor's listing in wider context. Who were the entries immediately before and immediately after your ancestor's family? Who lived in the house across the street? A database's keyword index won't include this contextual information—you'll have to look at an image of the census return.

tip

No discussion of cluster and collateral research would be complete without mentioning the “FAN” (Friends, Associates and Neighbors) Principle coined by Elizabeth Shown Mills. You can learn more about researching the “FAN Club” on Mills' website <www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-11-identity-problems-fan-principle>.

If your ancestor immigrated to this country, be sure to look at passenger lists as well. Whole communities often came to the New World together, so your ancestor may have traveled on a boat from the old country with his neighbors.

EIGHT STEPS FOR BETTER RESEARCH

Now that you know why and where you should research clusters and collateral relatives, we can talk about how you should go about doing it. Follow these eight basic steps to discover the members of your ancestor's community.



1. Gather information

What do you already know about your ancestor? Do any of his records that you already have mention his siblings, aunts, uncles, friends, etc.? Take a broad overview of the records you already have for your ancestor. (The Home Sources Checklist on page 14 is a good place to start.) See if any people continually crop up as:

- Witnesses on deeds and other documents
- Neighbors
- Heirs in wills or other estate documents
- Business partners or coworkers

Also examine the people buried next to your ancestor, and determine what (if any) groups your ancestor was a member of: churches, professional organizations, fraternal orders and so on.

2. Get organized

Use forms to keep all your data in one place. Family group sheets (which document pairs of parents and their children) could be helpful, as could the Cluster and Collateral Research Worksheet on the previous page.

3. Identify gaps

Now that you've laid out all of your information, what are you missing? Are there relationships you still haven't been able to determine? Are there specific individuals in your ancestor's family or community who you'd like to know more about?

4. Create research questions

Turn these gaps into queries that you can examine with research. Format them as questions, and make them specific—for example, "Was John Smith the brother of Adam Smith?" rather than "Who was John Smith?"

5. Research

Seek out records collections and sources most likely to solve your specific research question. Take notes on your sources as you go: what you found (and didn't find) there, how complete the source was, whether or not the text was legible, and so on.

6. Analyze your findings

Look at the data you've turned up. Hopefully, multiple sources will have provided answers to your research question. Evaluate the trustworthiness of these sources. Was the record cre-

tip

Though we're sharing these eight steps as key to cluster and collateral research, consider using them when researching direct-line ancestors as well. Having a consistent, methodical approach to your research will yield better results and more organized data.

ated with firsthand knowledge of the event, or did the information come secondhand? Are you looking at an original record, or another version of the data such as a transcription, translation or index? Original records created close in time to an event are generally more reliable than copies of records or records created long after an event occurred. This is especially important if you find sources that include conflicting information. Consider which sources are more likely to be correct.

7. Draw conclusions

Having evaluated your evidence, determine an answer to your research question. Include it in your family tree software, online family tree or wherever else you're storing your data. Make sure to cite your sources, and make a note if you still feel the conclusion is questionable.

8. Start over

Go back to step 1, and consider another ancestor, cluster or collateral relative. A genealogist's work is never done! ●



Finding Your Birth Family with DNA

DNA testing has opened a broad new avenue for adopted people to find their birth families. Our guide maps out your journey of discovery.

BY DIAHAN SOUTHARD

👤 **NEARLY 3 MILLION** US children were placed into adoption between 1945 and 1975, the only years when official government statistics exist. Formal adoptions peaked in 1970 at 175,000. (Neither figure captures informal adoptions that weren't documented in the courts.)

Approximately 5 million Americans alive today are adopted. They have memories of Christmases and birthdays and baseball games and vacations at the lake. They've lived—and are still living—full lives alongside the families who raised them. But many adoptees nonetheless have a longing to know why they have green eyes and high cheekbones, and whether their family histories include diabetes or heart disease. In increasing numbers, adoptees and the children and grandchildren of adoptees are turning to DNA testing to learn those unknown parts of their personal stories. We'll outline the process of finding your birth family with DNA.

A DNA test reunited Patrick Meeker of St. Louis with his birth parents Mary and Barry Drotar of Littleton, Colo., in 2016. In 1967, the then-teenage couple gave up their son for adoption in Michigan. Meeker's search was unusually lucky: He immediately found a second cousin match who knew the family history, and was on the phone with his birth mother within five days of receiving his test results. The *Denver Post* covered the family reunion; see <www.denverpost.com/2016/06/27/ancestry-dna-adoptee-biological-family-colorado> for the full story.



Like any journey of self-discovery,
taking a DNA test to try to discover your
biological ancestry is fraught with uncertainties.

BEFORE YOU TEST

I had a client who tested her own DNA in hopes of finding her dad's biological father. She found a second cousin match who led her to the right family. Genealogical sleuthing helped her form a hypothesis for the identity of her biological grandfather. After I confirmed her findings, she said, "I honestly didn't think it would be so easy."

Of course, it isn't usually that easy. But your chances of finding a second cousin or closer match in autosomal DNA databases are skyrocketing as more and more people test with services like AncestryDNA <ancestry.com/dna>, Family Tree DNA <www.familytreedna.com>, 23andMe <23andme.com> and MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com>.

Before you even take a DNA test, set reasonable expectations about what you may find and how it will affect others. Like any journey of self-discovery, taking a DNA test to try to discover your biological ancestry is fraught with uncertainties. Where do you start? How will you interpret the results? Do you really want to know the real story?

Before you find that match, you must decide how the discovery will affect that person, who likely doesn't know you exist. You need to balance your right to know with their right to not know. There are no rules on how this should work, but the general consensus among researchers experienced in birth family reunions is that as an adoptee, you have the right to know your heritage, but you don't have the right to a relationship with your biological family.

Consider turning to loved ones or a professional for help deciding whether to embark on your search or for support along the way. You may find comfort and research guidance in the experiences of others on the same journey; try online groups such as DNAAdoption Community <www.facebook.com/DnaAdoption> and Search Angels <www.searchangels.com/searching>.

You might want to know just your ethnic background. But given the current composition of DNA databases, it's futile to think you'll just learn your ethnicity percentages and that's as far as it'll go. If you truly don't want to find your birth family, your best options are to test at LivingDNA <www.livingdna.com>, which currently doesn't provide cousin matching (they plan to in the future, but you'll likely be able to opt out), or 23andMe, which lets you opt out of getting matches.

TESTING TIME

To learn about your biological family, you need as large a pool of potential matches as possible. Currently, of the four companies providing cousin matching, you can get into three of them for the price of one. Start by testing with AncestryDNA. When you have your results, log in to your account and use the settings menu at the top right of the DNA home page to download your raw DNA data to your computer. Then upload that data to Family Tree DNA and MyHeritage by following the instructions on their websites (for more help, see <www.yourDNAguide.com/transferring>).

If you already know one parent, try to have that known parent, or a half sibling or cousin on that side, tested. If your DNA match also matches that known relative, you'll know the match is related on your known side.

An autosomal DNA test isn't the only test that can aid in your birth family search. The Y-DNA (direct male line) and mitochondrial or mtDNA (direct female line) tests are worth considering because you'll know resulting cousin matches are related through the direct male or direct female line.

MtDNA testing probably won't lead to major discoveries about a biological parent. MtDNA keeps a meticulous record of your direct maternal line ancestors. You have the same mtDNA as your mother, who has the same as her mother, who has the same as her mother, and so on back to ancient times. Someone who has the same mtDNA as you shares an ancestor on that maternal line, but the question of when that ancestor lived becomes an issue. An exact mtDNA match could be your mother, your sister, or your 20th cousin. There's no good way to tell the difference.



TIP: "Search angels" are volunteers who help adoptees find their families, including with DNA research. Request to join the Adoption Search Angels Yahoo! group at <groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/adoption-search-angels/info>. Find Facebook <www.facebook.com> groups by searching for *adoption search angels* plus the state name.

If you're a man searching for your birth family, your Y-DNA is far more valuable. Women, as you know, don't have Y-DNA and can't take this test. Y-DNA works similarly to mtDNA, except it reveals origin and match information for your paternal line. The ethnic origin information—called a haplogroup—might tell you if you're Jewish or African or Native American, but more often than not, it'll indicate only that your origins lie somewhere in Europe.

But your Y-DNA match list might reveal an important clue: your surname. In most cultures, the surname is passed father to son, just like Y-DNA. If your Y-DNA match list at Family Tree DNA (the only company offering full Y-DNA testing) has a bunch of guys with the surname Butler, that could be your biological father's surname. It'll help if you have at least 67 Y-DNA markers (or locations) tested. Then, pay attention to the Genetic Distance column in your table of matches. The genetic distance between you and a match will be 3 or lower if you share a recent common ancestor. Because Y-DNA mutates slightly more frequently than mtDNA, it's easier to estimate how far back a common ancestor might've lived.

While Y-DNA, and occasionally mtDNA, might provide important clues in your search, they'll rarely confirm that a match is a close relative. For that, you need autosomal DNA.

EXAMINING AUTOSOMAL MATCHES

When you log in to review the results of your autosomal DNA test for the first time, your ethnicity chart may distract you with colors, maps and percentages. These are alluring, especially if you've never had any indication where you're from. With one click of a mouse you go from drifting in a sea of possibilities, to dropping anchor in the Baltic Sea or the English Channel. Keep in mind, though, that these percentages aren't always accurate and can vary depending on the testing company—see the July/August 2015 *Family Tree Magazine* <familytreemagazine.com/store/more-resources/family-tree-magazine/family-tree-magazine-digital/family-tree-magazine-july-august-2015-download> for more on understanding ethnicity results.

To identify close biological relatives, turn to your list of matches—other test-takers who have some of the same DNA you do. Follow these three steps:

1. LOOK FOR A SECOND COUSIN OR CLOSER MATCH. Matches are ranked starting with the closest, and the website predicts a relationship (such as sibling or third-to-fifth cousin) for each one. You might find a parent or sibling on your match list, making things simple. Otherwise, you want a second cousin or closer match. You can go through the process with more-distant cousins, but it'll be significantly more complicated and time-intensive.

2. CHECK YOUR MATCH'S PEDIGREE CHART FOR A COMMON ANCESTOR. For example, second cousins share great-grandparents, so you'll know that one of your match's four sets of great-grandparents also are *your* great-grandparents.

5 STEPS to Finding Your Birth Family With DNA

1

Take an autosomal DNA test and transfer your results to as many testing services as possible.

2

Look for a second cousin or closer match.

3

Check the appropriate generation in this match's pedigree chart for common ancestor candidates.

4

Use triangulation to narrow the candidates to one set of shared ancestors.

5

Research the descendants of this ancestral couple to identify individuals who were in the right place nine months before your birth date.

This can be trickier than it sounds. Your testing company estimates your relationship based on the amount of DNA you share, measured in centimorgans (cM). But due to the random nature of DNA inheritance, a given relationship can have varying amounts of shared DNA. For example, relatives who share 250 cM could be second cousins, first cousins twice removed, or some other genetically equivalent relationship. To determine your actual relationship, compare the number of shared centimorgans to a table like the one at <thegeneticgenealogist.com/2017/08/26/august-2017-update-to-the-shared-cm-project> (click the Relationship Chart image for a larger view), which shows ranges of shared centimorgans for known relatives who've tested their DNA. You also can download our free Relationship Chart at <familytreemagazine.com/cheatsheet/genealogyessentials> to see the average amount of shared DNA for different types of relatives.

Keep in mind that if you're much older or younger than your match, you could be a "removed" relative. For example, if you're 68 and your match is 28 (which you might be able to guess from a picture or from the birth years of her parents or grandparents), then you're likely once removed. This means you're a generation closer to your shared ancestors than she is, and you'll need to look a generation further back in her pedigree chart for the common ancestor. For example, if you share 500 cM with Amber, and the table indicates you're first cousins once removed (1C1R), instead of looking at Amber's two sets of grandparents (as you would for a first cousin), you'd evaluate her four sets of great-grandparents.

You could perform this same process for a third cousin, but instead of having four sets of great-grandparents to evaluate, you'd have eight sets of great-great-grandparents, making the process more difficult. If your match doesn't have a pedigree chart posted, try the tips at familytreemagazine.com/premium/no-tree-dna-matches. You may need to message him or her to ask for a tree, which can raise some touchy issues—see the sidebar for tips on making that initial contact.

3. NARROW YOUR COMMON ANCESTOR CANDIDATES TO THE ONE CONNECTING YOU. A good way to figure out which grandparent or great-grandparent couple you share with your match is through triangulation, using the Shared

Matches or "in common with" tool. Your match list might contain just one second cousin, but it likely lists third or fourth cousin matches who are also related to one of the four sets of great-grandparents. The shared matches tool finds your matches who share DNA with both you and your second cousin match. You can then look through the pedigree charts of those shared matches for evidence of a connection to one of the candidate great-grandparent couples.

For example, say you have a second cousin match JSBrown68. You write down the names of his great-grandparents, and one couple is Mary Ann Waterton and Wesley Hall. When you look at the DNA matches you and JSBrown68 have in common, one has an online tree with Halls in it. Another has Watertons in his tree. This is a clue that Mary and Wesley are your great-grandparents. The July/August 2017 *Family Tree Magazine* familytreemagazine.com/store/family-tree-magazine-july-august-2017-digital-issue can help you use this type of triangulation analysis to determine how you're related to your matches.

4. RESEARCH FORWARD IN TIME. Once you've identified your ancestral couple, it's time to research in genealogical records. You want to identify all of Mary and Wesley's grandchildren and determine where they were about nine months prior to the date you were born.

How to Make Contact

As Blaine Bettinger states in *The Family Tree Guide to Genetic Genealogy and DNA Testing* familytreemagazine.com/store/guide-to-dna-testing-and-genetic-genealogy, "DNA does not have a monopoly on family secrets." DNA testing has perhaps made it easier to uncover uncomfortable truths about our families, but genealogists have been discovering secrets for decades. These ethical dilemmas aren't new—just more common.

As genealogists unintentionally discover the secrets of others, we need to ask ourselves questions about the ethical issues. Whose right is it to discover these relationships, and whose right is it to reveal them? Who will be impacted—and how—when surprises come to light?

June's response when my mom and I reached out to her is, I think, a model for those navigating similar situations. She responded promptly that she couldn't

promise any answers, but would be in touch. Remember, we didn't know if June was a first or second cousin. It was possible that one of her uncles had fathered a child unbeknownst to his family (and possibly himself). This news could certainly upend the lives of people June knew and loved. She understood that this was not her secret alone to reveal, and took time to consult with family on what her role should be in helping us. Then she was forthright with the information she shared.

When you're contacting a match for the first time in your search for close biological relatives, it's important to strike a balance between honesty and not scaring the person away. I find the best approach is to just state the facts of what you see, and don't provide your own interpretation.

For example, you can say that your DNA identifies you and your match as second cousins, meaning that you share great-

grandparents. Share that you don't know all your great grandparents, and you'd love to find out more about your match's great-grandparents to see how you might connect.

If the match has an online family tree with a couple who seems promising, mention that the person's ancestors Michael and Mary are in the same location you'd expect your ancestors to be in, and request more information about that couple.

Add at the end that it would be lovely to hear from your match, even if he doesn't know anything about his family history, which may improve your chances of receiving a response.

See dna-explained.com/2015/08/11/autosomal-dna-testing-101-tips-and-tricks-for-contact-success for help sending messages in each DNA service, and more tips on what to say.

You might find a parent or sibling on your match list, making things simple. Otherwise, you want a second cousin or closer match.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

So the process is simple: Find a second cousin or closer match, determine which generation has your connection, use shared matches to identify a possible ancestral couple, then research their descendants. My mom was adopted as an infant, and our search for her birth family shows how you can leverage your DNA match list to find your ancestors.

After having mostly fourth cousins show up on her match page, Mom and I were thrilled when we saw June, a “first-to-second cousin” match at Family Tree DNA. If June (who gave her OK to share this story) were a first cousin, she and my mom would have the same grandparents and mom’s father would be June’s uncle. (Because of other research, we were pretty sure June was on Mom’s paternal side.) If June were a second cousin, she and Mom would share a set of great-grandparents. This was before the Shared cM Project began, or we would’ve been able to see right away in its table that June and my mom were very likely second cousins.

June didn’t have a pedigree online, so we contacted her (see the box on the previous page). After consulting with her relatives, she sent us some family information. Other members of her family also had tested. By studying the family tree data and comparing the matches Mom and June shared, we determined that my mom and June were second cousins and identified their common great-grandparents. Mom’s father was one of their grandsons.

Next, we researched genealogical records to identify all the couple’s grandchildren and theorize, based on their locations around the time of Mom’s birth, which grandson was the most likely candidate to be my mom’s father. Patience was key: The great-grandparents had 13 children and around 130 grandchildren to track down. We did ultimately identify the right grandson and Mom is in touch with her birth family.

Be prepared for bumps along the way. As you can see, this process is dependent on other people. You need a second cousin to take a DNA test. You need him to link his results to a pedigree chart and/or to communicate with you. Then, if you can locate close relatives, you may need answers your questions about your birth family.

The more I do genealogy, the more I notice the magical power of timing. Just because you looked for that court record today and didn’t find it, doesn’t mean it won’t be there tomorrow. While it might seem like anyone who gets a

DNA test must be interested in finding cousins, that’s not the case. People test for different reasons—curiosity about ethnicity, a short-lived interest in genealogy, a gifted test—and sometimes you have to be patient when waiting for a second cousin to show up or for a response to your contact.

Whatever the outcome, your DNA testing experience will change how you see yourself and your family. It may draw you closer to each other or push you apart, depending in part on your attitude and perspective. You might or might not find what you hoped for. The journey is filled with twists and turns, and it’s up to you to decide whether you want to take it. ■

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DIAHAN SOUTHARD founded the DNA testing consulting firm Your DNA Guide <www.yourdnaguide.com>.

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- DNA testing resources <familytreemagazine.com/articles/dna/tips-resources-dna-testing-genealogy-research>
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- Free e-book: *Which DNA Test Is Right for Me?* <familytreemagazine.com/freebie/which-dna-test-is-right-for-me>



- What to do when your DNA match doesn't have a tree <familytreemagazine.com/premium/no-tree-dna-matches>
- Solving research problems with genetic genealogy <familytreemagazine.com/premium/dna-genetic-genealogy-success-stories>
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Be Kind, Rewind

Follow these four steps to fact-check your research using family tree software and websites.

by RICK CRUME

Someone has probably asked how you could possibly research your family history for so long and *still* not have it finished. But, as any genealogist knows, there are always more ancestors to find—and better ways of organizing the research you’ve already done. In fact, a thorough review of your family tree might reveal new avenues for research.

By “rewinding” your research, you can take your genealogy back to the basics to help you identify potential errors you’ve made. Returning to your roots can also give you a fresh perspective on your family and help you better understand the research challenges you face.

Fortunately, redoing your research doesn’t have to be difficult or feel redundant. Genealogy software and online family trees offer many tools that automate the process. Here are four steps you can take to rewind your research with easy-to-use features from the following services.

1 FIND AND FIX DATA PROBLEMS IN YOUR TREE.

You don’t necessarily have to go over your whole family tree with a fine-tooth comb looking for errors. Most genealogy software and online family trees can help you find and correct common problems, such as a child born before his parent or an incorrect place name.

ANCESTRY MEMBER TREES

The site will alert you to a potential problem if you attempt to enter unlikely or impossible vital event dates, such as someone dying before

he was born. However, there's currently no tool to find errors already in your tree or that get added via other methods.

THE FAMILYSEARCH FAMILY TREE

A data-problem icon—a red square with a white exclamation mark—signals impossible or unlikely data. For example, it flags someone being married before he was born or a person living for more than 120 years.

FAMILY TREE MAKER

By default, the program alerts you when you enter an unlikely birth, marriage or death date or an unrecognized place name.

Several options under the Tools menu will help you find and fix data problems already in your file. Select Resolve All Place Names to find unrecognized place names. For example, if you entered *Stonington, CT*, the program suggests Stonington, New London, Connecticut, USA.

To accept a suggestion, check the box for the suggested place name and click OK. Likewise, the Convert Names option is useful if your file has names in all capital letters. You can convert names like JOHN WILLIAM SMITH to either John William SMITH or John William Smith.

LEGACY FAMILY TREE

Select Potential Problems from the Tools menu to check for common issues, such as someone being born after his date of marriage or non-standard entries in a name field. Also from the Tools menu, select US County Verifier, then USA County Verification to check for invalid county names in US locations. This tool will flag a county that didn't exist on the specified date, as well as misspellings and (if you choose) place names in your tree that don't include a county.

ROOTSMAGIC

Select Tools > Problem Search > Problem List to check for problems, such as someone born before a parent was born or after a parent had died. Select Data Clean from the Tools menu to find and correct problems or inconsistencies with names and place names, such as abbreviations or improper capitalization.

Select CountyCheck Explorer from the Tools menu to find when counties were created (and, if relevant, disbanded) in the United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain. The Explorer also tells you the parent counties from which a county was formed, as well as the counties that were formed from it.

2 TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HINTS.

The major genealogy websites continually add new family trees and historical records, but you don't need to keep repeating your searches to find new matches. Genealogy software and online family trees do that job for you automatically—though, of course, you'll want to assess the hints' accuracy before adding anything to your tree.

ANCESTRY MEMBER TREES

Ancestry works in the background to find matches among people in your Member Tree, its historical record collections and Public Member Trees. Look for a green leaf while viewing your tree in pedigree view, as these indicate Ancestry

Rewinding Your Research at a Glance

1 Find and fix data problems in your tree.

- Make sure vital event dates are at least possible.
- Standardize place names.
- Avoid abbreviations.

2 Take advantage of hints.

- Carefully analyze hints before adding new information to your tree.
- Manually search collections not included in the site's record hinting.

3 Follow up on clues and fill in gaps.

- Re-examine records (especially census returns) for clues to other sources.
- Use tools such as the Record Detective on MyHeritage to find more record matches.

4 Document all your facts.

- Record where you found each piece of information so you and other researchers can evaluate accuracy.
- Use your genealogy software or online family tree to find facts lacking source documentation.

By “rewinding” your research, you can take your genealogy back to the basics to help you identify potential errors you’ve made.

has found potential record matches in your tree. To review them, click on the person’s name in the tree, then on the link showing the number of Ancestry hints.

You can also review hints by clicking the Hints tab on a person’s profile page. Click Ignore if a hint doesn’t pertain to this person. Click Review to view more details about the hint. If it looks like a good match, click Yes. Then you can compare information in your tree with information in the record. Check the boxes beside information in the record that you want to copy to your tree then click Save to Your Tree.

Keep in mind that hints find possible matches only in censuses, vital records and Public Member Trees. Most of Ancestry’s collections aren’t covered by hints, so you still need to search them manually.

In certain cases, Ancestry will also provide record hints directly in your family tree. When viewing your family tree in pedigree or family view, you’ll notice that end-of-line people have links to Add Father or Add Mother. Ancestry sometimes suggests a Potential Father or Potential Mother for these individuals based on record hints, saving you from having to add them manually. Click on the potential parent’s link to review the details. Carefully analyze the potential parent’s profile and evaluate the source citations, then click Yes to add the parent if the hint is a match.

FAMILYSEARCH FAMILY TREE

In tree view, click Options in the upper-right corner to select items to display in the tree, such as record hints, research suggestions, data problems and more. Those items also appear in person view. In either view, click the blue icon to view record hints for that person. You can review each hint, determine if it’s a good match and select information to extract to a profile in the Family Tree, along with an image of the original record.

For example, my grandmother’s cousin DuBois Hasbrouck Cornish had eight record

hints that revealed a lot of interesting details. His passport application from 1919 contained a photo of him and indicated he was a musician planning to get married in Luxembourg and study music in France. Fast-forward to the 1940 census: The 43-year-old lived with his wife in Arizona and worked as a musician in an orchestra. His WWII draft registration card from 1942 showed that he was age 46 and living in Glendale, California. By viewing an image of the record, I was able to see his physical description on the reverse side of the card: 168 pounds; 5 feet, 10.5 inches tall; and a ruddy complexion.

FINDMYPAST

Your home page on Findmypast has a link to view hints in your family tree. Whether you display your tree in family, pedigree or another view, an orange circle shows how many hints were found for each person in historical records on Findmypast. Click on a circle to view the hint or on My Hints in the upper-right corner to view all new hints in the tree. After clicking on a hint, you can reject it outright or review it. After reviewing a record to determine if it’s a valid match, you can extract information from it to a profile in your tree, along with an image of the original record.

My Findmypast trees have hints in a variety of records from both sides of the Atlantic: US, Canadian and British census records, US vital records, English and Welsh parish registers, English and Welsh civil registration indexes and British army service records. For example, William Morgan, my immigrant ancestor’s brother who remained in Wales, initially had 18 hints, including the 1841 census, which shows him and his family still living on the family farm.

MYHERITAGE TREES

Icons indicating record hints appear in both family and pedigree views when MyHeritage finds a match between someone in your tree and the trees and/or historical record collections on MyHeritage. A green icon indicates pending

Re-examine records for information you missed. US census records, in particular, often have overlooked clues.

Smart Matches (matches in family trees), and a brown icon signals pending Record Matches. Click on a person's name to display an individual summary, which shows the number of both types of matches. Or click on an icon to go directly to the matches.

To review all the matches in your tree, hover your cursor over the Discoveries tab and select matches by people or matches by source. You can also view Smart Matches and Record Matches in Family Tree Builder <www.myheritage.com/family-tree-builder>, the free genealogy software from MyHeritage.

It pays to check matches for your direct ancestors, and their relatives, too. My great-great-grandfather Ithamar Cooley had MyHeritage Smart Matches in many family trees, plus five Record Matches, including the 1880 census. But his brother Dennis Nelson Cooley had even more Record Matches, including entries in the *Compilation of Published Sources*, a free collection of books and journals. A Record Match from one 1924 book showed his line of descent from a Revolutionary War soldier, and another Record Match (a Cleveland genealogy published in 1899) gave detailed information on each generation of the family back to another 17th-century immigrant.

LEGACY FAMILY TREE (DELUXE EDITION ONLY)

To adjust hint settings, click on the Options tab, then Customize. Then click View and scroll down to "8.13 Perform Background Legacy Hints." To get hints, make sure the box to "Show hint result icons in Legacy" is checked. Click on Select Background Hints to choose where you want to get hints. (You can also right-click on an orange hint icon in family or pedigree view to change the hint settings.) By default, only MyHeritage was checked. I added FamilySearch, Findmypast and GenealogyBank.

When Legacy finds hints, an orange circle icon appears next to the person's name in family and pedigree view. Click an icon to view a summary of the hints, then click a hint to open

the website with more details. Most of my hints are Smart Matches—that is, matches with family trees on MyHeritage. After reviewing a potential match, you can confirm or reject it. Hint results in Legacy show how many hints are pending, confirmed and rejected from each service. You can manually extract information from a hint to Legacy.

ROOTSMAGIC

Use RootsMagic as your genealogy hub, and you can get hints from the four largest genealogy websites—Ancestry, FamilySearch, Findmypast and MyHeritage. A light bulb next to a name in Pedigree, Family or Descendant view indicates that hints exist. Just click on the bulb to see them. RootsMagic will display the number of pending, confirmed, rejected and total WebHints on each site. Click on a hint count to view the actual hints.

Select File Options from the Tools menu to enable WebHints for one or more of the four websites and then select options for each one. You must enter your FamilySearch login and password to get hints from that site. To get WebHints from Ancestry, you must upload your tree to Ancestry or download your Ancestry Member Tree to RootsMagic.

WebHints quickly turned up lots of information on Jacob Imboden, a captain in the Confederate army who later settled in Honduras, where he had a large mining operation and was killed in 1899. FamilySearch has a record of his marriage to Rebecah J. Mims in Kentucky in 1869. Likewise, WebHints flagged matches in Ancestry Member Trees, which provided key details on his family, including names, dates and places. Also on Ancestry: his passport application from

tip

Make sure you download records you don't want to lose, especially documents from subscription sites.

1884, which gave a physical description and said he intended to travel to Central America and South America. MyHeritage had an article from *The Pittsburgh Press* reporting his murder.

3 FOLLOW UP ON CLUES AND FILL IN GAPS.

Re-examine records for information you missed the first time. US census records, in particular, often have clues that you may have overlooked. Have you found everyone who might appear in them, and investigated all the details in each entry?

For example, are you missing children who died in infancy? The 1900 and 1910 censuses indicated how many children a woman had borne and how many were still living, and a discrepancy between the two numbers can provide additional avenues of research.

And have you checked passenger lists and naturalization records? The censuses from 1900 to 1930 asked for both the year of immigration and whether the person was naturalized or alien. Information in either column should prompt you to look for those kinds of records.

The four largest genealogy websites have every-name indexes to the US federal census from 1790 to 1940. But FamilySearch and MyHeritage each have additional tools that help you identify missing ancestors in census records:

- **FamilySearch:** Research suggestions appear as purple icons in landscape, portrait and descendency tree views and on the person page. (If you don't see them, click Options at the upper right of the screen and select Research Suggestions.) A suggestion might say "Possible Missing Child" or "Person May Have Another Spouse." In the latter case, the site has flagged the person simply because he or she outlived his or her most recent spouse long enough to have remarried.

- **MyHeritage:** When you get hints or use SuperSearch to find historical records, Record Detective examines the matching records to see if they're connected to any other people in MyHeritage family trees. If so, those people might be linked to records that pertain to your target person. For example, when I click the brown Record Matches icon for my grandfather Frank Miles Crume (or select census records from the Research tab, then search on him), the matches include family trees and census records.

If I click on one of those matches to review the record, but keep scrolling down, I come to the Record Detective results with matches in additional family trees and census years.

4 DOCUMENT ALL YOUR FACTS.

Naturally, you want to make sure your family history is as accurate as possible. When compiling names, dates, places and relationships from multiple sources, you're bound to come across conflicting information. And some family stories might be more legend than fact. But as long you document the source—that is, you note where you found each piece of information, whether it was a family Bible record or an oral interview—people can assess your research's reliability and maybe even re-examine it.

Some genealogy software and online family trees give you tools to help you improve your source documentation.

FAMILYSEARCH FAMILY TREE

Click on a purple icon—the one used for research suggestions—and sometimes you'll find that it says, "This person has no sources attached to his or her information." Click Show Details to review hints to records on FamilySearch, but you can also cite sources you've found elsewhere. In Person view, click on the Sources tab, then Add Source. Fill out the form and optionally link the citation to a link or a FamilySearch Memory, such as a scanned document or some other piece of media. Check the box to Add Source to My Source Box so you can reuse the source without having to retype it.

FAMILY TREE MAKER

Click Publish > Collections > Source Reports > Undocumented Facts to create a report of facts without sources. If you save the report as a TXT file, you can open it in Excel and sort by place.

ROOTSMAGIC

Select Reports > Lists > Fact List, then click Create Report. Then you can create a list of facts without sources. You can optionally limit it to selected people. ●

Contributing Editor **Rick Crume** documents, and re-documents, his ancestors from his home in Glyndon, Minn.



Go with the Pro

When you've taken your family history research as far as you can on your own, it may be time for expert help. Follow our five strategies for working with a professional genealogist.

BY LISA A. ALZO

🐞 **OVER THE PAST** two decades, new technologies have revolutionized the way genealogists discover ancestors and their stories. Online records have replaced most microfilm searches and “shaky leaves” and other automated hinting systems practically drop genealogical documents in your lap. Google searches bring up old photos and digitized county histories. DNA matches and social media help you make connections that weren't possible even a few years ago.

But eventually, even the most accomplished do-it-yourself researcher hits some type of roadblock. You may be puzzling

over a complex pedigree chart, a missing maiden name or a foreign-language document you can't read. You may find that records you need are on paper only in a far-off repository. Or you may admit that your goals for writing a big family history book or applying to a lineage society are a little too ambitious to accomplish on your own.

In these instances, you may need to hire an expert. But trusting a stranger is a big commitment, both personally and monetarily. Follow these tips to get the most genealogical benefit for your money.

1 Prepare your request.

Before hiring help, have a good idea of what you want that person to do, says Valerie Eichler Lair <valsroots.com>. She's a professional researcher who specializes in coaching do-it-yourselfers through tricky tasks. "I can certainly assist anyone in developing specific research questions," she says. But you should try to prepare a request more specific than "finding anything and everything on the entire Jones family." Projects generally fall into these types:

- **RECORD RETRIEVAL:** You provide the repository, volume and page number of a record you need; your pro retrieves it.
- **SIMPLE TRANSLATION:** You need a record translated from a foreign language.
- **SMALL-SCALE RESEARCH:** You need someone to search for a specific record or piece of information.
- **LARGE-SCALE RESEARCH PROJECT:** You have a brick wall or an involved research question.

For small projects, you might be able to hire a member of the local genealogical society (see the Toolkit sidebar for more resources). For bigger projects, Lair asks prospective clients to write out what they already know about the individuals or family of interest: names, dates and places. She also asks them to share what research they've already done: What records have they explored? What repositories have they visited? She may also ask for copies of records, documents or photographs.

This process helps a client organize her thoughts, refine research requests and sometimes even answer additional questions herself. It also helps Lair. She can ensure she's building on accurate information and avoid unnecessary duplicate research (though sometimes re-locating the original record is warranted). And she can better help clients identify the steps they'd like her to take.

If you keep a family tree file on your favorite genealogy website or program, make sure it's up-to-date with your latest discoveries. Attach digital copies of all documents and photos to individual ancestor profiles. Then when it's time to share with a researcher, send an invite to your online tree, download a GEDCOM file, or export a family tree file from your software (ask the pro what works best). If you keep track of your family on paper, review your family group sheets and pedigree charts to be sure they contain everything you know, and make copies of vital records and other relevant documents.



TIP: You may find that hiring a local researcher to get records (such as a Civil War pension file) from the National Archives is faster and less expensive than ordering the records by mail.

At one time or another, even the most experienced researchers may need to hire a little help.

After reviewing your research request, an expert will help you identify what exactly you want her to do. She may send you back to do a little more homework in records you know, while suggesting that she tackle more difficult or advanced tasks—sometimes things you haven't even considered. For example, a professional researcher in an ancestral location may be able to take photos or visit town offices or local churches. Sometimes a pro can help you make cousin connections. My own go-to research contact in Slovakia, Michal Razus <slovak-ancestry.com>, introduced me to another client of his who's connected to me through my paternal great-grandmother.

2 Set a budget.

"Quality research takes time and patience," Lair says. A candid discussion with a professional about your budget and time constraints will help you avoid disappointments and set realistic expectations for what the pro can accomplish. For a complex research project, the person you hire may need time to review your case, formulate a research plan, carry it out and then report back to you. Even a simple document retrieval must be planned around the researcher's workload and travel schedule.

Rates and fee structures of individual professional researchers vary. Some charge a daily rate or a flat fee per project. But most charge an hourly rate based on their education and training, skill, experience, credentials and what the market will bear. Rates for in-depth research may range from \$20 to more than \$100 per hour, with simple record searches or translations running from \$15 and \$25 per hour. In addition, some researchers will bill for expenses such as mileage, parking, photocopying and postage. To keep close tabs on the project budget, you could authorize expenditures up to a set amount, and ask the person to get your OK for further expenditures.

Hiring a genealogy firm, as opposed to an independent researcher, is another option. Firms often offer standardized services, sold in blocks of hours. For example, at Legacy Tree Genealogists <www.legacytree.com>, you can purchase full-service research projects ranging from 20 to 60 hours. Projects are typically completed in 10 to 12 weeks, with a rush option available. More-basic services, such as research plan development (for you to carry out) or DNA test analysis and consultation, can be completed in two to three weeks.

Hire a Pro or Give it a Go?



The payment terms and project scope should be spelled out in a contract before work begins (see No. 5). Many reputable researchers and firms offer free estimates and are happy to do an initial consultation about what you can expect from them. This leads to the next question: how do you find the right professional?

3 Find the right expert for the job.

In the world of professional genealogy, one size doesn't necessarily fit all, so you need to be sure the researcher you choose is a good fit. Analyzing DNA test results requires a different set of skills than tracking down or translating a birth registration from a records office in the Czech Republic. Expert researchers often have at least one niche. The Association of Professional Genealogists (APG) <www.apgen.org> website has a member directory you can search by name, location, geographic area, research specialty (such as adoption, federal records or lineage societies), and other criteria. You also may search directories at the websites of credentialing organizations, discussed later in this article.

At the APG website, click in the left sidebar to search by specialty or a place in the United States, Canada or internationally. To search by multiple criteria simultaneously, use the Other Searches option and fill in the fields you want. Or you can click on a name in a search result to read more about that person's areas of expertise. For example, Rich Venezia

<www.richroots.net> offers research for Italian and Irish dual citizenship applications, in addition to other services.

Another way to find researchers based overseas is to consult with ethnic or foreign genealogical societies such as the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe <sggee.org>, Polish Genealogical Society of America <pgsa.org> or the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives <www.agra.org.uk> (for English or Welsh research). I found my Slovakian expert, Michal Razus, through a recommendation from the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International <cgsi.org>.

If you want to do the research yourself but you need someone to point you in the right direction, there are pros for that, too. Lair provides fee-based one-on-one consulting and coaching for researchers needing help determining their next steps. A service called GenealogyDOTcoach <genealogy.coach> helps clients schedule one-on-one help sessions with experts who can walk them through a specific task or research problem. (Disclosure: I'm one of these experts, offering help with eastern European research, publishing and more.)

A full-service research firm may be a better option for those who can't find the right expert themselves or who desire comprehensive assistance requiring the input of multiple experts. For example, you might hire a firm for an international inquiry that requires onsite access to records, or if you need an extensive heir search as part of a probate

settlement process. You also might consider hiring a firm to create a detailed research plan, complete with a DNA testing strategy and directions on records to consult to complete the research yourself.

Full-service firms include the previously mentioned Legacy Tree Genealogists; Ancestry ProGenealogists <www.progenealogists.com>, which requires a minimum 20-hour commitment; and Genealogists.com <genealogists.com>, which offers a low-price guarantee and has a network of more than 1,500 researchers worldwide.

4 Ask around. Before you enter into a contract, make sure you're working with a reputable researcher. Many professionals obtain certification through the Board for Certification of Genealogists <www.bcgcertification.org> or the International Commission for the Accreditation of Genealogists (ICAPGen) <www.icapgen.org>. Credentials aren't required to become a professional genealogist and they don't guarantee top-level services, but they do provide a measure of reassurance that your expert has professional-level research skills and has committed to providing responsible services. You also should consider the researcher's knowledge of the subject matter as well as her work experience, personality, ability to meet deadlines and other factors.

Try to speak with your prospective expert's past clients. Word of mouth is often the best way to learn about a researcher's reputation and work ethic. Read testimonials on the researcher's website or on social media. Ask for references (and contact them), and ask the pro for a research report produced for a previous client. Solicit the opinions of other genealogists in your genealogical society or, discreetly, through social media. A Facebook search for the pro's name might yield helpful information about his working style.

If you work with a research firm, multiple researchers might be involved with your project. Ask about their experience and areas of expertise. Legacy Tree, for example, chooses researchers with degrees, accreditation and/or extensive research experience. Each project undergoes a review to check for accuracy in research and presentation.

5 Know what to expect. You want to believe an expert can solve your deepest family mystery or unearth records that have eluded you. But that may not be the case. A pro can't produce records that don't exist or aren't legally accessible. And she can't guarantee the evidence will say what you're hoping it will.

For example, a marriage license application may be missing the parents' names. A court case may tell an unwelcome family story. DNA results may contain surprises. "I explain to all my clients that we may come across some surprises about

their ancestors," Lair says. "We can't make any assumptions, and we can't read into any evidence what we *want* it to say."

Set your agreement with a professional in a written contract, and keep a copy you've both signed. It should establish concise goals for the research project and what the expert will do to meet them. For example, if your research goal is

Pro Profile

Jennifer Holik, Global Coordinator of the World War II Research and Writing Center <wwiirwc.com>, specializes in researching and telling the stories of those who served in World War II. Here, she describes how she typically works with clients and what they can expect.

Q. Tell us about your business.

A. We locate, analyze and interpret WWI and WWII records across all [military] branches. We reconstruct service history, connect with researchers and tour guides in Europe and help you plan a trip to Europe to walk in your soldier's footsteps. Our team can help you write your family history or military history book. We can also write eulogies for military personnel, military service summaries and memorial speeches.

Q. What information do you need to begin research about a soldier?

A. Full name, military service/serial number, a final unit (or any unit with a date), birth and death dates and copies of any documents with any military information on them. We review all information and follow up with potential clients with a phone call to ask questions and discuss research options.

Q. What are your clients' typical goals?

A. Most clients are the children and grandchildren of WWII veterans, or those who died in service. They seek answers to questions, clarity to family stories, and specifically ask for healing, peace, closure and understanding.

Q. How do you verify family stories?

A. Family stories are a bit like the telephone game. By the time those WWII-era stories [have been passed down] one to three generations, they've changed. Stories usually contain a grain of truth, which I explain in the initial phone call, and we sort that out through the available records. There have been times when a client told me a story that ended up being more than 75 percent false. There are a lot of reasons for this. I write a fully documented research report explaining negative or disappointing news, and follow-up with a phone call to those specific clients to explain further and answer questions.

to find an ancestor's death information, the contract might specify that the expert will search for obituaries in the local public library's newspaper collection. Or you might stipulate that the person will spend up to a certain amount of time searching in a particular county for all available evidence relating to an ancestor's death, beginning with obituaries, civil and church records, tombstones and probate records.

The researcher should work with you to confirm that your plan fits the agreed-upon budget and time frame. "We're very transparent with our clients about what is and is not possible within the constraints of a project," says Amber Brown, marketing manager for Legacy Tree.

Your expert should get back to you within the agreed-upon time period, providing a report that documents all the services performed and the outcome of each one. You should receive copies of any records found and the citations for information or records discovered.

Reports also should include "negative results," or unsuccessful searches. A lack of findings after diligent effort does give you information: it tells you what's conspicuously absent from the records. These negative results still fulfill the researcher's responsibility "even if the outcome is disappointing or not

as anticipated," states Brown. She adds that Legacy Tree's reports go a step further to include recommendations for how to use the results to keep pursuing your research goals.

In my experience, a well-designed research project with a qualified expert is worth the expense. In challenging research situations, it's often more practical to hire a professional researcher who's familiar with an area—and who can access records in person—than to continue spending time and money on fruitless research. It's also usually far less expensive than traveling across the United States or going abroad yourself.

My parting advice: First do as much research as you can yourself, reading how-to guides and asking genealogy contacts for advice along the way. But when you can get no further, consider reaching out to an expert. Asking for professional assistance isn't a sign of weakness. At one time or another, even the most experienced researchers may need to hire a little help. ■

Genealogy instructor and writer **LISA A. ALZO** employed a genealogy guide and translator for visits to her Slovakian ancestral hometowns in 2010 and 2012, and believes the investment was worth every penny.

TOOLKIT

- **Ancestry ProGenealogists** <www.progenealogists.com>
- **Association of Professional Genealogists** <apgen.org>
- **Board for Certification of Genealogists**
<www.bcgcertification.org>
- **Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy**
<forensicgenealogists.org>: Researchers for projects with legal ramifications.
- **Cyndi's List: Genetic Genealogy Professional Services & DNA Testing** <cyndislist.com/dna/professional-services-and-dna-testing>
- **Cyndi's List: Professionals, Volunteers & Other Research Services** <cyndislist.com/professionals>
- **FamilySearch Wiki: Hiring a Professional Researcher** <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Hiring_a_Professional_Researcher>
- **Genealogists.com** <genealogists.com>
- **Genealogy Freelancers** <www.genealogyfreelancers.com>
- **GenealogyDOTcoach** <genealogy.coach>
- **Genlighten** <genlighten.com>: Find a freelance researcher.
- **Heritage Consulting** <www.heritageconsulting.com>
- **International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists** <www.icapgen.org>
- **Legacy Tree Genealogists** <www.legacytree.com>
- **New England Historic Genealogical Society Research Services** <www.americanancestors.org/services/hire-a-researcher>

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- Podcast: Set yourself up for genealogy success <familytreemagazine.com/articles/genealogy_research_strategies/genealogy-research-tips/episode92>



- How to hire a professional genealogist <familytreemagazine.com/premium/now-what-hiring-a-genealogy-researcher>
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