

BOUSE GENIES



THINK LIKE THE GREAT DETECTIVES

by Barbara A. H. Nuehring

[Used with permission from SKP Genies Newsletter Sep/Oct 2006]

Genealogists, by our very nature, are detectives. We are constantly searching for clues, following leads, and gathering evidence. As we seek proof of relationships, verify dates, hunt for residences and track down our origins, we must remember that the quality of the evidence we collect can either make or break our pedigree lines.

The key word here is quality. Therefore, we must always evaluate the reliability and credibility of the evidence in the way a judge and jury would. Thus, our research must be the result of thinking and acting like the great detectives. The starting point is an understanding of the nature, types and forms of evidence.

The Nature of Evidence

Conduct your research like Paul Drake, senior investigator for Perry Mason. Think—is this information from direct evidence or circumstantial evidence?

Direct evidence addresses the specific issue. A signed and court-filed marriage license is direct evidence of the participants, the date and the place of the marriage. Circumstantial evidence is data from which we can draw conclusions. A census schedule that reports that the second individual in the household is the wife of the head of the household is circumstantial evidence that the two are legally married.

Types of Evidence

Reason like Agatha Christie's famous sleuth, Hercule Poirot. Think—is this evidence from a primary or secondary source?

In genealogical terms, a primary source is an unbiased record created very near the time of the actual event by someone with firsthand knowledge of the event. A secondary source is a document produced a significant amount of time after the event occurred, most often by a person not present at the event. A death certificate signed by a doctor or coroner is a primary record with respect to the date, place and cause of death. However, the same certificate is also a secondary source for information about the date and place of birth and the parents of the deceased. Secondary sources are great clues for finding more data and the supporting primary source!

Forms of Evidence

Obsessively dig for proof like TV's Adrian Monk. Think—how did I obtain this evidence? Was it from an original document, or from an electronic reproduction of the original, or from a derivative source?

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The Bouse Genies meet every other Friday from October thru April at one of the members homes. You may email Carol at sidcarol@escapees.com for the time, place and schedule.

This newsletter is online at: <http://quartzsite.gen.googlepages.com/bousegenies>

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Originals are hard to obtain—but you can. Uncover family bibles, cherished letters, journals, diaries and photographs that are tucked away “someplace safe” with a family member. Investigate records maintained at Court Houses—land transactions, birth and death registrations, marriage licenses, probates, tax lists and legal proceedings. Archives are great places to snoop around. In addition to an abundance of historical manuscripts and maps, they are often the recipients of older documents from agencies that do not have room to store them. Also, consult the records of private institutions such as churches, cemeteries, schools and legal businesses for information.

Electronic reproductions—digital images, microfilms and microfiche of original documents are valid substitutes. Stake out the Family History Library or local Center to find censuses, military records and pensions, land bounty records, passenger lists, naturalization records, and vital records. Photocopies of originals held at courthouses, archives, libraries and institutions may be ordered by mail, which saves you time and legwork.

Derivative sources may not provide you with all the accurate information you require. Don't stop with them—keep probing. Full transcriptions, extracts and indexes (including databases) found in books, periodicals and on the Internet are subject to error for many reasons, among them poor penmanship and the transcriber's attention to detail. Be very suspicious of published works—family histories, county histories with submitted genealogies and biographies, personal Web sites, GEDCOMs, and even the International Genealogical Index (IGI)—when there is no documented evidence supporting the stated fact or relationship.

Helpful Tips from Some Real Genealogical Detectives

“Genealogists need to be skeptical because virtually every document used by a genealogist was created for some non-genealogy reason. As we look through any record, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of the document and keep an eye out for any strange inclusions that may be clues to our ancestors' lives.”
—Michael John Neill

“While it may seem like you are spending more time and moving slower in the research of your ancestors, by spending this time thoroughly investigating a given resource, you will actually find that you are less likely to over look something useful. Being thorough should

be as important to you as finding your ancestors.”
—Rhonda R. McClure

“Judge each item of evidence with the test of the four “Cs”: Closeness (in place and time); Credibility (of person who made the record); Causality (why the record was made); and, Corroboration (with other evidence).” —Thomas W. Jones

“Successful research—research that yields correct information with a minimum of wasted time and funds—depends upon a sound analysis of evidence.”
—Elizabeth Shown Mills

“Don't perpetuate data errors because you did not check the information recorded by someone else.”
—Carol Brown

Conclusion from a Genealogical Detective

Not all source documents are created equal. It pays to think like the great detectives, realizing that some documents give exciting clues, some documents present interesting leads, and some documents consist of solid evidence. In the end, good family histories result from genealogists who think, then act like the great detectives—evaluating each source, determining its strengths and weaknesses and citing a source for each and every fact uncovered during the investigation.

NATIONAL CEMETERY BURIAL LOCATIONS ON-LINE

[From Washington State Dept of Veteran Affairs newsletter]

More than three million records showing where veterans have been buried in Dept of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries are now available on-line....The national grave locator contains more than three million records of veterans and dependents buried in VA's 120 cemeteries since the Civil War. It has records of some burials in state veterans' cemeteries and burials in Arlington National Cemetery 1999 to the present....The information in the database comes from records on interment, which before 1994 were paper records, kept at each cemetery...Some information, such as identification of next of kin, will not be shown to the public for privacy reasons....

[The website will be updated nightly with information on burials the previous day <www.cem.va.gov>]

FROM THE COMPUTER DESK

by Carol Brown



HOW TO INPUT NAMES IN YOUR GENEALOGY PROGRAM

All of us using genealogy programs have worried over the way to input names. What do you do when you only know the first or last name of an individual? What do you do when you know the sex of a child but have no name?

Here are some suggestions that might help. In the following cases **John**, **Jane** and **Smith** are to be replaced by the name that you know.

- (1) You know the persons last name, but not their first name. Enter **Unknown Smith**
- (2) You know the husband's name is **John Smith**, but you don't know the wife's name. One thing you *don't* do is label his wife **Mrs. Smith** or **Mrs. John Smith**. Never use the married name for a woman when entering her name in a genealogy program. It should always be her maiden name in these programs. Enter her name simply as **Unknown**.
- (3) You know the wife's name but not the husband's. Enter his name as **Unknown**.
- (4) You know the person's first name but not their last name. Enter **Jane** or **John Unknown**.
- (5) You know a person does not have a middle name or initial when others in the family do. Enter **John nmi Smith**. (nmi = no middle initial)
- (6) There is a child in the family who probably died young without a name and you aren't sure of the sex. Enter **baby Smith**. You will have to specify the sex in the program and the default is female. Make a note in the notes area that you are not sure of the sex.
- (7) There is a child in the family who probably died young without a name and you are sure of the sex. Enter **son** or **daughter Smith**. This will assure that the sex of the child is carried on, even when that identifying field is not printed.

This method of naming should also be used when you are writing the information on family group sheets and ancestry charts.



Web sites come, move and go on a regular basis. These URLs were current at the time of publication and are subject to unannounced changes.

NETWORKING

<i>AncestralFindings</i>	www.ancestralfindings.com	<i>Books We Own</i>	www.rootsweb.com/~bwo
<i>CousinConnect</i>	www.cousinconnect.com	<i>GenCircles</i>	www.gencircles.com
<i>MyTrees.com \$\$\$</i>	www.mytrees.com	<i>Your Past Connect</i>	www.pastconnect.com
<i>My Genealogical Library</i>	www.kbiambooks.homestead.com/library.html		
<i>Obituary Lookups</i>	http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~obit/		



THREE PHASES OF GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

by Carol Brown

Thomas W. Jones stated in his article "The Way It was and Still Is" published in the NGS NewsMagazine, September/October 2004 page 41 that there are three phases in genealogy research. Each of us should understand the three phases and realize that our research will follow these same steps.

Mr. Jones identifies the first phase as "**Name Gathering**". When we first get interested in genealogy we are trying to gather all of the names, dates, and places of birth, marriage and death of our ancestors. We also gather names, dates and places for our aunts and uncles. Some of us go a little further and gather this information on everyone by a specific surname, or of those we know are in someway, though it might be distantly, related to us.

One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is to not record all sources for the information we gather as we go along. This is very important, since over time we might find the birth, marriage or death of an individual and discover that it does not match with information we already have. If we don't know where all of the data came from, we can't make an educated decision on which bit of information is most likely to be correct.

Somewhere along the way we discover that the information we are seeking is not available in the records we have easily researched. These usually include census records, on-line data bases, records gathered from family members and probably birth, marriage and death records from the state. We are now ready to start digging a little deeper.

The second phase identified by Mr. Jones is "**Record Hunting**". At this point we know some information about the individuals we are researching, but are interested in seeking specific documents, such as wills, deeds, probates and the like. As we start to understand the great value of these records to our research, we spend more time and effort to obtain as many records on our family as we can gather.

These records start to tell the story of the individual(s) and begin to put "meat on their bones" so to speak. They often extend our research far beyond what we expected to accomplish. Each record leads to our desire to gather more and more. It is very common at this stage to begin putting so many pieces together that we have gained extensive knowledge not only on our

ancestors and closest relations, but our research has expanded beyond our original goal and we are working on more and more members of the family we are researching.

Then we find that we have some situations where we can't link individuals to a particular family that we know should somehow fit. These can be our direct ancestors or other family members we have gathered along the way. Curiosity gets the better of us and we start the third phase.

Mr. Jones identifies this phase as "**Case Building**". We have already learned how to gather many different documents. We have been to a lot of courthouses, libraries, and have researched the Internet until our fingers and eyes are just worn out. But, we still can't prove the relationship we are seeking. We have also read many case studies in several excellent genealogy society quarterlies. We know that if more information is gathered and research is done on the individual as well as related family members and neighbors that we just might be able to make a case that will prove through the process of elimination the relationship we are seeking.

This process of elimination can take years. During that time we have accumulated (or will accumulate) sufficient indirect evidence to build a case that will make that link where no direct evidence is available. This phase often requires research in manuscript files, military records, and various other record formats that we never tried before. In the end we know the effort was really worth it, when we have proven a relationship that others before us have missed.



Life is lived forward, but understood backward.

Theory of relativity: If you go back far enough, we're all related.

Take nothing but ancestors, leave nothing but records.

"May you ask the right question of the right person at the right time"

Genealogists never die, they just lose their roots.

My ancestors are hiding in a witness protection program

BEGINNERS PIT FALLS

by Carol Brown

MY FAMILY TREE HAS BEEN DONE BY SOMEONE ELSE

There are many ways to fall into a genealogy pit. One of the biggest that many new researchers fall into is that "the family tree has been done by someone else".

It is wonderful to find a genealogy of your family on the internet or in a book, but what is the quality of the work done? Is the information fully documented? Have you check the sources yourself? Do the documents cover all of "your family" or do you have information that was not previously recorded? Are there still "holes" in the research you have found? Do you want to know more about the people listed?

Answering "yes" to any of these questions should lead you to do more work on the family in question. If the information is documented, then you should first check out the sources. You might be surprised at the additional information you will find. You just might find that one piece of information you have been looking for.

If the information has not been documented, then you will need to prove what you have found. Don't take someone else's word for the data. Wrong assumptions are made all the time and new documents that are now available just might disprove some of the data.

Don't perpetuate data errors because you did not check the information recorded by someone else.

I CAN'T FIND MY ANCESTOR'S DEATH CERTIFICATE, EVEN THOUGH I KNOW WHERE HE LIVED.

There might be a couple of reasons for this problem. First, do you know when the state first required the recording of death records? It is very possible that the record you are looking for was never required and therefore it was never made.

Your ancestor may have been living with an adult child in a different county or state at the time of death. If the ancestor was sick and needed assistance, most likely they were not living in the place they had lived before. Check for an obituary to see if it might indicate a place of death and then try again.



GOOGLE TO HELP MAKE PUBLIC RECORDS AVAILABLE

[From April 30, 2007 - Eastman Newsletter]

By providing free consulting and some software, Google Inc. is helping state governments make reams of public records that are now unavailable or hard to find online easily accessible to Web surfers. The Internet search company hopes to eventually persuade federal agencies to employ the same tools -- an effort that excites advocates of open government but worries some consumer privacy experts.

Google announced today that it has already partnered with four states -- Arizona, California, Utah and Virginia -- to remove technical barriers that had prevented its search engine, as well as those of Microsoft Corp. and Yahoo Inc., from accessing tens of thousands of public records dealing with education, real estate, health care and the environment.

These newly available records will not be exclusive to the search engines owned by Google, Yahoo and Microsoft, but available to other companies and the general public.

I cannot find any mention of historic records in today's announcement, however.

You know you are a genealogist when:

Your neighbors think you are crazy, your friends wonder and you know you are.

"I need just a little more time at the courthouse" means forget the cleaning, washing, dinner, chores; the day is shot.

HISTORY TRIVIA

Common entertainment included playing cards. However, there was a tax levied when purchasing playing cards but only applicable to the "ace of Spades." To avoid paying the tax, people would purchase 51 cards instead. Yet, since most games require 52 cards, these people were thought to be stupid or dumb because they weren't "playing with a full deck."

Bouse Genies News

Summer is upon us and most of us have left or will be leaving the area shortly for a few months or so. When we return we have several issues to be thinking about.

- 1) When and where will our first meeting be? Will be go to lunch or just have a meeting? How often and where will we meet throughout the season.
- 2) We need to do some organization, so we have to establish some basic guidelines. We will need a Constitution and By-Laws, which I have already taken from another genealogy society, that we can modify. We will need officers so that the various chores of the group are given to specific people. Also some basic membership rules and other items that may arise that we have not thought about yet. [Note: We should not need Articles of Incorporation since we are an arm of the Bouse Public Library and will not need a bank account.]
- 3) We need a memorandum of understanding with the Bouse Public Library about the books we have placed there, the classes I will be giving (which the Bouse Genies will sponsor) and the monies taken in from the classes and other items which are held for our use by the Friends of the Bouse Public Library.
- 4) The next issue of the newsletter will come out before we all return. If any of you have news that should be in that issue, please have it to me by Aug 20, 2006. Any news about the group that needs to be put in the Bouse Newsletter that Pat Schlect does, needs to be sent to Beth Van Sickle before Aug 14, 2006
- 5) Several forms we will need are being created and will be ready for your review at the first meeting. Hopefully, Roberta will have our logo done by then so it will appear on our newsletter and forms..
- 6) The Sep-Oct issue of the newsletter will be sent to all of the individuals on the current mail list, however after the first meeting, unless notified that you will not be in there and you want to remain on the list, your name will be removed from the mail list and you will not receive any more updates or newsletters.

- 7) I sent an email out in June about the library ordering the library edition of Ancestry.com for us. Ancestry is offering us a chance to get it for almost half price at \$995. We had \$674 from the genealogy and computer classes over the winter and then \$80 from the postage for the books from Maryalice. The library has loaned us the additional \$321, which we need to reimburse them for next season. They need to order it before June 30, 2007, so it will be available for the start of the season. Those still here in town will have access to it.

This version will be available to all visitors to the library. It will not be limited to the number of users as far as I know. We need to learn more about exactly what we are getting, but I believe it is full access. We will not be able to use it anywhere but at the library on their computers. It will not be available to laptop users, as they would get the password on their system, and we can't do that.

Nikky Mackie, the Librarian, said it looks like we will get one extra month free as new subscribers. Our feeling is that since the LDS had some of their free options with Ancestry.com discontinued, that this special offer is a way to try to get LDS to pay for access.

NEW FEDERAL LAW WILL LIMIT ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES

From the Indiana Gen Society
<http://www.indgensoc.org/>

The 108th Congress returned for a special session on December 6, 2004 to smooth opposition to Senate Bill 2845 (S. 2845), the "National Intelligence Reform Act of 2004." On December 7, the House voted 336-75 for the bill, and on December 8, the Senate approved it 89-2. The bill was signed into law by the president on December 17, without the exception for non-certified copies & certificates over 100 years old that the National Genealogical Society and Federation of Genealogical Societies had suggested.

The bill requires federal agencies to establish standards for all 50 states for the issuing of driver's licenses and birth certificates within the next 18 months. How this will effect local statutes regarding vital records access is unclear. The Indiana Genealogical Society will stay involved and issue any updated information.