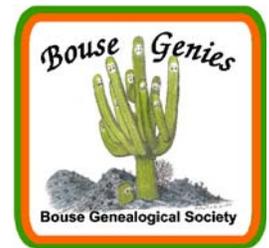


BOUSE GENIES NEWSLETTER

Volume 10, Number 3

Summer 2016



ON-SITE RESEARCH: COURTHOUSES

[From the Spring 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]



GRANT COUNTY COURTHOUSE, SILVER CITY, NEW MEXICO

Courthouses are one of our greatest repositories—for you will find documents pertaining to the everyday lives of most, if not all of your ancestors.

I'm not exaggerating. Every state and county has a judicial system and just about every person is mentioned in courthouse records at least a couple of times from their moment of birth through their dying day. During their lives our ancestors at one time or another may have been voters, taxpayers, landowners, petitioners, jurors, witnesses, appointees to an office, parties to a contract, applied for a license, charged with a criminal act, litigants in a civil case, or granted citizenship; and these undertakings resulted in the creation of official, often permanent documents.

So why are extensive courthouse records one of the most underutilized genealogical resources available to us?

Although some courthouse documents have been published in books, microfilmed or digitized, the vast majority have not. Therefore, it requires an on-site visit to where the records are kept and spending time searching original documents that may not be indexed.

In this edition of the *Bouse Genies Newsletter* we discuss ways for having a successful on-site research trip to local courthouses, and we endeavor to explain many of the various documents you will find in county and state courthouses. However, due to the enormity and complexity of land records, estate documents and the proceedings and files of criminal, civil and equity courts, those will be covered in future newsletters—stay tuned.

Regardless of the form—original, photocopy or compiled records you view, copy or transcribe, always include a full citation. Don't forget to include the location where you found the information and condition of the documents. That way you or future researchers will be able to locate the source of your findings at a later date.

As you read the articles in this edition of the newsletter, you will quickly discover courthouses are not just for bringing criminals to justice or convening civil trials. The appointed or elected Clerks of the Court who staff the courthouses are the creators and archivists of records of those who live within their jurisdiction. They are our friends—ones we should visit as we search for data about our ancestors and gather details about their lives so we have a fuller picture of our previous generations. ⚙

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Bouse Genealogical Society

Electronic Newsletter

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Please send all general correspondence to:

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The Bouse Genies meet the first and third Friday of the month from, October - April, at the Bouse Booster Club or Bouse Public Library. See the meeting schedule in this newsletter.

The Bouse Genies Website is:
<http://bousegeniesaz.org>

FROM THE COMPUTER DESK

OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS AND SOURCE DOCUMENTS ON DVD

By Carolyn H. Brown [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

While letting my fingers wonder around the Internet for old genealogical books and possibly some source documents, I came across a section of Amazon that I had not used before. I found there are over 100 DVDs, each containing from 50 to over 300 books on history, genealogy and other documents which cost anywhere from \$5.95 each to \$8.95 a set. Unfortunately, the cost of postage is about \$4.00 and it is not eligible for Amazon Prime.



To locate these wonderful DVDs open Amazon at <www.amazon.com>. In the search box at the top of the screen enter "genealogy books on DVD." You will get somewhere around 130 results, though only about six to eight pages are really genealogy-related DVDs. Click on the title and read the full description. You should also read the customer reviews. Barbara says:

I looked at Germany History & Genealogy (a DVD of 52 books on ancestry, records and families). The publisher says "This is the most complete collection of German History and Genealogy on DVD found anywhere on the Planet," but a reviewer wrote "emphasis is on German-American history and genealogy. Its strength is on documents related to the early (1700-1850) German settlement of eastern Pennsylvania, and if your ancestral roots go to that time and place this collection could be a gold mine." The title entices me to buy it; the review tells me it won't help me at all!

These DVDs cover every state in the union and many foreign countries. If you are researching in England, there is a DVD of Parish Registers which also contains wills. If you are into war history, there is a set of the Civil War DVDs and single DVDs on Confederate Veterans and WWI. There is also a set of four DVDs containing 95 old books on Scandinavia, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden history and genealogy family trees.

I purchased a two-volume set of "England Genealogy & Parish Registers." There was no description of what was and wasn't included on the DVDs. Therefore, when I reviewed them there were very few documents for Devonshire, my county of interest. Some of the books on these DVDs contain early family lineages. However, the second DVD contained information on Wales and in that folder was the 546 page book "The Royal Families of England, Scotland, and Wales" by John Burke, Esq., published in 1847. Since I have some Royal ancestry, access to this document was worth the purchase.

I also purchased a two-DVD set on "Virginia History & Genealogy" with old books about early Virginia history and many on specific counties and families. Many of the books have a table of contents, but few, if any, have an index.

Since the books and documents are in PDF format, they can be transferred to my tablet for easy reading. I like being able to sit in my living room reading books I had previously only been able to scan at the library when I could get there. ⚙️

PICTURE THIS



Bits &
Bytes

Not only is the beauty of courthouses in the documents they contain, but also the buildings themselves. Check out these URLs that have pictures and postcards of courthouses around the country.

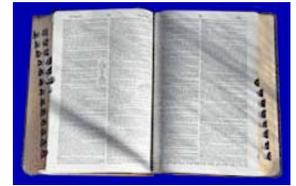
Courthouse History <http://courthousehistory.com/>

Flicker www.flickr.com/groups/countycourthouses/pool/

Google Image Search <https://images.google.com/> ⚙️

COURTLY WORDS

By Barbara A. H. Nuehring [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]



Preface: As you research courthouse documents and, in particular, court records, you will encounter legal phrases and obsolete terms that are too numerous to include here. Two references you may find helpful are Black's Law Dictionary and Burton's Legal Thesaurus. Check World Cat <www.worldcat.org> to find libraries closest to you having these publications. Caution: I have come across some judicial terms that are the same as genealogical terms but have a different meaning.

COUNTY COURTHOUSES are government buildings where the offices of county administrators are located and where local court proceedings are held. Courthouses range from small-town rural buildings with a few rooms to huge metropolitan high-rises. For the genealogist, the County Clerk's office in the county courthouse is a repository of a wide range of legal documents created for or by our ancestors.

TOWN HALLS have a long tradition in the New England area and contain many of the same records county courthouses do in other parts of the USA. Many have handwritten ledgers dating to the founding of the town. In those ledgers you will find minutes of town meetings and birth, marriage, death, cemetery, tax, court and land records. I even found a registration of an ancestor's cattle ear tags.

JURISDICTION is the geographical area of legal authority. Jurisdictions change over time (splitting of a county or realignments of county lines) or by the type of the event (kidnapping falls under federal jurisdiction; murder falls under local jurisdiction).

CASE is a generic term describing any action—not just in criminal or civil cases—taken by the court..

DOCKETS are chronological lists of cases scheduled or being heard in the courts. Most dockets are kept by the type of the court, but some courts keep only one docket for all types of cases. Dockets are indexed by the term of the court and will include the name of the plaintiff and/or defendant.

TRANSCRIPTS are an exact written record of everything said during a court proceeding and are the official record of what transpired during the case and what rulings/decisions were handed down by the judge.

MINUTES are taken by the clerk of the court of all the actions taken by the court on a single day. Since they usually list the participants in the case, minutes are very useful when indexes and dockets cannot be located.

CASE FILES contain all the evidence, testimonies, affidavits, correspondences, depositions, and other documents pertaining to a case. To request a case file you will need to know the case file number which you can get from the docket or minutes of the case.

ORDERS are concise summaries of each case and the judgement.

AFFIDAVITS are written, sworn statements signed before a notary public or an authority having the power to witness an oath. Affidavits are often used in court proceedings when an individual cannot be physically present and are part of the court record. Lying on an affidavit can result in a charge of perjury.

COURT ORDERS are legal rulings issued by a judge requiring an action or non-action by individual(s). Most orders are signed, but others are oral orders that are included in the transcripts of court proceedings. There are many types of court orders such as a restraining order, custody order, search warrant or a subpoena.

COMPILED RECORDS are valuable genealogical resources. Those created during the 1800s predate lost or destroyed originals and contain the only data of early documents. Additionally, most compiled records are fully indexed, which will save you precious time in locating existing originals.

ABSTRACTS summarize essential points or key elements of a record by omitting the boilerplate language found in legal documents. Names, places and events are written exactly as they appeared in the original document. Editorial comments are included in square brackets. Abstracts contain more information than extracts.

EXTRACTS are very abbreviated but precise listings of entries in original documents. They provide basic details which aid us in identifying an individual or finding an event. ⚙

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: PREPARING FOR COURTHOUSE RESEARCH

By Carolyn H. Brown [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Courthouse research will be some of the most important hours you will spend! For the most part, the records you will be able to access are the original documents, or closest to the original that exist. There is nothing like holding those old documents in your hands and knowing your ancestor may have touched them. It is in a courthouse you are most likely to find information which can't be found anywhere else.

"But, what do I need to know before I go to the courthouse?" you might ask. To answer that, here are some of the things you should do before you leave home.

WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?

Determine *whom* you are going to research, *when* they lived in a specific area, *what* information you are interested in locating, and *where* those records may be held today. Gather all of the information you have on the individual(s) and their family, as well as their friends, associates and neighbors. Based on what you know, locate the county where they lived at that time.

WHERE ARE THE DOCUMENTS OF INTEREST HOUSED?

Even though you know what the county is today, the county lines may not have been the same in the past. Use *AniMap* (see page5) to identify the county boundaries as they were in the year(s) of the records you are searching. Even though the documents were created in a specific county, they may be housed someplace else. Many counties sent their very old documents to the state archives which may be several counties away. In some cases, the county line may have changed several times.

CONTACT THE COURTHOUSE

Once you are sure of the location you need to be working in, access the courthouse website online to try to determine what records they hold, and what may be housed someplace else. Record the address and hours of operation, so you are sure the courthouse will be open when you arrive. If you can't get the information you are seeking from the website, call and ask.

Ask where specific records you need are held. Older records may have been transferred to an archives.

Ask what types of personal items you may bring into the courthouse. Some courthouses have restrictions on what they allow in their research rooms.

Ask about prices for copies and if you can bring a camera, computer, tablet or phone with you. What are the courthouse procedures for making copies and taking photos of documents? They vary significantly.

Ask if there are restrictions on taking purses or satchels into the document area. If there are, they usually have a bank of lockers for your personal items.

Ask if the courthouse allows researchers in the document area. If not, they will require you to know which documents you are seeking, and then court personnel will bring them to you.

If the courthouse website has an index to the documents they hold, download and save it to your handheld device(s). If you don't have a device, then print the document to take with you. For more information on items to take with you see "Genealogy To-Go Bag" in Vol 10, No. 1, Winter 2016.

WHAT DOCUMENTS MAY BE FOUND IN A COURTHOUSE?

Anything an individual does involving the government may be found in a courthouse, whether it is at the town, city, county, state, or national level. If it is a legal document, it was generated at one of these places. In the following pages you will find articles about most of the types of documents you may find in courthouses.

However, there are some legal documents that are so important to genealogists, but also so complex we have in the past and will in a future newsletter cover them in depth. They are land records and estate/will/probate records.

Since the beginning of the society articles about documents found in courthouses have been appearing in *Bouse Genies Newsletters*. All past newsletters may be found on the Bouse Genies Website Members Only page. ✨

LOCATING THE RIGHT COURTHOUSE WITH ANIMAP

By Carolyn H. Brown [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Do you know how important it is to know which courthouse should house the documents you are seeking really is? Most of us use genealogy software that can tell us which county the city or town we are researching is located in today, but sometimes it may be the wrong county leading us to the wrong courthouse. The problem occurs because over the years state and county boundaries changed. If you can't determine the county which had jurisdiction over the records created at the time of the event you are researching—you won't locate the records you need.



Fortunately, there is *AniMap*, located at <<http://goldbug.com/animap/>>, which can be used to identify and plot county, state and territorial line changes. It is available for Windows; however, it is not available on the MAC platform.

AniMap Features

Locate Old Towns and Counties – Over the past 200-plus years, state and county lines in every state and county have changed. The earliest map in *AniMap* shows Virginia in 1617. All other states and territories begin with the earliest established boundaries.

Maps may be viewed individually, or they may be set in motion so you can see the changes in a movie-like mode. Also available is a full US map showing all the changes in state and territorial boundaries from 1776 to the present.

Each map includes a listing of the changes from the previous map, making it easy to keep track of the parent county.

Mark the Spot – Using the “place marker” feature allows the user to create up to 50 unique markers with varying designs and colors. The user may view the location of a town or city and follow the changing county and state lines to see exactly where the information being sought should be located.

Marking multiple places on a map allows the user to see the distance between two cities/towns to determine other places to search for the desired records or record substitutes.

SiteFinder – The SiteFinder database in *AniMap* contains listings for more than one million places in the US including more than 120,000 variant names. Each listing gives the name of the place, the county where it is (or was) located, and includes latitude-longitude coordinates for 95% of them.

Some of the listings included are: Cities, towns and locales (including railroads, trading posts, farms and ranches, plantations, ruins, ghost towns). There are several other categories which can be searched separately or in combination such as courthouses, cemeteries, churches, schools, islands, townships and more.

Searching with SiteFinder – Using the SiteFinder browser the genealogist can use wildcard searches if unsure of the spelling of a place. They can also display a complete list of sites in any given county, or a list of locations within a specific number of miles (between 1 and 99) from a chosen location.

SiteFinder's free web-based database can also be combined with Google Maps for a whole new way of “plucking and plotting” to view satellite images.

Original Information – *AniMap*'s information was extracted from the US Geological Survey files and US Post Office records. More than 50,000 of the locations are places that are no longer in existence or those that have had name changes. While it does not list every place that ever existed, it is believed you will find it to be the best source available.

Print or Export Maps – All maps can be printed directly from the program in black-and-white or color, or may be exported as a Bitmap (.bmp) file for use in a word processor. The .bmp file can also be used in a photo editing program to enhance the map with additional text and colors.

Video Tutorial – A video tutorial is offered for an additional price to help the user learn to work with this amazing program.

Additional Map Sets – There are many additional map sets available for purchase starting in 1885 including the European Map Set for: England (8); Europe (9) for Australia-Hungary, France, Germany - Prussia, Holland-Belgium, Ireland, Italy-Switzerland, Norway-Sweden-Denmark, Russia-Poland, Scotland, and Spain-Portugal; and Historic Map Library (by state or city by date, including topographic, railroads, Civil War and more).

I have been using *AniMap* for years, but it looks like the new version 3.0.2 offers the capability to add maps from other countries, which was not available at the time I bought mine. Guess it is time to upgrade! ⚙

WORKING WITH THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

By Carolyn H. Brown [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

The county clerk is responsible for filing vital records and/or important documents related to a specific county's population, including birth, marriage and death certificates. Depending on the population of an area, their responsibilities may go beyond that. In general, the county clerk has several other employees who maintain control over all other documents held by the county court.



In some cases the records they maintain are considered off limits to the general public, however, some of those records such as probate, land and various court records may be open to lawyers of the area. In other cases, the older records are housed in an area open to researchers.

County clerks seem to have a way of sizing researchers up as soon as they walk in the door. The way they react to a new visitor is based on their previous encounters with other researchers. If that experience went well, they may be more open to assist you. If however, the clerk had a bad experience, they may expect the experience to follow the same format. Therefore, it is up to you to set the tone of your interaction.

Before you go to any courthouse, make sure you know the hours of operation and what you are looking for. Let the clerk know that you checked the website and know they hold those documents. If you could not find that information on the website, it may help if you let the clerk know you at least tried to find the answer to your question. When you let them know you have done your homework, they will be more willing to assist you.

Never ask for *everything* they have on any event or person. This is the fastest way to turn the clerk off. They probably don't even know of the person or event you are trying to locate. All you really need to know is where the record types for the time period you are seeking are located, and may you have access to them. You should ask if you can make copies or take photos of documents. Also, if you can't find what you are seeking, ask where those records may be housed. Due to lack of space, some records you expect to be in the courthouse may not be.

The more friendly and courteous you are to them, the more friendly and courteous they will be to you. Follow any instructions they give you concerning what you can and can't take into the room, and where to store what you can't take with you.

Most of the time the books you will be handling are very large. There may be times when you need assistance to access them. Ask politely for their assistance. Make sure the books are returned to the exact place you got them. This goes for other records as well. If you are searching in a box of loose documents, make sure they are re-filed correctly.

When you leave, make sure to thank the clerk. Don't forget the copies of the records you want. People have been known to be so excited with their findings they leave those valuable documents behind. Take everything you brought into the facility out with you, and leave the tables and other areas as you found them. ⚙

COURTHOUSE RECORDS: ADOPTION DECREES

By Barbara A. H. Nuehring [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Adoption is the process where the rights and responsibilities of raising a child are assumed by others who are not the biological parent(s). Since the mid-19th century it has been a formal process through the court system.

Genealogists searching for primary source documents of adoptions must break down extra high brick walls that consist of laws requiring the “closing and sealing” of birth and adoption records or undocumented private arrangements made between individuals and the biological parent(s). How one breaks down those brick walls depends on the time frame and location of the adoption.

Early in our history, newborns and children may have been “passed off” to other family members; apprenticed out to learn a trade; sent to workhouses; left with an orphanage; or simply abandoned if the parents could not or would not take care of them. Thus, finding the biological parents means looking at other source documents (i.e., census records, orphanage records, wills/probates), or through DNA testing. Read how Carol Brown made connections with previously unknown blood-relatives in Vol. 10, No. 2, Spring 2016.

In the mid-1800s, states started passing formal adoption statutes. Although state laws differ, generally prospective parents started the adoption process by filing a petition with the local court. The child’s birth name and biological mother’s name were listed. Some courts listed an unmarried birth mother as the “sole surviving parent,” but this does not mean the birth father was unknown or deceased.

At the time of birth an original birth certificate was issued including the baby’s given name, place and date of birth, birth mother’s name, and birth father’s name. (If the biological parent did not give the child a name, it would simply state “Baby Boy” or “Baby Girl”. Depending on the time and place, the birth father’s name was often left off when the birth parents were unmarried.) When a child was adopted, a new birth certificate was created. The adoptive parents’ names and the baby’s adoptive name were listed.

The final court document—the adoption decree—completed the legal adoption process. The decree listed the adoptive child’s birth and adoptive names, and sometimes the birth mother’s name. The time between the petition and the decree depended on statute and facts presented in court.

A general push to close adoption records started in the 1940s to protect adopted children from the stigma of illegitimacy by removing such information from open court records. This means the original birth certificate becomes permanently sealed so it is virtually impossible to get those records from the courthouse. But times and societal norms are changing, which makes it possible to find biological connections and living descendants or relatives of adoptees.

To learn about the laws influencing the content of adoption records and accessibility and how to obtain records or information from them, download the PDF *Access to Adoption Records* from <www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/infoaccessap/>.

Some states have a confidential intermediary program to help individuals seeking to locate their birth parents and there are adoption search services which specialize in specific states. There are websites to help you find that kind of help.

Family Search has a wiki which provides information and links to United States Adoption Research at <https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Adoption_Research>.

Cyndi’s List offers a long list of adoption professionals, volunteers and other services at <www.cyndislist.com/adoption/professionals/>.

There is also a group within the Association of Professional Genealogists which specializes in adoption at <www.apgen.org/directory/search_results.html?search=true&research_specialty=6>.

Granted it is much harder to trace your family tree through adopted branches, it only means you have more avenues to explore in order to find biological relationships of your adopted ancestors. ⚙

COURTHOUSE RECORDS: BIRTH AND DEATH REPORTS

By **Barbara A. H. Nuehring** [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Since the beginning of the 20th century states have required their citizens to report births and deaths to the state. The exact date mandatory reporting of births and deaths began, the process for obtaining copies of these certificates, and the agency or jurisdiction housing the records varies by the state.



However, some counties were recording births and deaths during the latter half of the 19th century; and the New England states have recorded births and deaths at the town level since the settling of the town. Copies of these older records are in the county courthouse or town hall.

Delayed birth certificates were issued in the decades following the initiation of mandatory birth registrations. Many people who were born prior to record-keeping applied for delayed birth certificates because they needed proof of their birth when they submitted an application for Social Security, a driver's license, a passport, or to enlist in the military. Delayed birth certificates are usually kept by the same governmental agency as regular birth certificates. Although I have found them recorded in margins of birth registers, if you request a search you need to specify you are looking for a delayed birth certificate; otherwise the clerks will usually not look outside their regular files.

Some states have a "closed record" policy—meaning birth and death records are not open to the public for a certain amount of time after the event, usually 50 to 75 years.

Medical Examiner's Reports or Coroner's Inquests are maintained in the courthouse of the county where the individual died. They are filed by date and provide a substantial amount of information about the deceased—much more than a death certificate provides.

To learn about each state's laws, check available indexes and perhaps download a copy of the certificate, go to How to Find United States Birth Records <https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/How_to_Find_United_States_Birth_Records> and How to Find United States Death Records <https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/How_to_Find_United_States_Death_Records>. ⚙



COURTHOUSE RECORDS: DIVORCE CASE FILES

By **Barbara A. H. Nuehring** [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Divorce is the court system's termination of a marriage contract. The process happens much more often in the 21st century and the latter part of the 20th century than in did in our ancestors' time. Much has to do with our longevity, our economic security, society's acceptance and the relaxation of the laws governing divorce.

Today a person may petition the courts for a divorce on the grounds of either fault or no-fault. However, in past generations most states only granted divorces on fault grounds.

No-fault divorces are when neither party is held responsible for the failed marriage. Divorce is granted on grounds such as irreconcilable differences, incompatibility, an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, or after a voluntary period of separation.

Fault divorces occur when one person asks for a divorce because the other individual did something wrong. Grounds for a fault divorce are proof of adultery, cruelty, abandonment, mental illness, criminal conviction, drug abuse, impotency, and religious reasons.

Divorce laws vary by jurisdiction and are modified over time to fit changing social norms. Some courts impose a waiting period before a divorce is final or there are state residency requirements. Divorce decrees often involve issues of alimony; child custody, visitations and financial support; distribution of property; and division

of debt. Most divorces filed prior to the mid-1900s are open to researchers, but more recent case files may be sealed and available only to the involved parties.

Case files include a variety of interesting genealogical data—the grounds for divorce; the plaintiff's complaint and defendant's response; evidence or testimony; date and location of the marriage; addresses and occupations of the plaintiff and defendant; names and ages of children from that marriage; provisions for the care of minor children; the judge's final decree; and the terms of the settlement.

In most cases original divorce records are maintained in the county where the divorce occurred. However, some states have state-wide indexes online, or there may be published indexes by a local genealogy society, or an individual that may help you locate case files. Some of the earliest divorces were granted by territorial or colony/state legislatures and may be listed in legislature records. Since the 1800s, divorce actions will most likely be found in dockets, minutes, and case files of the county, circuit or district court. In some areas of the USA, divorces have been under the jurisdiction of a chancery, common pleas, domestic, probate, superior, or supreme judicial court.

Start your search for divorce records in the county courthouse where your ancestors were living when the marriage was ending. If not there, they may be stored off-site. To speed up your time during your on-site visit to the courthouse, check county's or state's website or contact the County Clerk to determine where your ancestors' divorce files are housed.

From personal experience I can guarantee the information about your ancestors' relationships found in their divorce case file will be fascinating reading. In fact, it may contradict the "truth" that has been handed down through generations. ✨

COURTHOUSE RECORDS: LICENSES AND PERMITS

By **Barbara A. H. Nuehring** [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Licenses and permits, which authorize an individual or company to do or own something, are issued by the county or state. Those applying for a license or permit complete paperwork and may have to appear before the Court Clerk or governmental agency to complete the process.

Requirements vary by state, county and city, as well as by profession or industry.



BUSINESS LICENSES had to be obtained from the state, county and/or city when a product- or service-based commercial enterprise was formed. These include all types of businesses (such as manufacturing companies, retail and resale shops, repair facilities, restaurants, taxis, barber/beauty shops, theaters, importers). Until the end of the Second World War there were many small family-run businesses and those licenses may provide an abundance of information not available anywhere else.

OCCUPATIONAL LICENSES were granted to individuals to certify they had the training and qualifications to perform a particular service. Normally a function of the state court system, these include a wide range of professions (health care providers, lawyers, engineers, electricians, plumbers, manicurists, beauticians, barbers, real estate brokers and sales people, educators, funeral directors, bartenders, and social workers).

LIQUOR LICENSES are required by law and are issued by the state to businesses serving alcoholic beverages. States may limit the number of liquor licenses that can be in effect at a time and most place restrictions on who can buy drinks. Liquor licenses may give you information about the proprietor of the business.

DRIVER'S LICENSES have been issued to our ancestors since 1913. Each state developed their own eligibility and testing criteria before issuing a driver's license. These licenses will validate birth dates and residency, as well as providing a physical description and/or a photo of your ancestor. I have read some states have been releasing photos of old licenses, but I haven't found any. If the state has kept copies of expired drivers' licenses, they are probably in the State Archives.

ROAD PERMITS have been issued by various jurisdictions since byways evolved from dirt trails into planned constructed roads. During the last decade of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century the building of roads was often done by corporations chartered by the states. Those charters are likely housed in the State Archives. For the past 175 years states have built highways, counties have built roads and cities have built streets. Start looking for the construction permits issued to contractors in the jurisdiction's courthouse.

BUILDING PERMITS gave permission to construct, remodel or add to a structure. Our ancestors usually had to submit plans and specifications which were reviewed by a city plans examiner to determine compliance with applicable codes. Look for them in city courthouses.

Since licenses are often filed chronologically and may not be indexed. You should know enough about your ancestor's life and livelihood to know if you should spend your time delving into these courthouse records. ⚙



COURTHOUSE RECORDS: MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS

By **Barbara A. H. Nuehring** [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Since marriage is a legal contract conferring rights and obligations on two individuals, the documents pertaining to it are filed with the County Clerk. The marriage contract has two parts:

The top half is the Marriage License which gives permission for two people to marry provided they have met the criteria for entering into the marriage contract. It states who is authorized to perform the ceremony and is signed by a clerk of the court.

The second half is the Marriage Certificate stating where and when the two individuals were joined in marriage. It is signed by the bride, groom, two witnesses and the person conducting the ceremony. It also provides the date it was recorded with the county and signed by a clerk of the court.

The form is filed in a ledger-style book and the book number and page number are stamped on the form.

Different jurisdictions allow for various individuals to perform the wedding ceremony. In most instances it will be ordained clergy in a religious wedding, or judges or Justices of the Peace in a civil ceremony.

Learn what restrictions to couples marrying were in effect at the time of your ancestors' lives. Most jurisdictions had or currently have restrictions on who can marry such as a minimum age, mixed race unions or same-sex marriages. If your ancestor did not meet the marriage restriction in their county, they may have gone to another county, state or country to get married.

A license may have been obtained in one county, but the ceremony was held in another jurisdiction within the state. (The marriage document will be filed in the county issuing the license.) So if you know grandma and grandpa were married in a certain town but you can't find the license/certificate at the county courthouse, you may need to check another county courthouse. Sometimes the county seat of a neighboring county was geographically closer to your ancestor's home than their county seat.

Of course, there are some instances where a license was obtained but the couple never had a wedding ceremony. There are also some cases where the license was issued, the marriage took place and the bride and groom were given a Certificate of Marriage, but the document was never filed with the county clerk.

Getting copies of marriage records is not difficult since many counties have indexes or databases by the bride's and groom's surnames with the book and page numbers listed. Some counties have microforms or digital images of the license or certificate. Naturally, certified copies will cost more than a plain copy. ⚙



I find it interesting how over the years of my genealogy research different record types and new genealogy tools change the direction of my research. Right now I am gaga over DNA. ⚙

COURTHOUSE RECORDS: NATURALIZATION DOCUMENTS

By **Barbara A. H. Nuehring** [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Naturalization is a voluntary process by which a foreign-born resident becomes a citizen of the USA. It is a two-step process: the individual files a Declaration of Intent to Naturalize (or first papers) usually shortly after they arrive in country; and the Petition for Naturalization (or second papers) five years later after the residency requirement has been met. No centralized files exist prior to 1906 when the federal government required county and state courts to submit copies. Therein lies two problems.



Since an alien could become naturalized in any court of law, most people went to the one most convenient to them. Likely it would be the nearest county court, but it could be the county supreme court, criminal courts, common pleas courts, divorce courts, state supreme court, circuit courts, or federal district courts.

First and second papers did not need to be filed with the same court. Since many immigrants were anxious to become citizens, first papers may have been filed in an area near their port of entry. Five years later, that person could be anywhere in the country.

The good news is that some counties and states have indexed their naturalization documents—check their Clerk of Courts websites. If the naturalization took place in a federal court, you will likely find indexes, Declarations of Intent and Petitions for Naturalization in the NARA regional facility serving the state in which the federal court was located.

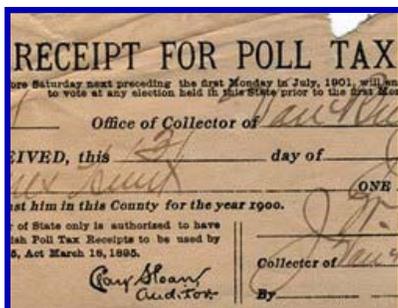
To locate naturalization documents take a look at the federal censuses taken during the first three decades of the 1900s. The enumeration schedules have columns with codes pertaining to the individual's citizenship. This will narrow down the time frame for searching for the first or second papers.

Another way to locate the Petition for Naturalization is to start with the county courthouses closest to where your male or single female ancestor lived five years after he/she immigrated. (Until the mid 20th century married women and children derived their citizenship from their husband's/father's naturalization, and until 1906 they were rarely listed on the first or second papers.) If records aren't found in the first courthouse you visit, expand your search to the state and federal courts.

Naturalization papers can be an important source of information about your ancestors. Don't overlook them when you are making on-site visits to the courthouses near where your immigrant ancestors lived. ⚙

COURTHOUSE RECORDS: TAX LISTS

Carolyn H. Brown [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]



There were a lot of commodity taxes on the early colonists such as tobacco, sugar and tea which were paid at the point of sale. They didn't generate a list of the individuals in the colonies. It was only the taxes based on the number of individuals or their property that generated the lists we genealogists can use to prove our ancestors were at a given place at a specific point in time. These varied lists originated in courthouses and may be found there or in their archives.

POLL TAX

The first tax which created a "tax list" was the head or poll tax which began in England in 1377. The poll tax is a capital tax equally levied on adults in the community. Later, the poll tax became a means of deterring or preventing African-Americans and poor whites in the southern USA from voter registration and voting. The poll tax was ended in the USA by the ratification of the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on 23 January 1964.

HEADRIGHT SYSTEM

The headright system was originally created in 1618 in Jamestown, Virginia. It was eventually available in all of the original 13 colonies, but was used mainly in Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Maryland. Settlers who could afford it would accumulate land by paying for poor individuals to travel to America. They were given 50 acres for each person. In the 1600s, the cost was roughly 6 pounds per person, or approximately \$215 today. This system led to the development of indentured servitude. The eight-volume set of "Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants" by Nell Marion Nugent provides information on land received in Virginia through the headright system.

TITHABLES

In English Law "tithable" referred to the tax of the tenth portion of the livestock and certain other agricultural products for the support of the church. The term "tithable" developed a different and restricted meaning in 17th century Virginia, where it came to apply to persons on whom the colony's tax laws assessed a poll tax or capitation tax, literally a tax on each "head."

Among the very first acts of the General Assembly was the imposition in March 1623/4 of a tax of ten pounds of tobacco levied upon every male above sixteen years of age. It was apparently understood the tax applied only to freemen.

By 1658, when the assembly passed a law defining "What Persons are Tithable," a "tithable" was a member of the potentially productive labor force: free Caucasian males age sixteen or older, plus "all Negroes imported whether male or female, and Indian servants male or female however procured, being sixteen years of age." Subsequent laws made the immigrants' descendants tithable, too. Slaves and servants did not pay their own taxes; their owners or masters were therefore "tithable" for themselves and for the taxes on their servants and slaves.

The early tithable lists only named the head of household and included the number of slaves and other tithables in the household. In 1782 in Virginia, the name of each tithable in the household and of each slave is also listed.

QUIT RENTS

The first land tax rolls were based on the "quit rents" imposed in Virginia in 1704. They imposed a "quit rent" of one shilling for every fifty acres. The list of the landowners and the amount each owned was prepared by the sheriffs of the various counties and delivered to the Receiver-General, who collected the quit rents and transmitted the lists, with his accounts, to the English Government. These rolls recognized the "headright system". Georgia also adopted a headright law in 1777, but headrights were not granted until 1780. Fees were due for issuing land grants, which show up in these rolls.

REAL ESTATE TAXES

Property tax on real estate is usually levied by the local government at the municipal or county level. Rates vary across the states, between 0% and 4% of the home value. The assessment is made up of two components—the improvement or building value, and the land or site value. The property tax is the main tax supporting local education, police/fire protection, local governments, some free medical services, and most of other local infrastructure.

Property tax records may indicate the year an individual arrived in a specific area. They also indicate when the property owner departed or died. These records may direct you to other land documents such as deeds, indentures, wills, and other instruments. By following the property tax lists you may find when land changed hands and who received it. These records can fill in where deeds are missing. These lists usually provide a specific reference to the parcel(s) being assessed and can help in pinpointing the location and identifying the current property owner.

PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES

Many states had taxes on items other than real estate. The items taxed ranged from windows in the home to horses, carriages and other livestock. Laws governing personal property taxes have varied greatly over time and can indicate the wealth of the individual. Tax records vary so much that you will need to consult the tax assessor or similar administrator for advice on how to access what records still exist.

LOCATING TAX LISTS

In some areas these records are available at the local courthouse. However, many of the early records have been microfilmed and are available at the state archives or state library. The Family History Library (FHL) also has some microfilm of early tax lists. Some lists have been lost, but don't assume that all were lost. It is possible some of the tax lists have been salvaged and a copy is held elsewhere. Some lists have been published in newspapers, genealogy quarterlies and newsletters—check PERSI (Periodical Source Index).

CONCLUSION

Though you won't find the names of women, unless they were the owner of the property or head of household at the time, tax lists are the one list which may indicate when the property owner became of age and/or died. None of us likes taxes, but these lists may help you get over a brick wall. ✨

COURTHOUSE RECORDS: VOTER LISTS

By Barbara A. H. Nuehring, SKP 83946

Since our independence from England, "everyone" has had the right to vote for our leadership and the laws that govern us. Granted at first those were white, male landowners—less than 10 percent of the population—but eventually the right of all American citizens to vote came to fruition.



Sadly, during the past 100 years only 50 to 60 percent of eligible voters have turned out for presidential elections with the number of voting during midterm elections even lower. However, in the 1800s, 70 to 80 percent of our ancestors voted. That means more of the population than that actually registered to vote. In most cases it was at the county courthouse.

When registering to vote our ancestors provided their name, country or state of birth, race, age, street address, length of residence, whether native or naturalized, date of naturalization, and the court where the naturalization occurred. That information was recorded on alphabetical voter lists (also called poll lists, poll books, registers or electoral records) that were checked when our ancestor went to polling places to vote. Some counties also created card indexes with voter information.

If you have discovered any of your counties of interest have not saved their voter lists check for published compiled records; the state archives manuscript collections; the FHL catalog; and online genealogical databases for voter lists by state and/or county.

Tip: Voter lists are often used as a substitute for the destroyed 1890 federal census, so much effort has gone into finding and preserving them. ✨

Record books at courthouses are large and heavy. Most weigh in at about 10-20 pounds and will cover the entire glass copying area of an office copy machine. They are "racked" on metal shelves with "pockets" sized to contain these large books. Each pocket has a set of rollers that allow the book to slide in and out. These racks reach from the floor to about 6 foot high. If you have back problems, problems stooping or squatting, or cannot lift heavy objects, then you should think about taking someone with you who can handle the books.

In many small county courthouses the record rooms are very cramped with only a large center table about 4 foot in height available to use. There is no place to sit down and it is necessary to stand the entire time you are looking at record books. If standing for long periods is a problem you will need to take into consideration rest periods when you are compiling your list of research items.

The majority of "closings" on real estate take place the last week of a month and the courthouse is normally filled with title attorneys or their clerks. It's tough to compete with them for use of the record books. Think about making your trip during the middle two weeks of the month. ~ Linda Haas Davenport

BURNED COURTHOUSE RESEARCH

By Carolyn H. Brown [From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

During the course of our research many of us have come across the need for records that were destroyed by fire or other calamities. Our first instinct is to say to ourselves “Oh, heck.” and move on to another ancestor.

You don't have to give up so easily because there are ways to work around the supposed loss of documents. I say supposed because many times not all records were lost. In some counties they have tried to reconstruct information of lost documents from other sources.

Some courthouses were burned during the American Revolution, and many in the south were pillaged or burned during the Civil War. Other courthouse records were lost to hurricanes, tornados, floods or natural fires. The truth is, it is very possible that not all of the records were actually destroyed. During wars, many local people were concerned about the records and they may have moved them to someone's home or other facility. Some of the oldest records may have been moved to the state archives or the local historical society to provide space in the courthouse for newer records. In some cases, it has been years after the loss of the courthouse before the documents were discovered and returned. When the courthouse burned, it is possible many of the very large volumes didn't completely burn, as they were too thick. There are cases when a courthouse burned and the records were burned, but someone had previously created a book of abstracts or transcriptions of some of the record books which can now be found in the library or archives.

When working in counties where the courthouse burned before 1775, look for copies of documents to have been sent back to the mother country of the state involved.

In the case of James City County, Virginia, the courthouse has burned three times. However, copies of their early records are in England. With the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, some of the early records have been copied and may be found at the foundation. Other documents may be found at the College of William and Mary. Check the library and historical society manuscript collections. Local church records may also help to overcome the problem of lost courthouse records.

You may have been told that no records exist, but don't believe it. When a courthouse burned, the land-owners had to present a copy of the land patent, grant or deed to have the property reinstated in the court records in order to sell it. Likewise, if a probate or court case was ongoing, the family had to present any documents they had to get the case back in the records. These records may also contain copies of deeds, wills, marriage documents or other types of records required to complete the court case. Therefore, it is important to look for documents from the past in the first 10 to 20 years after the fire or damage. When a state started keeping records of births, marriages and deaths, copies of those records were sent to the state. Some court cases which started at the county level may have been moved up to the state level, and those records may be available there.

Since 1950, many older courthouse records have been microfilmed and are available through the state archives or the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In the past when it could take a day to go 20 miles by carriage, people went to the closest courthouse, even if it was the courthouse for the neighboring county. Also, are you looking in the wrong county because the place your family lived was in a different county before the courthouse disaster? Did the family own land in two counties? It never hurts to check the counties around your county of interest. You never know what will turn up where you least expect it.

To learn more about the specific burned courthouse of your research, study all you can find in books and on the Internet. You may be surprised what someone else found that may help you. Another good place to locate information to help you get by a burned county, is to read the footnotes of articles in genealogy quarterlies. The author may mention a set of records you never knew existed. ⚙



OSCODA COUNTY, MICHIGAN
1888 COURTHOUSE BURNED ON 4 MAY 2016

BOUSE GENIES NEWS

By Carolyn H. Brown

The *Dog Days of Summer* are upon us, and those of us still here in Bouse are trying to figure out ways to get out of town, if only for a short time. Nikki Mackey and I took five days and attended the Southern California Genealogical Society Jamboree in Burbank, California the first of June. As usual, every time we attend one of these big genealogy events we had a great time. Kenyatta Berry of *Genealogy Road Show* TV show was the guest speaker for the banquet. It was so interesting hearing about how the show comes together behind the scenes. I met two more distant cousins and visited with several old friends.

GENEALOGY WORKSHOP 2017

We are beginning to think about the 2017 Genealogy Workshop. We need our members to get busy and prepare some new classes for the workshop. We also need your input as to the class themes you would like to see at the 2017 workshop. Is there a presentation by one of our members which you have seen in the past which you would like to see repeated at the workshop? Please let us know.

DNA USERS GROUP

Our members who are working with DNA are marking more connections. I am sure there will be some good stories to share in the fall.

WEBSITE UPDATES

We have a fabulous website at <www.bousegeniesaz.org>. Please take a few minutes to read every page on the site and if you see something that should be changed, or maybe something you would like to have added, please let us know at <bousegenies@gmail.com>.

From the Editor's Desk

By Carolyn H. Brown and Barbara A. H. Nuehring

[From the Summer 2016 SKP Genies Newsletter]

Although Carol has been living in a house in the western Arizona desert for several years and Barbara has recently “hung up her full-timing keys” to spend the summers in the New Mexico mountains and the winters in Arizona’s southeastern desert, both of us still know how wonderful it is to be able to travel via an RV to do on-site research. Oh, the stories—both great and frustrating—we could tell you! Some do make their way into our articles, but our editorial goals are to share genealogy resources we have found and experiences we have gained through our combined 60+ years of tracing our family histories.

But we are not the only Bouse Genies who have knowledge in some of the many facets of genealogy research.

Everyone has at least one story to tell. Why not share your story? We have a feature called “Great Journeys into the Past” for stories about research challenges and successes. As you may have noticed, we haven’t had any submissions for this feature in quite some time; too long, in fact. So, limber up those fingers and hit the keyboard. Then send us a story about your family, an ancestor, or how you knocked down a brick wall.

Everyone is an expert in at least one aspect of family history. If your experience is using the facilities and resources of a library—public, academic, specialized or private—then now is the time to start working on an article about it, because libraries will be the focus of the Fall edition of the *Bouse Genies Newsletter*. If you have researched in state archives or the national archives we would like to have an article from you for the Winter edition of the newsletter.

Send your articles to Carol <GenieCarol@gmail.com>. The deadline for the Fall edition is 1 September. We look forward to hearing from you. ⚙️



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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

BYU Family History and Genealogy Conference

26–29 July 2016 in Provo, Utah

Info: <http://familyhistory.ce.byu.edu/>

Summer Genealogy Fest

30 July 2016 in Eugene, Oregon

Info: www.gcoconference.com

Celtic Connections Conference

5–6 August 2016 in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Info: <http://celtic-connections.org/>

International Conference on Jewish Genealogy

7–12 August 2016 in Seattle, Washington

Info: www.iajgs2016.org

Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference

31 August–3 September 2016 in Springfield, Illinois

Info: www.fgs.org/cpage.php?pt=43

Legacy Family Tree Cruise

2–9 September 2016

Seward, Alaska, to Vancouver, British Columbia

Info: www.legacyfamilytree.com/CruiseInfo_2016.asp

New York State Family History Conference

15–17 September 2016 in Syracuse, New York

Info: www.nysfhc.org/registration.html

2016 British Institute

10–14 October 2016 in Salt Lake City, Utah

Info: www.isbgfh.org/cpage.php?pt=56 ✨



While planning your research trip, check the local genealogy society's website to see if they have seminars, conferences, classes, or meetings scheduled during the time you will be on-site.

You will meet the locals and learn from those who really know the area. Plus, you might discover a distant cousin. ✨

Bouse Genies Newsletters 2002–2015

All past and current individual files of the *Bouse Genies Newsletters* and the *2015 Newsletter Index* are available on the *Members Only* page of our www.bousegeniesaz.org website.

OR

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