



# ABCs of Family Research

John Sutherland

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## "Sutherland"

*An engraving from R. R. McJan's Costumes in the Clans of Scotland originally published in Glasgow, Scotland, 1845.*

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## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 - To Begin...	3
Let's Start With What You Know	3
Background on America	3
Record Keeping	6
Paper Records	7
Computer Digital Records	8
Chapter 2 - Home Computer System Hardware	11
The Basic Computer System	12
Computer Disk Drives	12
Internet Service Modems	16
Cable Internet Modems	16
DSL and Fiber Modems	17
AC Power Battery Backups/UPS Units	18
Laptop Computers	19
Summary	20
Chapter 3 - Home Computer System Software	22
Computer Software	22
Operating System Software	22

Research Application Software	23
Family Tree Maker	23
RootsMagic	24
The Master Genealogist (TMG)	25
GEDCOM	26
Summary	27
Chapter 4 - Collecting Individual Data	29
Chapter 5 - FindaGrave and BillionGraves	32
Find A Grave	32
BillionGraves	35
Summary	42
Chapter 6 - Performing the Actual Research	44
Local Genealogical or Historical Societies	44
Family History Centers (FHCs)	45
Genealogical Societies	46
Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS)	47
Historical Societies	48
Names and Dates	49
Location Names	50
Date Formats	52
Double Dates	53
Federal, State, City, Town, Church Records	54
Federal Census Records	55
The 1890 Census	59

Currently Available US Census Reports	60
Canadian Census Reports	61
Social Security Indexes, Border Crossings, etc.	65
Social Security and Railroad Retirement	65
Other Church, State, and Local records	67
Town Clerks, City Clerks	69
Military Records	71
Fold3 Records	76
Local Library Resources	78
Cemetery and Funeral Home Resources	81
Types of Cemeteries	81
Types of Cemetery Burials	82
Twombly Fogg Cemetery 32	84
Cemetery records	86
Mountain View Cemetery, Longmont, CO	87
Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, MA	89
Online Resources, Including Ancestry.com	92
The ARPANET	92
The Internet	93
Online Ancestry Search Engines and Databases	94
USGenWeb	99
Other Online sources	100
Family and Town History Books	101
PDF Documents	102

Early Family Histories	103
Early Town Histories	108
Newspapers, Magazines	113
Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection	116
Newspaper Announcements	117
Newspaper Copyrights	120
DNA Testing	121
Types of DNA	121
How Does DNA Testing Work?	123
The Big Companies in DNA Testing	124
Problems with DNA Testing Privacy	126
Problems with DNA Testing Accuracy	128
DNA Errors and Fraud	130
DNA summary	132
Blood Types	132
Domestic Animal Blood Types	133
Human Blood Types	134
Rh Negative Blood Types	136
Google and Internet Privacy and Security	137
FaceBook, Twitter, and Google Privacy and Security	138
The Good Side of Google	139
Other Search Engines	141
Computer System Privacy	142
The Onion Router (TOR) Browser	143

Photographs and Videos	144
Early Photographs	144
But What About Movies and Videos?	146
What About Home Movies?	147
Paper Maps, and GPS Locators	152
Satellites	153
NAVSTAR and GPS	154
Focusing on GPS	155
Genealogical Numbering Systems	158
Chapter 7 – Wrapping It All Up	162
About Communicating with Others	162
Keep Asking Questions	164
But, What If...?	166
Final Thoughts	174
Appendices	176
Appendix A -- List of Abbreviations	177
Appendix B -- Individual Data Form	178
Appendix C -- Individual's Spouse(s) Data Form	179
Appendix D -- Individual's Children Data Form	180
Appendix E -- Family Pedigree Form	181
Index	182

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## Introduction

Doing your own family research is not rocket science, but success in doing it does require a certain amount of persistence and determination, attention to detail, a generous bit of analytical and deductive thinking, and your own focused attempt to seek, find, and record the truth – always. Being humble, polite, and learning to ask lots of specific questions is an important part of this process – this whole subject area is a huge learning and maturing process.

In the animal kingdom, only humans seem intent on recording history and using historical evidence to determine what happened, and where he or she came from. This has led to recorded history, a process that is still evolving and going on wherever humans live and work. On a positive note, human record keeping seems to be improving in quality, in quantity, and in availability in recent decades with the advent of the Internet, and we can witness that process in all of its glory in the record keeping style and intensity performed by various government agencies – they record everything.

But, in addition to the good records keepers, aka the truth tellers, we also have the liars, frauds, and fools – people who choose to tell lies to others, and others who simply make mistakes. Ours is not a pure animal species by any definition at all.

And while an individual family's history is invariably the beginning of a story, learning about that story also reveals a bit of local history and culture of a people.

I sometimes tell people that my work in genealogy is like that of a private investigator, the only difference being that many (maybe most) of the people I look for and research are dead, and some have been dead for centuries. But

seeking that record of truth and/or fiction about an individual over times long past is where the fun and frustration for a genealogist begins.

In this beginner's guide, I will try to provide enough information and suggestions to help you get started doing your own family research. I'll also try to get you, through stories and observations of my own research, to see how the research process works and how to use your own thinking process to be successful. Some of what I write may be redundant to what you already know and understand about computers, or genealogy, or whatever, but remember – this is a beginner's document.

And, regardless of your personal background and experience, I will link the basic family research elements that I think you will need to have and use, in order for you to be as successful as possible starting your own family research efforts. You will be reading the culmination of my own learning efforts for the past couple of decades. Inasmuch as some books on this subject try to teach organized methods and procedures, I won't do much of that in this book. I think we are all different and those differences mean we will all tend to do things differently. Good for us.

I should also mention that I learn something new in this area of research every single day. This is part of what keeps me involved in this ongoing research process – I still have so much to learn. I am still a student of life. So, if mysteries and discoveries are your 'thing,' I suggest this is a great personal hobby area for you to jump into.

Also note that my suggestions and techniques, while being American based and oriented, should apply as well for anyone anywhere beginning family research.

Let's get started, shall we?

# Chapter 1 - To Begin...

## Let's Start With What You Know

You know who you are, and with any luck at all, you know who your parents are, and maybe even your grandparents. That's all good, and is the basis for getting started in genealogical research of your own family. But, as they say, the devil is in the details, and that is what doing this research is all about. Finding the details, making certain they are correct and accurate, and then documenting what you have learned – that's the goal.

Chapter 4 will help you get started on the specific individual data you want to look for. The other chapters in this book help with the background details of how to get started, what to use for tools, and how to create your own memorable family history book.

I will tend to get into some details that you may not be expecting, so be patient and try to bear with my offerings here. They are meant to help you be successful. Since I suspect most of you reading this will probably be Americans, and so much of what you will be researching is American, I'll devote some time into uncovering some of the layers of research in understanding America, how it evolved, and what it has to offer in support of searching out your own past.

## Background on America

In the long history of mankind, the history of the United States is relatively short and it has been tumultuous. The English colonized the Americas because their enemies,

the Spanish and the French, were expanding in the Americas, and they felt they had to keep their enemies from taking control of the whole new world. But England had spent a lot of money on recent wars, so its treasury was pretty low and it did not have much money to invest in the new world. Also, the people of England had been impoverished and beaten down by the religious wars, and many just wanted to get out of England, so emigrating to the Americas was appealing to them.

The first permanent English settlement was Jamestown, named after King James I, and was chartered by the "Virginia Company of London" in 1606. Jamestown survived much better than did the original first Virginia settlement (the Lost Colony of Roanoke), and by the mid-18th century, there were thirteen British colonies, the last of which was Georgia.

<u>COLONY NAME</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>FOUNDED BY</u>
Virginia	1606	Virginia Company of London
Massachusetts	1620	Puritans
New Hampshire	1623	John Wheelwright
Maryland	1634	Lord Baltimore
Connecticut	c. 1635	Thomas Hooker
Rhode Island	1636	Roger Williams
Delaware	1638	Peter Minuit and New Sweden Company
North Carolina	1653	Virginians
South Carolina	1663	Eight Nobles with a Royal Charter from Charles II
New Jersey	1664	Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret
New York	1664	Duke of York
Pennsylvania	1682	William Penn
Georgia	1732	James Edward Oglethorpe

By the late 18th century, English colonies in the Americas included: 1) Newfoundland, 2) Nova Scotia, 3) The thirteen American colonies, 4) Bermuda, 5) Bahamas, 6) British Honduras (was Spanish c1750: became British in 1798), 7) Jamaica, 8) British Leeward Islands and Barbados.

The American colonies thrived under a condition of 'salutary neglect' from England, until the King and Parliament noticed that the colonies were thriving, and that's when the conflicts of interest started happening.

In 1772 Benjamin Franklin, after examining the wretched hovels in Scotland surrounding the opulent mansions of the land owners, observed that in 'New England' "every man is a property owner, has a vote in public affairs, lives in a tidy, warm house, has plenty of good food and fuel, with whole clothes from head to foot, the manufacture perhaps of his own family."

The 'enlightened' American colonists felt they deserved all the rights and freedoms of Englishmen. The English, on the other hand, felt that the colonies were created to be used in the way that best suited the crown and parliament. This divergence of views and conflict is embodied in one of the rallying cries of the American Revolution: 'No Taxation Without Representation.'

And, as we know, on Patriot's Day, April 19, 1775, the English and the Americans started an armed conflict between each other in Lexington and in Concord, Massachusetts that would result in the American colonies winning their independence from England.

The war between these new united States of America and Great Britain was fought from 1775 until 1783, when final terms of peace between the two countries was declared in Paris. The 'Paris Treaty' was signed on September 3, 1783, and was ratified by Congress on January 14, 1784, formally ending the American Revolutionary War between the Kingdom of Great Britain and the united States of America.

Article 1 of the Paris Treaty individually lists all of the former colonies as 'free sovereign and independent states.' The sovereignty of the individual states was thus clearly

understood and proclaimed by both parties signing the treaty:

*“His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States, viz., **New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, to be free sovereign and independent states**, that he treats with them as such, and for himself, his heirs, and successors, relinquishes all claims to the government, propriety, and territorial rights of the same and every part thereof.” [Emphasis added]*

Well, sovereignty was proclaimed, but the question of whether or not the British and the Rothschild banksters ever stopped interfering with America is being continually asked, and it appears to the most casual observer that the foreigners never did let go of their controlling interests in America.

I raise these points because the United States, from the very beginning, has gone through a lot of unnecessary misery and hardships, many times due to foreign interference in our country. Even the problems we see today are caused largely because of interferences from the international banksters, dual or foreign nationals inside our government (exclusively Israeli), and the lawlessness of the people who work for us in Washington.

So, that was, in general, how our country got started. Now, let’s see how our families fit into its existence and its development. But first, let’s delve into what records we will be finding and determine how we will be keeping them.

## **Record Keeping**

Since record access, retrieval, and storage is basic to all genealogical research, let’s start with deciding how you

are going to deal with the information you find about your own family history. If you are computer savvy, you can probably skim read or skip around Chapter 2.

There are basically two types of records you will be dealing with in your own research, specifically paper records and digital records. Although I am pretty computer oriented, I keep, use, and save both record types. Note also that I often digitally scan many of my own paper records (including photos) into digital format (i.e. digital records) for my own daily use and for storage on my local computer.

## Paper Records

The first family member records you will likely obtain and use are family stories and paper records. These records are often passed down to you from others in your family. Prize these records. Save these records. Treasure them. They are the seeds of your own success. Remember - all human history begins at home, and in your particular case, it was your home in which your history began.

On a personal level, I merge paper records, photos, and family keepsakes into the broad definition of 'paper records.' And for paper records, there are two generic types, namely family records, and locality records.

Family records include all individual vital documents (birth certificates, death certificates, etc.), all personal items (photos, personal items like wallets, bibles, licenses, etc.), and other family histories you will have obtained from others and from your own online research. You will also probably end up with a library of hardback books and other documents and material that you will have purchased, and that support your own areas of family research.

And then there are locality records; the early town or county histories, or historical documents that record the movements of people from one area to another area.

Migrations have been a human fact of life for centuries, and the more you can understand area histories, the more you will understand the people who lived there.

On a personal level, I usually keep my 'paper' records in 8-1/2" file folders, filed alphabetically in banker's boxes for ease of storage, movement, and ready access. You can use Banker's



Boxes or metal filing cabinets for storage – that's your call. The important thing to remember is that these paper records are permanent evidence of your own family tree information, so keep and protect these records. Your children will thank you (eventually).

### Computer Digital Records

For most people these days, computers are the best tool for complex family information research, access, and retrieval. In the computer world there are desktop computers, laptop computers, and then there are their smaller digital brethren whose technology keeps getting smaller, faster, and smarter. There are also online (Internet) resources like **Ancestry.com** and **FamilySearch** that are available for record searching and record keeping. I'll address both search engine/databases later on.

Technically, I'm old school, and so when it comes to computer technology, I don't trust any single source of technology. I am always concerned about backup and



redundancy, simply because I have lost too much information in years past, and when that loss happens to me, I'm invariably at a huge mental loss. For me, losing computer data is like losing a family member. And, recovery from such a data loss is a slow, painstaking, process if there had been no computer data backup.

So, what I am going to suggest is that, if you are serious about researching and recording your family's history, you spend time and resources to set up a computing environment that will do what you need to have done and will do it consistently and securely. Try not to lose your own computer data.

Historically, I'm a minicomputer and PC guy, so I'm going to write more about PC systems and applications than about Apple systems and applications. Why am I PC based? In the early years of personal computers there were many more software applications developed and available for IBM PCs than were made available for any other computer platforms, including Apple. While that may not be absolutely true today, depending on which version of an Apple product you buy, you may be able to use either technology quite well, so the historic differences between PCs and Apple computers can almost be considered moot.

Because I value computer records so highly, I am going to introduce you to redundancy right here and in the sections below. Basically, I have a home computer system (a PC desktop) and I use online storage (Ancestry.com) of family data as my backup (the cloud, so to speak). In spite of a couple of unexpected software hiccups, so far, so good – no data lost.

My research process is that 1) I develop and enter family research data on my home computer system, and 2)

then with my family research application software, I upload (i.e. synchronize) a copy of that data to Ancestry.com.

Using Ancestry.com as a backup for my local computer system also provides for another side benefit. Because putting your family tree on Ancestry.com exposes what you know to other researchers, and vice versa – you get to see other trees also, and they get to see yours. What happens once you get into this really broad research area, is that you find missing relatives, missing data, and incorrect data. One hand washes the other... We all end up helping each other. But also remember, what you post online becomes public material. If you don't want something exposed to the public, don't put it in your public tree, and don't post it online.

You can also think of this referencing and possibly using 'other people's data' as a sanity check on your own research. Are the dates the same? Why does this other person think uncle George was born in Philadelphia instead of Syracuse? Are there two Georges? You get the idea.

## Chapter 2 - Home Computer System Hardware

The computer industry is constantly and rapidly changing and developing new products for us to buy and use. Computer hardware advancements are announced on a daily basis, especially in the areas of capacity, speed, and increased power and capability. What I am going to suggest here is that you buy or build a nominal home system that will perform well now and for the next few years. Regardless of what computer system you buy and use, you should be aware that you will basically get results out of your computer system depending on what you invest in it.



BTW, if you don't have a computer geek in the family or as a good friend, Amazon.com as a vendor sells a lot of computer product brands, and the computer manufacturers like DELL and HP are

always offering their own sales of complete computer system products. Amazon, of course, is not manufacturer biased, so on their web site you can often compare various

manufacturer's systems on a price per feature basis. For me, comparison shopping is just smart shopping.

## **The Basic Computer System**

For your new computer system, and if you are going to do all of your work from home, I'm going to suggest an Intel CPU based desktop PC or server system. The CPU should probably now be a 64-bit Intel processor with a minimum of 8 GB of main memory, an internal 1 or 2 TB 3-1/2 inch (perhaps a Seagate Barracuda) disk drive, a DVD drive, and probably also a Blu-Ray drive. The video display (if you buy your system a la carte) will probably want to be a high resolution flat screen display and have an HDMI 2.0 (or later) video interface. Video screen size may be determined best by your own vision – that is, how well your eyes can see. Hint: I like larger video displays - 32 inch flat screen monitors work well for me. You will find having a digital scanner and laser printer of great help in that process of dealing with images and documents.

My primary home computer system is now a 64-bit Lenovo server desktop tower system with 8 GB main memory, (2) 1 TB rotating hard disk drives (one of the disks lies dormant and is my cold backup hard disk), an LG brand DVD drive, an LG brand Blu-Ray drive, a Brother HL-L2380DW laser printer, a Canon digital scanner, and a 32" TCL ROKU HDMI flat screen television/display unit.

## **Computer Disk Drives**

At this point I should probably discuss hard disk drives a bit. Hard disk drives of the older, traditional rotating media technology are sealed units, have been around since the 1950s, and modern versions are composed of three major internal components, namely the disk platter(s), the internal interface and controller PC card, and the motor assembly. All

of this is mounted and sealed in a relatively ruggedized metal enclosure that fits current computer standard mounting requirements (2-1/2" or 3-1/2" form factor).



Lifetime usage for disks of this type is usually about five years of steady 24/7 usage. The mortal enemies of these hard disk drives are heat, dust, and excessive force or vibration applied to the drive. Dust and excessive force are usually the bigger problems in laptops because laptops don't have air fans for cooling, and laptops get moved around a lot.

Disk drives are perhaps the single most important component in your computer system simply because they are the permanent keepers of all of your research data. Replacing a physical hard disk drive is cheap – replacing a year's worth of data entry is expensive, and may be impossible.

So, what goes wrong when a disk drive fails? Failure is often due to a head crash (the disk read/write traveling head crashes into the high speed rotating disk media), or a disk drive PC card failure. There are services available that will try to recover data from a crashed hard disk for you, for a fee. The trick is to know this is going to happen ahead of time, and make preparations for the failure recovery process.

For example, I worked with another genealogist here in Colorado, and her single system disk drive just suddenly failed her. She was still running Windows ME operating system, and her two year old disk drive just stopped

reading/writing. It turns out the disk drive's internal printed circuit board firmware chip needed to be updated. Who would have seen that one coming, eh? I found a Vietnamese guy in California who would upgrade the firmware for \$50 plus shipping costs. One or two weeks later, the disk drive was returned with all data intact, and she was good to go. But she was lucky. Not everyone is so lucky when a disk drive decides to crash and burn.

So, protecting data stored on hard disk drives is of great (HUGE) importance. In my opinion.

I should probably also discuss solid state drives (SSD) a bit. Both SSDs and rotating media hard disk drives do the same job: They boot your system, and they store your software applications and your personal data files. But these two types of disk storage have their own unique feature set, and you should decide why you would want to buy one as opposed to buying the other.

Basically, SSDs are made out of semiconductor memory chips, use less power, generate no noise, have no moving parts, are blazingly fast (est. ten times faster than rotating media hard disk drives), of lower capacity than hard



drives (at this time), are more rugged and resistant to vibration and physical abuse, are the same physical form factor size (or smaller) as hard disk drives, are physically interchangeable with rotating media hard disk drives, and they cost more (in 2018, about 4-5 times as much).

Overall rotating media hard disk drives win on price, capacity, and availability at this time. Both drive types have

about the same expected life span (i.e. five years). In a competition, SSDs would win over hard disk drives if low power consumption, ruggedness, small form factor, noise, and performance are important factors to you, and if you are not concerned about the price and capacity issues. The price of SSDs is coming down, but you may still find that SSDs may be a bit too expensive to totally replace the terabytes of data that some users have in their PCs and Macs.

And I should note that in August, 2018, Samsung announced it was starting mass production of the first consumer-level 4 TB SATA solid state drive, signaling a possible turning point for high capacity computer home storage. Kingston was also offering a 960 GB SSD drive for less than \$250/ea on Amazon at this same time.

When considering backing up my local hard disk drive, the 1 TB drives in early 2017 cost me about \$50 each and are larger capacity than what I needed, but the speed was adequate, and I could easily afford two drives. My use of the disk drives is to have one drive that operates constantly while the other is unplugged and dormant. About every six months I make a full disk duplicate backup copy (a clone) from the operational drive to the backup drive, and then store the previous operational drive while the backup drive operates for the next six months. This way, the normal five years of life for each drive gets lengthened, and I have, at worst, a six month old plug-and-play replacement drive if something mean, wicked, or terrible happens to the operating disk drive.

There is one other hybrid system disk consideration that you should consider, namely using one SSD disk (for operating system and supporting programs) and using a second rotating media disk, for data storage. The advantage? System boot up time is on the order of 3-5 seconds and programs run at much faster speed.

## Internet Service Modems

Moving on to Internet connecting modems, whether DSL, cable, or fiber based Internet service, I suspect all Internet service providers are quite willing and able to charge you \$10 per month (more) for rental of one of their modems. This may not be a bad deal if you are not looking for long term modem use or are undecided on what to use.

Note that there are sometimes disadvantages for renting Internet service provider modems. One disadvantage is the recurring cost, and another is the vintage of the modem. Some service providers often (maybe always) simply recycle modems in their office area, so modem firmware can become obsolete, and the modem you get from them may actually support only slower speed Internet access.

My suggestion? Go to your Internet service provider's web site and find the web page that tells you exactly what modems they support for their different support speeds.

## Cable Internet Modems

The cable modem specifications to look for in 2018 are DOCSIS (Data Over Cable Service Interface Specification) 3.0 and 3.1 standard, which are backwards compatible with DOCSIS 2.0, and 1.1 services. DOCSIS 3.0's highest possible speed is 1Gbps, also known as the "Gigabit Internet." However, the newer standard, known as DOCSIS 3.1 maxes out at an amazing 10Gbps.

It appears that one popular series of cable modems are the Arris SURFboard modems, and some models (e.g. SURFboard® SBG6900-AC) operate at DOCSIS 3.0 speeds up to 686 Mbps with WIFI support, and unless you are also a gamer running at Gigabit Internet speeds, DOCSIS 3.0 should be more than adequate for your needs.

By the way, when considering any modem, be aware that not all modems have wireless support (the one noted



above does), and if wireless support is of value to you, just make certain the modem you rent or buy has wireless support.

### **DSL and Fiber Modems**

And then we should also discuss the world of **DSL** and **Fiber** cable Internet Service.

*“DSL is provided by phone companies like AT&T and CenturyLink, and often bundled with home phone service. It isn’t as fast as Cable or Fiber Internet. However, it is often cheaper. Outside of urban and suburban areas, DSL is often the only wired Internet option.”*

*“Fiber Internet is a relative newcomer to the home broadband market. Fiber is provided by companies like Verizon Fios and Google Fiber, who invest in running expensive high-speed fiber-optic lines all the way to customer addresses.”*

All three Internet service types are discussed and compared at this website:

<https://broadbandnow.com/guides/dsl-vs-cable-vs-fiber>

If you choose either Fiber Internet service or DSL service, each will require a different modem than the Arris SURFboard noted above.

Fiber Internet service can usually use the Motorola MG7550 16x4 DOCSIS 3.0 cable modem which includes a built-in AC1900 Dual Band (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) Wi-Fi Gigabit Router, four Gigabit (GigE) Ethernet ports, a firewall, and more. This fiber modem is recommended for actual cable Internet service speeds up to 375 Mbps, so it’s pretty fast.

DSL telephone service can use the Motorola MD1600 for CenturyLink, Frontier, or most other ADSL or VDSL services. It combines a VDSL2/ADSL2+ modem with a full-featured AC1600 WiFi Gigabit router to provide fast Internet to all your WiFi and Ethernet devices. As I suspect you know, DSL services use the telephone wiring in your home. Remember, with DSL service, you want to be located within about 3,000 feet of a telephone repeater pod.

One final comment on Internet modems discussed above. Motorola makes Arris modems, so what I have done is listed three Motorola designed modems. I did this for consistency purposes only. There are several other modem manufacturers in the marketplace, and you can review them as well. Netgear is one of the more popular non-Motorola brands.

Also note that all new modems must be ‘turned on’ by the Internet service provider before the modem will work. The service provider will want the serial number of the new modem, which is printed on the bottom of the unit. This startup procedure can usually be handled via a telephone call.

## **AC Power Battery Backups/UPS Units**

Now we should discuss computer power and how to protect your computer system from electric source power problems. [I really like this website’s messaging, BTW. They are very good.]

*“Desktop computers, however, don’t have batteries built-in, like laptops do. If you had been working on a desktop during that power outage, the system would come to an immediate halt. Not only would you lose your work, but the process imposes unnecessary stress on your machine. In all our years of working with computers, the vast majority of hardware failures can be directly attributed to the stress hardware*

*components experience during the shut down and startup process (especially if power surges or blackouts are involved)."*

<https://www.howtogeek.com/161479/how-to-select-a-battery-backup-for-your-computer/>

Supporting my own home computer systems, peripherals and my Internet modem are two online MinuteMan 1100 VA (Volt Amp) UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) battery backup units which provide me with at least fifteen minutes of necessary computer power when the power fails completely, or when there are power surges or power sags. For me, UPS systems are an excellent long term investment, although the batteries may have a lifetime use of only five years each. But battery technology is getting better all the time.

I should also note that power strips do a reasonable job of protecting your computer against power line surges, but they provide no protection against sags in line voltage, against brownouts, or against blackouts and other unexpected power source issues and problems (they have no batteries).

## **Laptop Computers**

So far, I haven't really addressed the subject of laptop computers yet. I'm not a big fan of laptops (yes, I know, that probably makes me an oddball). Laptops are much better these days than they were in the early days (they're smaller, lighter, more powerful, etc.), but they also have a few disadvantages.

Laptops run on a battery, and the battery only operates for so much time before the system needs to be plugged in for a battery recharge once again. Modern laptops

have an inherent problem with cooling since they do not have a cooling fan or fans and convection cooling of the laptop internal electronics is only so good. Laptops have a small screen for viewing, which for an old guy like me, makes the screen print and video displays pretty small and hard to see and read. Depending on what laptop model you buy, you are historically dealing with a single 2-1/2" hard disk drive, so its storage capacity may not be quite as large as you want. And, finally, laptops, because of their size and portability, are still peripheral limited. For example, my daughter's Apple laptop doesn't have a DVD drive, and for me, that would be an oops.

But, having said all that, if you are considering buying a new laptop, I would suggest that you look at buying one with at least 128 GB SSD drive. The larger the SSD drive, the better. Also, you can buy external peripherals, like DVD or Blu-Ray drives, printers, etc., all connected via USB 3.3 ports on your laptop.

## Summary

With regard to computer hardware in general, I suggest that you choose the style, the brand, and the model that appeals to you the most, is the most reliable, is the one which has the most features you need and are looking for, the one that will run your family research software, and is the one that you can afford. All of the computer hardware that I described above for my home computer system, and that I use, probably cost me about \$1,000. Desktop computer systems usually last about five or six years, although I manage to stretch mine out a bit longer. Laptops, not quite as long.

I keep reading about super computing systems that are in development, and so that computer technology may be, or eventually will be, available for you when you are shopping for a computer system in the future. Fortunately for us all, and unlike automobiles and trucks, computer

systems available in the marketplace seem to be continually increasing in performance and capability while also being made available for our purchase at a lower cost. And that's good for all of us.

## Chapter 3 - Home Computer System Software

### Computer Software

After you have the hardware settled away, then you must decide on which software will run on the hardware.

### Operating System Software

I haven't discussed computer operating system software yet, but I use **64-bit Windows 7 Professional** along with various utility and application software packages (audio, video editing and playback software, Adobe Acrobat, MS Office, etc.). These software tools give me what I need to operate pretty consistently in the general computer and Internet world. I also have the **Linux Mint** operating system on this computer, but the Windows 7 Pro does the lion's share of my family research work.

My reasons for staying with the older Windows 7 Professional, rather than going with the newer Windows 10 is simply a personal preference. I view some of the features of Window 10 as being quite onerous, and other features as being quite unnecessary, and frankly, I find Windows 10 somewhat awkward to use. Actually, I would have stayed with Windows XP if Microsoft had not dropped its technical and maintenance support of XP as I am not a hacker, and

Windows XP had all of the operating system features I ever needed.

Which operating system software you choose is your call, but your choice may also determine which family research application software you are able to use on your computer system.

## Research Application Software

Which now gets us into the subject area of family research software. There are people and companies who regularly evaluate the various genealogical software packages on the market. I'm not one of them.

### Family Tree Maker

The software package I have been using for the last couple of decades is **Family Tree Maker (FTM)**. The software started out pretty much alone in 1989, offered by **Banner Blue Software** and running under the DOS operating system. FTM has changed owners several times, experienced new competition, and was eventually bought by Ancestry.com (circa 2007). Good news, eh? Well, maybe not so much.



Family Tree Maker 2017

*“On December 8, 2015, Ancestry.com announced that it would discontinue Family Tree Maker. The announcement was met by fierce protest from Family Tree Maker users. On February 2, 2016, Ancestry.com announced that **Software MacKiev**, the company that had developed the Mac version of the software for more than six years, would acquire the*

*Family Tree Maker brand, and take over the development and publishing of Mac and Windows editions.”*

In spite of all of the bumps and grinds associated with FTM, I'm still using that software. Its great value to me may be its ability to synchronize my several family trees onto Ancestry.com. In fact, the FTM 2017 version provides data searching with both Ancestry and FamilySearch databases, uses a new color coding schema, and it now offers a photo repair tool.

Is FTM perfect, no, but it does keep track of my data for me (my largest tree is almost 5,000 members), it gives me warnings when I am about to make an entry mistake (e.g. someone born in 1889 and who was married in 1912, rather than my attempted data entry of the marriage in 1812), has charts and reports that I like and that I can manipulate as necessary, and it does the GEDCOM transfer adequately, etc.

Family Tree Maker under MacKiev currently operates on Mac (OSX 10.9 and later) and PC (Microsoft Windows 7 and later). The FTM user community is pretty large and is very vocal. For me, I would cautiously recommend the product. My suggestion? For genealogical software I would encourage you to research what is available and then buy your own preferred brand. If you choose to buy FTM, do it because you like it, not because I like it.

## RootsMagic

For purposes of this book, my references and use of



family research software will usually be based on Family Tree

Maker software. But there is one other software package that you might want to evaluate as an alternative to FTM. I



would suggest you look at **RootsMagic** as it seems to be almost as good as FTM. And its free (the Essentials version), or small fee based (\$29.95) for the full version. I would look seriously at the full version as some of its features are almost awe inspiring, especially in the reports and charts that are available. It uses FamilySearch as a database search engine, rather than Ancestry.com, so there is that difference and I'll get into them both further on.

Here is a link that discusses the features of both the free and the fee based versions of RootsMagic.

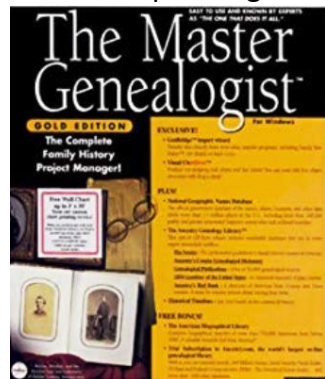
<http://rootsmagic.com/RootsMagic/Features.aspx>

I haven't used RootsMagic myself, but have come across several (maybe many) family researchers who have done so, and they seemed quite happy with the product. So, it's worth a review on your part.

### **The Master Genealogist (TMG)**

From 1993 to 2014 there was also a genealogical software package designed for both hobby researchers and for genealogy professionals. **The Master Genealogist (TMG)** was genealogy software that was created by **Bob Velke** of **Wholly Genes Software**, ran under Microsoft operating systems, and was first released in July, 1993. Data entry was customized through the use of user-defined events, names, and relationship types. Official support for TMG ceased at the end of 2014 when Bob Velke retired.

TMG had elaborate and detailed support for sources in a



database format where a source could be referred to by any other record. In the GEDCOM database specification, sources can only refer to either a single individual or single family. Because of GEDCOM's limitation, exporting a TMG database involved duplicating the sources into each place where a given source is used. All of the information was exported, but the structure of each source was lost permanently.

An example of this limitation of GEDCOM is when there is a census or ship's record that lists many members of an extended family. TMG allowed each individual's entry to refer to a common source record, which could itself have an elaborate description. The structure of GEDCOM forces the user to duplicate all mention of, and information contained in, that source. The duplication of records, makes the source information in the exported GEDCOM file (and all GEDCOM files) hard to maintain.

Several software developers have created companion products specifically for TMG that enhance its functionality, including **Second Site**, advanced web publishing and data review application software for TMG, written and offered by **John Cardinal**.

As an aside, if you don't have a computer and still want to get started immediately on your own tree, many local libraries have subscriptions to Ancestry.com, so you can go to the library, create an Ancestry account and log on, create a tree, and when you get your own computer and software, download the tree from Ancestry.com to your computer via GEDCOM or via the FTM sync feature (if you select FTM as your genealogical software).

## **GEDCOM**

I should spend a few words discussing **GEDCOM**. GEDCOM (Genealogical Data Communication) is a data structure created by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints, and is an open, public domain specification for exchanging genealogical text data between different brands of genealogy software. The current version of GEDCOM is 5.5, which was released on January 12, 1996. So, and as you can see, GEDCOM has been around for a while, and change in what is now an industry transfer standard, has been, and is going to be slow to non-existent. It's very stable. I've used GEDCOM once or twice when helping other researchers, but I have noticed that because GEDCOM is text oriented, it doesn't carry along some of the special features found in most modern genealogical software.



As a side note, while the proprietary genealogy software programs invariably treat research data differently than GEDCOM does, the genealogical research data doesn't always transfer perfectly among the various software programs. However, some genealogy software programs read Family Tree Maker (FTM), Personal Ancestral File (PAF) and other file formats directly, so use of the GEDCOM conversion protocol is not always required. Direct data transfers, if possible, between programs will save time and will produce more complete and more accurate results.

## Summary

With Family Tree Maker, as with other genealogical software programs, you can physically link photos and documents to an individual in a tree. If I can find an ancestor's photo someplace, I'll usually attach it to the individual's data record, and that way the person's image will show up on reports and will also get blasted up to Ancestry when I do a synchronization of the two trees.

When I first started synchronizing family trees, I would attach a lot of other digitized documents to an individual's data record (e.g. draft card image, census reports, vital doc images, etc.) but have slowed down doing this. Why? In the past, the software management of these media attachments has gotten a bit messed up and fixing the results was a bit of a time consuming challenge. So, inasmuch as my posted data is usually checked out several times for accuracy, I often do not attach supporting media to a tree.

And this gets me into what I do with research media. I actually do a LOT with media, it just doesn't always show up on the tree. When I find a document online that helps support information about an individual, I'll download an image of that specific document, enhance the image via Microsoft Office picture manager, and save the enhanced document in a family folder on my computer. For each tree, I have a series of digital family folders, into which I load digital images of supporting documents. Each saved document has as its title the person's name and the type of data. For example, "Helen McCarthy 1900 census" or "Charles B Newcomb Marriage Record" or "William T Sutherland Gravestone." My Sutherland family folder, all by itself, is now 2.3 GB in size, and contains 12 subfolders and over 1,000 media and document files. Does this help demonstrate why large capacity disk drives are sometimes important?

So, when someone contacts me and requests supporting information for a family or for an individual for whom I have data, I either send them an e-mail with an attachment, or, if the request is for a large amount of data files, I request the other person's physical address and simply burn a CD or DVD and mail it to the requester.

## Chapter 4 - Collecting Individual Data

So, what kind of individual data are we looking for? Family Tree Maker has a whole range of information fields from which to select, but I choose not to use them all. My own selected list of data items from FTM's list includes the following:

- Name at Birth
- Date of Birth
- Place of Birth
- Religion
- Date of Baptism
- Place of Baptism
- Education
- Occupation
- Military
- Date of Marriage
- Place of Marriage
- Date of Divorce
- Place of Divorce
- Date of Death
- Place of Death
- Cause of Death
- Date of Burial
- Place of Burial (City)
- Cemetery Name, Grave Location
- FindaGrave Memorial Number

This list addresses the individual's basic personal data. Besides this, the system looks for parental information (identical to the above), spouse information (also identical to the above), and offspring information (identical to the above, on a per child basis). Once you get to the parental links, then you can get into identifying siblings.

In addition to this data, there is also a section for individual 'story of the life' information. I usually draft a short bio that identifies the individual, his/her parents, their lives, etc. and I upload this material to their online Findagrave memorial also. Here is an abbreviated example of what I might write as a bio for an individual.

*"Marguerite Alice "Missy" **LeHand** was born in Potsdam, New York on Sep 13, 1896 to Daniel J. LeHand and Mary Jane (Graffin) LeHand, who were the children of Irish immigrants. Margeurite was the youngest of five children born to the couple. Her siblings were Arthur H LeHand (b. Feb, 1879), Daniel (Dan) James LeHand (b. Aug, 1880), Bernard John LeHand (b. Jul 31, 1883), and Anna M LeHand (b. Sep 1889).*

*"When Marguerite was a young child, the family relocated to Somerville, a working class suburb of Boston, where LeHand was struck by rheumatic fever at age fifteen. It permanently damaged her heart, causing episodes of atrial fibrillation and eventually leading to her premature death. Eleanor Roosevelt later stated that the disease had left her delicate and barred from strenuous exercise. She graduated from Somerville High School in 1917 at the age of 21, where she had taken secretarial courses in preparation for a career. Although she never attended college, in 1937 Rosary College (now called Dominican University) recognized her professional*

*achievements with an honorary Doctor of Laws, presented at the White House on Jun 11, 1937. Etc., etc.”*

You get the idea. Every life has a story, and as a family historian, you can help tell an individual’s story. And, if you choose not to – who will? Something to think about, eh.

If you are just starting out collecting this data, you can use the manual forms found in the Appendix B through E. Having noted that, I’ll try to convince you to become automated as soon as possible. The manual forms will help you get started, but the computer software resources will be of greatest value over the long term.

Decades ago the method of keeping all of this information sorted out was done with pencil and paper, or, if you were lucky, you had a typewriter. Today we have computers and we have the Internet. So, yes, we are lucky in that respect. Very lucky. Most of what I will be discussing will be using computers and Internet resources for research and data storage.

## Chapter 5 - FindaGrave and BillionGraves

### Find A Grave

By now you may have noticed from the list in Chapter 4 that I've snuck in what appears to be a new topic without any notice or fanfare, and that is the subject of **FindaGrave**.



**FIND A GRAVE**  
[www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

FindaGrave is a relatively large online database of about 190 million cemetery burial records (or

more) in the USA, Canada, and other countries in Europe and elsewhere. FindaGrave is supported by thousands of individual volunteer genealogists and photographers who accept requests for grave photos, and then bumble around cemeteries taking gravestone photos (I suggest that term 'bumble' because as a FindaGrave photographer, that's what I find myself doing more often than not while wandering around a cemetery, especially a cemetery that is new to me). But, for me, bumbling is fun.

Interestingly enough, FindaGrave is now owned and controlled by Ancestry.com and is therefore now considered a legitimate genealogical data source. So, good news all around, eh. If you have a camera and would consider wandering around local cemeteries looking for gravestone monuments to photograph as a hobby, maybe being a FindaGrave photographer is a good fit for you.



If you choose to join FindaGrave, remember, the photos you take may be the last photos ever taken for any given gravesite, and so I suggest that you try to make the photos as clear and the grave marker images as readable as possible. You are contributing to historical evidence with your photos.

As a reward for being a FindaGrave photographer, you get to meet others similarly involved. Also you now get to learn firsthand the history of grave markers and can notice how large and detailed some of the older memorials are, when compared to modern gravestones (the average American, and maybe like people everywhere, simply doesn't have as much wealth as he had in prior decades and centuries). We can thank bankers and governments for that loss in wealth.

FindaGrave photo requests are initiated by other FindaGrave family researchers, who usually live a long way away from where you live. You become one of perhaps several people who get notified (I think the maximum number of e-mail photo requests sent out by FindaGrave is 20) of a photo request in your area.

You look up the FindaGrave cemetery and memorial and question the idea of you claiming that photo request. In the beginning, the photo requests may seem awkward at figuring out what is needed to find the specific grave site, etc. Every cemetery and their grave mapping schema is different. Some are much better than others. You'll see.

Because gravestones suffer environmental damage through the passage of time, I often try to clean up the stones before taking a photo, simply so that my photo will be as clear and readable as possible. For flat grave markers, this usually means trimming the grass from the marker's edges, and cleaning off the bugs and the debris. For vertical

gravestones, depending on the area you live in, you may have to deal with lichen, bird poop, mineral deposits, etc.

My standard FindaGrave cemetery cleaning tool kit includes a soft nylon brush, some rags, and a spray bottle of distilled water (I don't want to damage or contaminate an older stone with minerals or other crap from a cleaning fluid). Cemeteries that perform maintenance, maintain only the lawns – they consider the gravestones to be family property, and therefore the gravestones will be maintained by the family, not by them. Most families don't know that.

Some cemeteries are very restrictive about letting non-family members enter and take photos, and they can get inquisitive if they see you cleaning a gravestone. I usually tell them I am doing the cleaning on behalf of the family and thank them for their attention to other maintenance matters.

As an aside, it turns out that there are people who have an actual business of professionally cleaning old gravestones, and you can find videos on the Internet that discuss the best techniques for cleaning old, cruddy, gravestones without damaging them.

If you want to explore more about FindaGrave, this link takes you to their Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page, and this page should answer most of your questions.

<https://www.findagrave.com/list-faqs>

And, as an FYI, this is my own personal page on the FindaGrave website.

<https://www.findagrave.com/user/profile/47703806>

The FindaGrave database is of value to you because it will often add to, confirm, or correct what you already know

about an individual. But, like cemetery databases and government databases, sometimes the FindaGrave information is missing or just plain wrong. That's where the FindaGrave 'edit' function comes in so handy – if you know for a fact that certain data on a particular FindaGrave memorial is incorrect, you can request of the memorial owner that a change be inserted. I do this all the time. It's a closed-loop feedback mechanism that is extremely valuable for assuring accurate record keeping on FindaGrave.

## BillionGraves

There are a few other fairly large (and growing) cemetery burial databases worth reviewing, including **BillionGraves (BG)**. BG, is a free (or fee based) cemetery



database website, and claims to have the largest, most-sophisticated,

geo-tagged records database in genealogy. Note that BillionGraves is connected with FamilySearch and not with Ancestry.com, and it is likewise not connected with Family Tree Maker.

As a BillionGraves Plus paid subscriber, I ran a search on "Marguerite Alice LeHand," and inasmuch as her gravestone photo shows up in FindaGrave, her grave photograph did not show up in the BG Plus search results. Why not? I asked BillionGraves and by return e-mail they sent me a well thought out and fairly long response, excerpts of which I'll include here.

*"Find A Grave and BillionGraves are very different from each other." "Find A Grave uses information from users that may*

*or may not be accurate. It is based solely on trust.” [That’s actually true for both services] “On Find A Grave, people are also placed in charge of the data they submit. This can also be a problem with individuals who refuse to change inaccurate information. Many are kind and are willing to fix problems, but a few individuals have been hostile to any attempt at editing wrong information.” [This is true.]*

*“BillionGraves is different. Our site relies on volunteers who will both photograph cemeteries and transcribe records. Our main source of data are photographs taken with our app that provides a GPS location of the headstone. People simply go into a cemetery and take photos with our app. The app puts a GPS marker on the headstone so that it can be easily located.” “As photos are uploaded, they are sent into transcription where volunteers read the stones and put in the data that they can see. If there are mistakes made in transcription, users can go in and fix problems with the stone.”*

*“Like Find A Grave, we also allow people to add photos without GPS data. These are called Supporting Records on our site. These are simple to add, and desirable, but not our primary source of records. Supporting records are secondary in our website. They provide a secondary account of a burial because without a GPS marker they can't be verified for certain. They are searchable, however, and if someone goes into the cemetery and takes a photo with our app, the GPS record will become the primary source.”*

*“Unlike Find A Grave, our site offers its users two options. You can either enjoy using the site for free or for a small subscription fee (BillionGraves+), you can use the site with better tools such as family notifications, global family records,*

*and see who is buried around your loved one. The downside to the free site is that it does have more ads, (However, free is always good, right?) and that it has a lot fewer tools that are offered on BG+. The upside to the subscription site is the tools mentioned as well as priority support, and emails sent out to volunteers for photo requests.”*

*“We are getting records on a daily basis, but our records take a little more effort to acquire as we ask volunteers to go out into the cemetery to take photos with our app. This requires photos done in real time, rather than photographs that could be 20-30 years old. [N.B. Because of aging gravestone problems, sometimes the older photos are actually better.] Marguerite LeHand most likely does not show up because a photo has not been taken of her headstone yet. You can place a photo request in on the front page of the cemetery, and hopefully a volunteer will go out and acquire a photo for you.”*

So, there you have it. Sometimes we learn more by asking simple questions than we learn from the company website original source (this information was not generally found on the BillionGraves website).

I should note the one thing that is common with both services is that they rely on individual efforts, and, in my opinion, that is always a good thing. Having said that, however, I should also note that individuals differ. One individual, in order to assure a good photograph, may take time and clean a gravestone before photographing it, or may return to the grave site when the light of day is better for taking a photograph. One individual may invest the time and effort to match the gravestone information with the cemetery record information, and/or vital documents data.

One photographer may simply be better at taking photos than another photographer.

I should also note that there are a few (not the majority) of FindaGrave photographers, and maybe some BillionGraves photographers as well, who have uploaded and posted complete and full cemeteries of burial data, and have thus created tens of thousands of memorials, often with data gathered from the cemetery databases, not all of which are consistent, accurate, or complete. And remember, not all cemeteries have their records digitized yet. It seems that in this regard, both FindaGrave and BillionGraves will operate in a similar fashion. So, is this a race to find out which database is the best? Competition is good, but so is fact checking, and that is my job and that is your job as family historians.

As my final thought on these two database systems, I will suggest that you trust nothing and always check and recheck everything. This is exactly why I often write the short bios (like the one for Marguerite LeHand) that I do for many burial records. When you go through that exercise of thinking about and writing all of that summary material about an individual's life, the process forces you to align your words with facts and evidence, and that helps resolve what might otherwise be mysterious actions. Let's face it, the biggest problem with researching people who have passed is that they have passed, and you simply cannot talk to them and ask them why they did certain things.

As an example, within the last few days, and while researching a woman's life (Maggie Duncan), I've learned that she was married twice, and that she was buried with her first husband, and buried under his family name, not buried with her second husband under her second married name (her legal name at death). How did this happen?

Maggie's first husband had died before her and was buried in a dual burial space lot in one cemetery. Maggie married a second time to a man whose first wife had already died and who had been buried earlier in a different dual space lot in a different cemetery in the same town. Maggie's second husband died before she did, and he was thus buried with his own first wife, and when Maggie herself died, she was buried in the remaining available space with her first husband but under his name, not hers. Why?

I suspect that both dual lots were already paid for, and so it was just practical to use the available second space in both cases. But, unless you were alert, these kinds of things could cause confusion to future generations. And it is wise to also remember that it is the survivors in a family that do the actual burials of those who pass, so money and logistics often rule the day when it comes to specific burials. This is all OK as long as people make certain their actions are clear to others who follow. Some are careful in this respect, and some, not so much.

Now, in Maggie's case, I had some difficulty getting Maggie's FindaGrave memorial married name changed from the first husband's name to the second husband's name, so she would be correctly identified in the database. I had to provide a copy of Maggie's death certificate in order to get the FindaGrave memorial owner to make the name change – he had initially refused to make the change because of what had been carved on the gravestone.

And this is what I wrote as a short bio for Maggie's FindaGrave memorial in order to help clarify what had happened in Maggie's life.

*"Margaret (Maggie) Duncan was born July 26, 1875 in*

*Banchory, Aberdeenshire, Scotland to William Duncan and Elizabeth (Laing) Duncan.*

*“Margaret married first George Littlejohn Ross in Aberdeenshire circa 1895. The couple had four children, including George Littlejohn Jr (b. Oct 10, 1895), William D (b. May 25, 1898), Ethel Leola (b. Apr 11, 1903), and Margaret M (b. Jul 25, 1905). George Jr and William were born in Scotland, and Ethel and Margaret were born in Barre, Vermont. Margaret’s husband, George Sr. died in Barre on Nov 27, 1912, and is buried in Hope Cemetery in Barre, Vermont.*

*“Margaret married second, Robert Mackie in Barre, Vermont on Sep 1, 1917. The couple had at least one child, Alfred D (b. circa 1919). Robert died at the age of 47 on Jul 27, 1920 in Graniteville, Vermont and is buried in Wilson Cemetery in Barre, Vermont.*

*“Margaret died at the age of 82 in South Barre, Vermont, on May 6, 1958 of a cerebral thrombosis. She is buried with her first husband (George L Ross) in Hope Cemetery, in Barre, Vermont.”*

And this gets us back to the subject of accuracy of database driven burial records. While the photographs of gravestones may be quite helpful, they are not always the final answer on burial accuracy (the gravestone also may have been incorrectly carved). If you focus on being accurate and on asking and answering that final, nagging, question, you will have a much better chance of getting your own data ‘right.’

On the subject of gravestone photos, some gravestones are good and clear, and the stones are easy to read, some are not. And what do you photograph if the



person had no gravestone to photograph? Or, what do you do if the gravestone markings are not easily readable? These are the individual photographer's questions and he/she must provide the most reasonable answers.

The following are a few of my own FindaGrave gravestone photos and you can see how I've answered these questions.

If there is no Gravestone, I photograph the area and surrounding gravestones and add notes on what I learned when doing the photo shoot.



Some gravestones have a nice clear gravestone image, and photographing them is no problem at all.



And then some older stones simply have ‘not so clear’ images, so the photos plus the cemetery text information help describe who is buried in that space.



I tried unsuccessfully to find some of my saved grave images where the gravestones had no information, or where the grave markers had been damaged or destroyed by the weather or by vandals. I must not have saved them.

## Summary

We all should be aware that gravestones are not the final say with regard to gathering accurate or complete information about someone who has died. Some gravestones are missing, some are damaged or destroyed by weather or pollution, some are carved incorrectly, etc. I found one gravestone at the edge of a cemetery, while the actual grave was located outside the fence marking the cemetery boundary and on public property.

I found another gravestone with one man’s name carved on it while the cemetery records indicated another man was buried in that grave. It turns out this guy had two names, two lives, and was a crook in one life. I figured this

out by examining the actual funeral home records on the guy and by talking to the funeral director.

Regarding my own gravestone images, I have adopted the personal practice of usually making the photos I upload to FindaGrave to be sized 1024 x 768 pixels, or as close to that size as is reasonable. I do retain the original photos in their much larger original resolution size on a flash card for backup. This reduced size on FindaGrave gives the photos a good readability without taking up too much database space. I also try to align, crop, and image enhance my photos so that the final image is as readable and as informative as possible.

Adding photograph notes to the uploaded image is also helpful, as it gives the family researcher additional information about the burial and the photo they are looking at. In a family lot, I usually will take a photo of all the individual gravestones as well as an area photo of the whole family plot, just in case photos of the other graves have not yet been taken and uploaded.

BTW, you should know that in the United States your photographs are considered copyrightable material and you should probably think about how you want to treat the photos you take for FindaGrave, BillionGraves, or any other effort. You can either claim the photos as your own personal property, and not allow others to copy and use them, or you can allow anyone to freely use your photos.

In my own gravestone photo efforts, I allow people to freely use my photos for all non-commercial use. If someone is going to use my photo(s) to make money, then I want a piece of the action, but absent that commercial usage, and for all of my FindaGrave photos, I allow free, private, personal, copyright usage.

## Chapter 6 - Performing the Actual Research

After getting some of the basic tools out of the way, I suspect you are developing a sense of what is involved in doing genealogical research for your own family or for other families. So, let's look at some of the details available for research material.

Inasmuch as I try to identify acronyms, abbreviations, and terms I use, there will be some abbreviations and acronyms you will discover that may be confusing at first. I'll include a list in the appendices.

### Local Genealogical or Historical Societies

Depending on what city or town you live in, you may have a local genealogical society or local historical society, or maybe even a local LDS research center. These volunteer

organizations are all good at helping people get started in family research. In fact, these voluntary groups are excellent in that they also



introduce you to others who have similar interests as you, and others whom you can learn from.

### **Family History Centers (FHCs)**

Let's start with the LDS **Family History Centers (FHCs)**. These research centers are branches of 'FamilySearch' and the 'Family History Library' based in Salt Lake City, Utah, and includes over 4,500 locations spread all around the world. Amazing, eh. Their humble goal is to provide resources to assist you in the research and study of your genealogy and family history by:

- Giving personal one-on-one assistance to patrons
- Providing access to genealogical records through the Internet
- Offering free how-to classes (varies by location)

<https://familyhistorydaily.com/tips-and-tricks/family-history-center-do-you-have-one-in-your-area/>

*“Many genealogists have dreamed of making their way to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. With genealogy records on more than 3 billion individuals, this family history center hosts the largest collection of its kind found anywhere in the world.”*

Inasmuch as this library and these history centers are offered by the LDS Church (Church of the Latter Day Saints), you don't have to be an LDS church member to access and use them, and there will be no effort expended to convert you into becoming an LDS church member. These facilities are in place for genealogical research purposes only. In fact, the centers are often mutually supported by a local

genealogical society, and they have a HUGE amount of research data and online resources available for general use.

No matter where you live, you should check and see if there is a Family History Center near you. Here's a link that might help a local research center:

<https://www.familysearch.org/locations/>

And if you would like to become a member of the FamilySearch community, signup is free, and in fact, if you choose to sign up and also choose to buy the Family Tree Maker software, the FamilySearch database is included in your FTM tree notification flags and search opportunities. Here's the membership link:



<https://www.familysearch.org/>

### Genealogical Societies

**Genealogical societies** are usually locally based, and are probably not as large in quantities of societies as are local historical societies. Most local genealogical societies operate on an annual membership fee basis, and, depending on their size, have regular meetings to discuss group projects, provide training, etc.



There is also a **National Genealogical Society (NGS)** you might consider joining. The NGS was organized in Washington, DC, in April, 1903, so it is

well over a century old. The Society was originally incorporated on 16 June 1904, under the laws of the District of Columbia.

The NGS Mission is to serve and grow the genealogical community by providing education and training, fostering increased quality and standards, and promoting access to and preservation of genealogical records. The chief activities by which the Society seeks its objective of promoting genealogical knowledge is through its Quarterly and other publications, and the presentations of formal papers in its regular meetings on pertinent subjects.

Additional information on NGS is found here:

<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>

### **Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS)**

*In 1975, and “despite the patriotic fervor to save the nation’s personal and collective past, historical records were being lost to floods, fires, neglect, and legislative acts. Vital records, critical to genealogical inquiry, were closed to researchers in some states, and the threat of more record closures was real. Concerned individuals and small organizations were having little influence on preservation and legislative efforts. A collective voice was needed.”*



*“It was in this environment that the idea of a national umbrella organization [of genealogical societies] was born. In June of 1975, a group of over 45 persons who were attending a conference in Salt Lake City addressed the problem by forming the **Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS).**”*

Representing the members of hundreds of local genealogical societies across the United States and other nations, the Federation of Genealogical Societies was created and is in place to link the genealogical community by helping local genealogical societies strengthen and grow. A link to the FGS website is found here:

<https://fgs.org/>

This FGS link may help you find a local genealogical society near you:

<https://fgs.org/find-a-society/>

### Historical Societies

While **historical societies** may be larger in quantity in the United States, they do not appear to be as well centralized or confederated as are the genealogical societies. If you do an Internet search of historical societies there is no easily identifiable national historical society, nor is there a federation of historical societies as there is for genealogical societies. I have no idea what that means. I have dealt with both genealogical and historical societies in several states, and have found them all to be very helpful, especially when it comes to local histories.

So, my suggestion is that when you are researching a particular location that you investigate what the local historical society has to offer you. There is a TON of historical material that remains local and never gets uploaded to the Internet. It's yours for the asking.

If you decide you want to join either a local genealogical society or historical society, consider your membership a long term investment of your time. Family history research is a fairly tricky and involved subject area,



and understanding the nuances of this research just takes time – usually years of time.

For several years, I belonged to a local genealogical society that had over a hundred members, and found the society's actual research work concerned with the local cemetery was far more interesting to me than were the society meetings, which I often found to be more social than educational. But the coffee and cookies were good... And yes, I should not complain - I learned a lot.

## Names and Dates

Before we get too deep into research and record keeping, let's set up some identification conventions. What I'll suggest here will help you see things more consistently and allow you to spot errors more quickly.

Part of these suggestions are caused by the fact that genealogical programs typically use the standard ASCII character set and don't allow special text formatting and highlighting, so you will be stuck with using simple upper and lower case letters and numbers.

**Person names:** First, Middle, LAST name. My suggestion is to always type the surname (family) name for both males and females in all CAPITAL letters. The reason for doing this is to immediately identify the maiden name of married women in reports you print out. So, for example, Mary CHUTE marries Elias CHENEY, her name would appear as Mary CHUTE Cheney in reports. As another example of why this is important, sometimes women are buried in their own family cemetery plots and you might find Mary CHUTE Cheney buried with Chute family members, rather than with Cheney family members. So keeping track of surnames by capitalizing their letters is very helpful.

## Location Names

Because there is sometimes multiple location names and/or location spellings for cities, towns, and villages, I often include the county or parish name with the town name. Adding that second locator helps identify the specific location you were referring to. An example might be Augusta, Michigan (there are two), so I might add Kalamazoo (the county) in my description of Augusta, Michigan.

Also note that when you start using Ancestry, FindaGrave, and/or Family Tree Maker, they all use town, county (or parish), state or province, and country names as location identifiers.

And then there is the problem of location name changes. For example, when was the United States created? Many historians opine that the United States of America was founded when Thomas Jefferson drafted and proclaimed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Others tell us the United States of America was formed or founded on March 1, 1781 under The Articles of Confederation and that John Hanson was the first President of the United States under the Articles of Confederation. Others would argue that it was the Treaty of Paris (1783) when England formally recognized the 13 previous English colonies as 13 sovereign states (i.e. sovereign countries). However, George Washington became the first President of the United States after the formation of the Constitution of America, in the year 1789. So, what is the real creation date? [Rhetorical question]

Regardless of when you believe the United States was created, the names of the 13 English colonies changed from their previous names to their new sovereign state names. For example, Massachusetts Bay Colony became the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that we all know and love today. And, interestingly enough, the present state of Maine

was an integral part of the state of Massachusetts until it became the 23rd state on March 15, 1820, as part of the Missouri Compromise, which allowed Missouri to enter the union as a slave state and Maine enter as a free state.

I raise these points and questions because sometimes it is important to call things and places by their right names for the time periods in which they existed. In the case of early Maine records, it may be important for us to know whether to go to Massachusetts for Maine records in 1810, or are the records now kept in Maine.

It may also be important for us to know when New Brunswick, Canada was formed (the English colony of New Brunswick was separated from Nova Scotia and thus officially created with Sir Thomas Carleton the first governor, on August 16, 1784). Should we go to Nova Scotia, or to New Brunswick for early records?

You get the idea. Place names change. So, getting back to the Massachusetts question, in your records, how do you identify the birth location of Elias Cheney, born in Newbury, Massachusetts on February 20, 1741? Massachusetts was surely not yet the sovereign state we now call the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - an integral part of the United States of America. In 1741, Massachusetts was still owned and managed by Great Britain, and it was called the Massachusetts Bay Colony. So, in your American records, it is probably a worthy suggestion to call all events in the colonies prior to 1781 by their colony names in your records.

In our Elias Cheney example above, Elias would thus have been born on 20 Feb 1741 in Newbury, Essex, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Note that this particular date is a double date year which we will get into in the next subsection.

## Date Formats

We have a fairly wide area of choice when we choose our own standard date formats. Do we use MM/DD/YY; MM/DD/YYYY; Month Day, Year; Day Month Year; or some other format? Good question, eh.

When you set up some programs like Family Tree Maker, you get to choose what date format you will use. That's a good thing because no matter what date format you enter, the application program will 'normalize' it for you. In FTM, I use the date format of DD MMM YYYY, and that would look like 28 Jun 1986. If I type June 28, 1986, FTM will automatically change the format back to 28 Jun 1986. Choose what you like, but in this area, be consistent.

FindaGrave and some other applications will probably not allow you to change their own preferred date format, but that's OK – they are trying to appeal to a more universal audience. However, what appeals to application software programs does not have to be your own preferred choice.

Remember also that the 4 digit year identifier is almost mandatory because you will be dealing with multiple centuries in your research, and you really don't want to get confused by typing '06' referring to the year 1906, because that just doesn't work out very well for the reader – even if the reader is you.

And be aware that other researchers may be using a different date format than what you have chosen. When I lived in England, I became painfully aware of the difference between using date formats of mm/dd/yy (American) and dd/mm/yy (European).

One other caution I would offer is to stay alert to multiple wives and/or multiple husbands, and the children that are born to each specific pair.

For example, one of the Elias Cheney family members (yes, there was more than one Elias) was married three times. Elias married first Jane Plummer with whom he had three children. He married second Ruth Jackman with whom he had three children. He married third Hannah Pike with whom he had four children. So, Elias had ten children by three different wives – don't get them all mixed up. This is important. And, sadly, early official records and family histories will often not be clear enough help you sort this out, and you will have to look at birth and death dates and family locations, etc.

### Double Dates

And now we enter the wild and whacky world of **double dates**.

*“Today, Americans are used to a calendar with a "year" based on the earth's rotation around the sun, with "months" having no relationship to the cycles of the moon and New Years Day falling on January 1. However, that system was not adopted in England and its colonies until 1752.*

*“The changes implemented that year have created challenges for historians and genealogists working with early colonial records, since it is sometimes hard to determine whether information was entered according to the then-current English calendar or the "New Style" calendar we use today.”*

<https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/hg/colonialresearch/calendar>

*“A double date comes from the transition from the **Julian** calendar to the **Gregorian** calendar. According to the Julian calendar, the first day of the year was March 25 [Lady Day]*

*and each year was 365 days and 6 hours long. Not all areas accepted the change to the Gregorian calendar at the same time, however. Because the Julian and Gregorian calendars were long used simultaneously, although in different places, calendar dates in the transition period were often ambiguous, unless it is specified which calendar was being used. For this reason, many people wrote dates falling between January 1 and March 25 with double dates on the original document to clarify. Others used the terms OS and NS. Old style (OS) meant Julian; New style (NS) meant Gregorian. The first year in a double date given is the Julian calendar, and the second given is the Gregorian calendar.”*

<https://genealogy.stackexchange.com/questions/132/what-is-a-double-date>

A more thorough discussion on this subject of double dates can be found here:

<http://www.cree.name/genuki/dates.htm>

I will suggest as a final note on the subject of double dates that, for your own sanity, you follow the suggestions of the family research software that you use. For me, this whole subject is a bit overwhelming and I don't enjoy having to deal with double dates. And to frustrate the subject further, some reference sources will only provide a single date in a double date time period – so which date did they provide?

## **Federal, State, City, Town, Church Records**

Government, for everything bad said about it, does a fairly good job of creating and maintaining records – all kinds of records. Sometimes government stumbles (e.g. the 1890 Census destroyed by fire), but in general, a lot of your

progress in following the lives of people in your family will flow nicely due to the existence of government records that you can access online or by visiting or calling a government office. Census data will anchor your ancestor to a place and time and give you important clues about family relationships.

## Federal Census Records

In the US, and on the federal level, the federal census occurs every ten years on the decade marked year (e.g. 1900, 1910, 1920, etc.). The federal census reports are extremely valuable, and unless people have lied or there are transcription errors, the digital information and images found online are extremely valuable in following a family's growth and movements. But we have gone from immediate availability of census reports to 72 year wait periods for census reports, and that is frustrating to all genealogists.

*"The first [U.S.] census began more than a year after the inauguration of President Washington and shortly before the second session of the first Congress ended. Congress assigned responsibility for the 1790 census to the marshals of the U.S. judicial districts under an act which, with minor modifications and extensions, governed census taking through 1840. The law required that every household be visited, that completed census schedules be posted in "two of the most public places within [each jurisdiction], there to remain for the inspection of all concerned..." and that "the aggregate amount of each description of persons" for every district be transmitted to the president."*

[https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/overview/1790.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1790.html)

The 1790 census identified the name of the head of the family and the number of persons in each household according to the following descriptions:

- Free White males of 16 years and upward (to assess the country's industrial and military potential)
- Free White males under 16 years
- Free White females
- All other free persons
- Slaves

Very early individual birth, marriage, and death information were often personal family records or were church collected records. Personal family records were often simply records hand written in family bibles. Early church records, sometimes collected and saved by wandering missionaries, often (maybe usually) recorded birth as well as baptism dates, marriage dates, death dates, and their respective locations.

Aside from the detailed census content data now made available online via Ancestry.com and other genealogical databases and search engines, the US Census Bureau also posts census data summaries online as we find posted here online for the 1850 census:

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1853/dec/1850a.html>

But while the old federal law that told us the completed census reports would be posted in "two of the most public places within [each jurisdiction], there to remain for the inspection of all concerned," today we, the public,



now have to wait 72 years to gain access to the census detailed data. Really.

*“The U.S. government will not release personally identifiable information about an individual to any other individual or agency until 72 years after it was collected for the decennial census. This "72-Year Rule" (92 Stat. 915; Public Law 95-416; October 5, 1978) restricts access to decennial census records to all but the individual named on the record or their legal heir.”*

[https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial\\_census\\_records/the\\_72\\_year\\_rule\\_1.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/the_72_year_rule_1.html)

Thus the US census detailed content data is currently kept secret from the public for seventy-two (72) years, and that means in the year 2022, the 1950 census contents will be finally released to the public. Of course, in the past, it has taken a year or so of volunteer efforts to transcribe the actual census image data into online accessible digital data, so if conditions remain the same for the 2020 census, and if you were born in the 1940s and are still alive, you should see yourself show up in the 1950 census by the year 2023.

As a side note, an individual may purchase his own recent census data from the federal government for a fairly hefty fee.

*“Fee required: The \$65.00 fee is for a search of one census for one person only. The time required to complete a search depends upon the number of cases on hand at the particular time and the difficulty encountered in searching a particular case. The normal processing time is 3 to 4 weeks. The fee covers return postage of your search results by regular mail.*

*You do not need to include a return envelope for normal processing. For an additional fee of \$20 the search can be completed in one business day after we receive it. If you want your search results returned to you by express mail you must include a self-addressed, prepaid express mail envelope with your application. You may also submit your application by express mail for faster service.*

*“No more than one census will be searched and the results furnished for one fee. Should it be necessary to search more than one census to find the record, you will be notified to send another fee before another search is made. Tax monies are not available to furnish the information. If a search has been made, the fee cannot be returned even if the information is not found.”*

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2013/demo/B-C-600.pdf>

But what does one do if one is a pauper in America in 2018? Can he still get to see his own data without paying a fee? Apparently not.

*“This means that no one can gain access to confidential census records or avoid the search fees through these acts.”*

<https://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/cff/cff-9702.pdf>

I find this ruling quite interesting. Personal information, forced from an individual by rule of law to be submitted freely to the federal government, cannot be accessed freely by that same individual at a later time. Is one of the reasons for the 72 year restricted access law to allow

the government to collect another fee from the American citizen? How would we ever know?

### The 1890 Census

I made a reference earlier to the 1890 US census and maybe this is a good time to describe how things got screwed up for the important 1890 census material by the unexpected and unfortunate fire in the year 1921.

*“Of the decennial population census schedules, perhaps none might have been more critical to studies of immigration, industrialization, westward migration, and characteristics of the general population than the Eleventh Census of the United States, taken in June 1890. United States residents completed millions of detailed questionnaires, yet only a fragment of the general population schedules and an incomplete set of special schedules enumerating Union veterans and widows are available today. Reference sources routinely dismiss the 1890 census records as “destroyed by fire” in 1921. Examination of the records of the Bureau of Census and other federal agencies, however, reveals a far more complex tale. This is a genuine tragedy of records -- played out before Congress fully established a National Archives -- and eternally anguishing to researchers.”*

The rest of the sad story about loss of the 1890 census data can be found here:

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1996/spring/1890-census-1.html>

## Currently Available US Census Reports

So, in your family search efforts involving federal census material, in 2018 you can search online for information for data from the census years 1790 through 1880, and census years 1900 through 1940.

On a personal level, I am fond of the twelfth US census, i.e. the 1900 census. It contains a LOT of very useful information for the genealogist. The 1900 census included data from 45 US states, as well as data from Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, Alaska, Oklahoma and Indian territories.

In addition to the standard page header information (year, date, state, county, city or town) the 1900 census household data collected included:

- Detailed physical location
  - Name of street
  - House number
- Name of each person in household
- Relationship to Head of Household
- Personal Description
  - Color or Race
  - Sex
  - Month and year of birth
  - Age at last birthday
  - Marital Status (Single, Married, Widowed, Divorced)
- Number of years married
- Mother of how many children
- Number of how many living children
- Nativity
  - Birthplace of person
  - Birthplace of father

- Birthplace of mother
- Citizenship
  - Year of Immigration to US
  - Number of years in US
  - Naturalization
- Occupation, Trade, or Profession
  - Occupation
  - Number of months unemployed
- Education
  - Attended school # months
  - Can read
  - Can write
  - Can speak English
- Ownership of Home
  - Owned or rented
  - Owned free or mortgaged
  - Farm or house

While the 1910, 1920, and 1930 census reports are also very interesting, my next fondest US census year is 1940, probably because so many interesting things happened in the 1930s which ended up being tallied in the 1940 census. But in 2018, that's where the publically available federal census data stops.

Of some interest to the family researcher is the fact that some (maybe many) US states also conduct their own state census surveys, and their census data may be made available in shorter time periods than the US federal census reports. The states will also likely collect different data in different formats than is found in the federal census data.

### **Canadian Census Reports**

For many Americans, their ancestral roots include ancestors who travelled from Europe to Canada and then

down into the United States. In fact, in the early days of both countries, there was a lot of free movement back and forth between the United States and Canada, and so the Canadian census reports are often of interesting and great value to Americans also.

The Canadian census reports are taken on the year after the decade beginning, e.g. 1891, 1901, 1911, etc., and this is probably due to the largely British background of the Canadian government. The data that is collected is slightly different than the data we see in the United States. For example, while the US 1900 census simply requests a racial indicator (W, B, A, etc.), the 1901 Canadian census additionally inquires about breeds and half breeds. The terms used are:

- Fb (French breed)
- Eb (English breed)
- Sb (Scottish breed)
- Ib (Irish breed)
- Ob (other breed)
- Cree fb (Cree and French breed)

For a brief bit of Canadian history, in eastern Canada, after the Vikings, the French were the first European settlers who occupied Canada, and if you look at early colonial history in the Americas, the French had colonized Canada, the Spanish had colonized what is now southern USA, Central America, and much of South America, and Portugal had colonized Brazil. It was largely because of these French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonial activities that the English king decided he had better stake a claim to what has become the United States, with colonies attempted first in Virginia, and then in New England, etc. - thirteen in total.

So, in spite of being financially 'challenged' due to continual wars influenced by the banks and fought by the English non-royal 'subjects' (sound like the USA in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century?), the English king set up 13 separate colonies in coastal U.S. and as was usual for those times, there was conflict between the British colonists and the French, and between the British colonists and the Spanish.

In Canada, until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, no European society had survived in Kanata (Canada). It was the French Europeans who first settled and organized eastern Canada, and it was the French who started the first trading in Canada, but in 1670, the English who wanted to get in on the trading business in Canada, created the Hudson Bay Company. This could have been, and likely was, the start of the trade wars in Canada, and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we notice the French control of Canada was declining. And then came the war...

*“Conflict between Great Britain and France broke out in 1754–1756 when the British attacked disputed French positions in North America, starting with a British ambush of a small French force at the Battle of Jumonville Glen on 28 May 1754, and extended across the colonial boundaries and [led to] the seizure of hundreds of French merchant ships at sea.”*

The Battle of **Jumonville Glen**, near present day Uniontown, Pennsylvania, was the opening battle of the 'French and Indian War' and was the first combat action experienced by 22 year old George Washington. The French and Indian War (1754–63) is viewed by some as the American component of the largely European Seven Years' War of 1756–63, and in the Americas it pitted the British colonies militarily against the French colonies from Canada.

*“At the start of the war, the French North American colonies had a population of roughly 60,000 settlers, compared with 2 million in the British North American colonies. The outnumbered French particularly depended on [support from] the Indians.”* The French lost the war and ceded Canada to England in accordance with the Treaty of Paris (1763).

*“The outcome [of the French and Indian War] was one of the most significant developments in a century of Anglo-French conflict. France ceded to Great Britain its territory east of the Mississippi. It [also] ceded French Louisiana west of the Mississippi River (including New Orleans) to its ally Spain in compensation for Spain's loss to Britain of Florida. (Spain had ceded Florida to Britain in exchange for the return of Havana, Cuba.) France's colonial presence north of the Caribbean was reduced to the islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon [located 16 miles west from the Burin Peninsula of Newfoundland], confirming Great Britain's position as the dominant colonial power in eastern North America.”*

I didn't really mean to get so deeply into a history of Canada (apologies if I have explained Canadian history inaccurately), but the English ended up winning control of a mixed Canadian population of English, French, and Native peoples, and today the record keeping that occurs in Canada is still largely influenced by historic British record keeping guidelines. Anyway, you may find that Canadian records are often of great value to your American family research.

If you want to know a bit more about Canadian history, the following link provides a short 11 minutes of audio/visual Canadian history.



<https://youtu.be/6RrHAOQEL9w>

### **Social Security Indexes, Border Crossings, etc.**

Also on the U.S. federal level we have **Social Security** indexes and reports. While not always as complete as you might like them to be, they are sometimes quite helpful.

Immigration and border crossing records are helpful if you want to try and determine when your ancestor came into the United States and when he or she might have been naturalized. Of course, if that same ancestor lived near the border and went across the border often, some of the border crossing reports can be undocumented or even meaningless in helping determine naturalization efforts.

On the federal level, the census reports are probably the most valuable reports that you will come across and that you will find useful on a daily basis.

### **Social Security and Railroad Retirement**

One of the less obvious realities of American life is that while the IRS may force an ‘employer’ to take money from his ‘employee’ (you) and send some of it into the ‘Social Security’ bank account, not everyone historically was required to pay into social security.

If, for example, you worked for a railroad, at one time you had a much better ‘retirement’ plan than social security ever thought of being.

*“Employers and employees covered by the Railroad Retirement Act pay higher retirement taxes than those covered by the Social Security Act, so that railroad retirement benefits remain higher than social security benefits, especially for career employees who have 30 or more years of service.”*

*“The average age annuity being paid by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) at the end of fiscal year 2017 to career rail employees was \$3,415 a month, and for all retired rail employees the average was \$2,730. The average age retirement benefit being paid under social security was over \$1,370 a month. Spouse benefits averaged \$1,010 a month under railroad retirement compared to \$695 under social security.*

*“The Railroad Retirement Act also provides supplemental railroad retirement annuities of between \$23 and \$43 a month, which are payable to employees who retire directly from the rail industry with 25 or more years of service.”*

<https://www.rrb.gov/NewsRoom/NewsReleases/Q%26A%3AComparisonOfBenefits>

*“In the 1930s, amidst concern about the ability of existing pension programs to provide former railroad workers with adequate assistance in old age, Congress established a national Railroad Retirement system. This system is primarily administered by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB), which is an independent federal agency charged with providing benefits to eligible employees of the railroad industry and their families. Today, the Railroad Retirement program is closely tied to the far better-known Social Security program, and although the Railroad Retirement program and Social Security share a number of common elements, key differences also exist between the two in areas such as funding and benefit structure. This article aims to increase awareness and understanding of the Railroad Retirement program and its relationship with Social Security by examining the parallel development of these two retirement programs while*

*illuminating areas where the two diverge. The history of the Railroad Retirement program, the benefits provided by the program, and RRB's financial operations are reviewed, using elements of the Social Security system as points of reference.”*

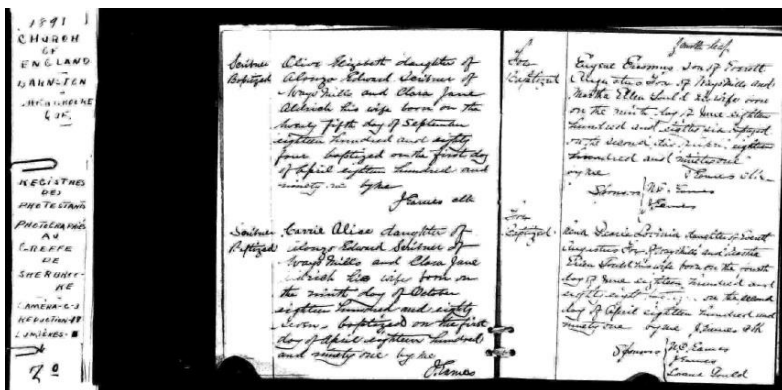
<https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v68n2/v68n2p41.html>

I tell you all of this because for a period of time in the twentieth century, railroad employees were covered with their own retirement program, and it wasn't until recent years that social security became intertwined with the railroad retirement system. Additionally, prior to July 1, 1963, the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) issued original SSN cards in the 700 – 728 series to all railroad employees.

And it was from the RRB that I finally found my lost uncle who had worked for the railroads for nearly all of his adult life. He was born in Vermont, spent most of his life in New England, died in Florida in 1961, and was buried in Massachusetts. Finding him took a while since we had never connected on a personal level. He was just my Dad's older brother Joe.

### **Other Church, State, and Local records**

But there has not always been a government, and government has not always collected records on the people it rules over. So what about early records? On a more local level, we have local birth, marriage, and death records.



This is an example of an early church record (1891) from Barnston, Sherbrook, Quebec, Canada.

I suspect that it is because of these early personal and church records and the record keepers, that people in government started keeping **vital Statistic records** for those who lived in their areas of control.

Much of the record searching that we do in genealogy is from older records, and not so much from modern records for two reasons. First of all, and inasmuch as government now keeps pretty good records, the modern personal records are often kept secret from the public in general, so while you may be second cousin to, or maybe not even related to George, you may not be allowed to see his records. Only immediate family can see George's records, and then they will often have to pay for that information. These controls are allegedly in place to 'protect' the privacy of the deceased.

On the state and local level, there are birth certificates, marriage and divorce records and certificates, death certificates, wills, land use documents, and some tax records. I generally do not look for modern state issued records like firearms permits, driver's licenses, employment

records, etc. as these records are only a recent occurrence in America and are still largely kept secret from the people.

Interestingly enough, many states will now release some of their older records, and some will not – the prohibitors typically want you to buy certified copies of their records, and this can be a costly problem if you don't want or need a fully certified copy of a certificate, and if you only want names, dates, and places for your own genealogical records.

In the case of the good states (e.g. Missouri is good), they provide free access to copies of older actual birth and death certificates that have been posted online, and in the case of bad states (e.g. New York is not good), every request has to go through some extreme control freak sets of state government rules. We have fifty different states and fifty different sets of rules - all to be approached with care, caution, and a positive, polite attitude.

For example, I had an aunt who had died in Maine (not in Florida where she had lived, and as I had suspected where she had died), and Maine Vital Stats department in 2012 would not tell me over the phone if she had died in Maine. If I wanted to know, I had to send \$15 (as I recall) to the state and then they would either tell me, 'no, she did not die in Maine,' or 'yes she did die in Maine, and here's the death certificate.' It turns out that she HAD died in Maine, in 1965, and so my guess was lucky. I also learned from her death certificate that she was buried in HER family's burial plot in Massachusetts, and coincidentally enough, that was how I also found my uncle's burial location – he was buried next to her.

### **Town Clerks, City Clerks**

I haven't yet discussed town clerks and city clerks, people who are often busy, but who are also the local

government record keepers, and aside from the local library, are probably the best people for finding information about uncle George or aunt Alice.

As an example, while researching Marguerite (Missy) LeHand, who was born in Potsdam, New York, I called the Potsdam town hall and spoke with a town clerk, who was most helpful in understanding and relaying to me some of the family background, including locations of some family members who were buried locally.

As an aside, it turns out that in Potsdam, there are two Catholic cemeteries, an old Saint Mary's, and a new Saint Mary's, both managed by one church, both on the same road, but a quarter of a mile separate from each other. The two cemetery information was, by the way, very helpful information that was not offered to me by the local Saint Mary's cemetery administrator. I eventually learned from the town clerk that Marguerite's parents were buried in the NEW Saint Mary's Cemetery, and her grandparents were buried in the OLD Saint Mary's Cemetery.

The Potsdam town clerk also told me who the local historian was, said he would probably be quite interested in the work I was doing, and gave me his contact information. I couldn't have asked for more. When the project was done, I sent the town a copy of the LeHand family notes and brief history. The response was 'thank you very much, and you must stop by and visit us sometime.' If I were closer to Potsdam, I would. ;-)

In summary, town halls and sometimes city halls, are a great resource for finding family record information. I do find, however, that in spite of my always trying to be nice to strangers, sometimes larger cities just have too many rules and regulations to be of much value.

For example, I was trying to get some information from the Boston City Clerk's office, but their policy was that I had to go to their office, fill out a form, and then they would help me. I tried to explain that I lived 2,200 miles away and needed their help some other way – I was just unable to 'pop on in' and fill out their forms. Sadly, no help from Boston.

Boston is not the only large city that is a bit bureaucratic, many are. And the same story could be told about some county records offices. I tried to get some basic burial information from a county office I visited here in Colorado, and even flashed my Longmont Genealogical Society badge, but because I was not related to the deceased, they were unable to provide detailed death and/or burial information. I asked about maybe providing me with 'index information' only, and it turned out that WAS allowed, so I left with what I needed. Problem solved. Sometimes in addition to being nice, you just have to ask the right questions.

## **Military Records**

Military records, depending on the country and/or state, the years, and the wars involved, will be different. And, of course, everything we are looking for depends on how we (or the government) define the term 'war.'

Before the United States was formed, the American colonies were involved in several military conflicts that involved the British military and the British colonists, and some of them created written records that we are now able to access, review, and use. These records are often found in early town histories, early county histories, and in early state histories as most of the people living in the new country still wanted to acknowledge and honor those who fought in wars before their time.

This **FamilySearch** website link also has quite a bit of information about colonial wars and conflicts between the various European governments.

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Colonial\\_Wars,\\_1607\\_to\\_1763](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Colonial_Wars,_1607_to_1763)

From this site, the following are the wars that occurred in the English colonies before 1775 in the land that is now called the United States. The list (modified by me) may not be complete.

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Name of the War</u>
1607-1615	Tarrantine War
1637	Pequot War
1675-1676	King Philip's War
1689-1697	King William's War
1702-1713	Queen Anne's War
1721-1725	Drummer's War (aka Father Rale's War)
1739-1748	War of Jenkins' Ear
1744-1748	King George's War
1749-1755	Father Le Loutre's War
1755-1763	French and Indian War
1763- 1764	Pontiac's Rebellion
1774	Lord Dunmore's War

Many colonists served in local militias and participated in King William's War (1689–1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), King George's War (1744–48), and the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Because these were local units and not part of the British Army, surviving records are often found in historical societies and state libraries and archives. However, regarding the British military, we have



this FamilySearch website page comment:

*“You may find evidence that an ancestor served in the [British] military from family records, biographies, census, probates, civil registration, or church records. In addition, militaria such as headress badges, buttons, photographs of uniforms, soldier's trunks, paybooks, letters, colours, and medals with clasps can provide proof of ancestral links. Medals can have the soldier's number on the rim of the medal itself.”*

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/British\\_Military\\_Records](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/British_Military_Records)

OK, let's leave the colonial period and get into the period of 'hot' American wars, aka US wars, themselves, and that, of course, gets us into the definitions of the term 'war' used by the government.

As an aside, I have never found any evidence of the American people (or people in any other country) demanding that their government declare a war on any foreign country. None. So, maybe the first question we all should be asking is 'where do all of these wars come from?'

United States Marine Corps General and 2 times Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Smedley Butler has one well known observation and opinion:

*“I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place*

*for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.” — Smedley D. Butler, “War is a Racket: The Antiwar Classic”*

So, it appears that not everyone likes war, even the guys who fight the wars. On the legal side of warfare, however, we have this comment from the U.S. Senate web site.

*“The [U.S.] Constitution grants Congress the sole power to declare war. [Since the beginning of the United States of America] Congress has declared war on 11 occasions, including its first declaration of war with Great Britain in 1812. Congress approved its last formal declaration of war during World War II. Since that time it has agreed to resolutions authorizing the use of military force and continues to shape U.S. military policy through appropriations and oversight.” --*

[https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/h\\_multi\\_sections\\_and\\_teasers/WarDeclarationsbyCongress.htm](https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/h_multi_sections_and_teasers/WarDeclarationsbyCongress.htm)

So we can also see from the link below, “Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 of the U.S. Constitution grants Congress

*the power to declare war. The President, meanwhile, derives the power to direct the military after a Congressional declaration of war from Article II, Section 2, which names the President Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. These provisions require cooperation between the President and Congress regarding military affairs, with Congress funding or declaring the operation and the President directing it. Nevertheless, throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Presidents have often engaged in military operations without express Congressional consent. These operations include the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Operation Desert Storm, the Afghanistan War of 2001 and the Iraq War of 2002.”*

[https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/war\\_powers](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/war_powers)

As an FYI, the **American Legion** traditionally follows these official government defined war dates closely for use in determining who is eligible for membership, and the **Veterans of Foreign Wars** has its own much more elaborate list of dates.

Relying on the official constitutional definition of war, however, leaves us with a bit of a dilemma. How do we understand, accommodate, and document the actual 40 military actions in the twentieth century, especially since some of those military conflicts were largely kept secret at the time? And why are wars often kept secret from the people? Shouldn't we be taught about all of the wars Americans have fought since our beginning as a country?

For example, while the list of (40) twentieth century American wars includes the 1909 Crazy Snake Rebellion in Oklahoma, does the government ever record, acknowledge, or give credit to the warriors on both sides of that alleged war? Are there any government records of that 'war' or are

the only remaining available records now private? Maybe in the National Archives we can find more information.

How about all of the current wars on nouns (e.g. war on poverty, war on drugs, war on terror, etc.) – does the government consider these actual military wars and does it keep and provide accurate records of those who fought in these wars? How would we know, since these wars appear to be secret wars? How many military wars, in how many countries, are we fighting in 2018? How would we know?

And then we have to deal with, and consider, the evident government lies regarding many foreign and domestic military actions. The Vietnam War is perhaps a classic example of a war based on lies and fraud, all the way from the false flag Gulf of Tonkin attack through the illegal bombings and attacks on people in neighboring countries of Vietnam, etc. How many Vietnam widows have no idea where, why, or how, their husbands were killed? Lies and fraud always screw up good family research efforts, so, with regard to wars, we have to question everything. Always.

But, to get back to the actual records we can seek, locate, and ultimately use, let's only look at what we can usually find online from Ancestry's government records. For the twentieth century wars we have WW I and WW II draft cards, and they are both extremely helpful. I have not seen any Korean War or Vietnam War draft cards yet, but that may all be tied into the seventy year federal secrecy policies. Also for the twentieth century wars, we have pension documents and burial gravestone requests. There are also individual military unit online resources, usually created by volunteer organizations.

### Fold3 Records

And, there is now a private, free or fee-based, online source for military information named **Fold3**, and it is related

to, and linked with, Ancestry.com. This could be of major help to you in your military history research efforts.



*“Fold3 features premier collections of original military records. These records include the stories, photos, and personal documents of the men and women who served in the military. Many of the records come from the U.S. National archives, The National Archives of the U.K. and other international records.”*

*“Why is it called Fold3? Traditionally, the third fold in some flag-folding ceremonies honors and remembers veterans for their sacrifice in defending their country and promoting peace in the world.”*

<https://www.fold3.com/>

Fold3 has records from these earlier American military wars: Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican American and Early Indian Wars, Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Recent Wars, International (non-US) Wars, and Non-military Records.

If you are interested in reviewing most if not all of the historic and acknowledged 119 American wars, this Wikipedia site has what appears to be a pretty good list:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_wars\\_involving\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_the_United_States)

So, to summarize, war, as a research subject, is kind of special. The western humans seem to be continually embroiled in one kind of war or other and record keeping can vary, depending on the record keepers.

I don't know how to resolve the issues of deliberately false documents being embedded inside an individual's military records, but as in many questionable environments, just keep asking questions and pushing for the truth to be made available to you.

From my own ancestry pursuits, I have relied more on family photos, on family and town stories, on obituaries, and on what is engraved on an individual's gravestone. We have to use what we have, and do our best to determine the truth behind it all.

And that discussion brings us into what may be our best local resource, namely the public libraries spread throughout the country.

## Local Library Resources

In the interests of full disclosure, I should probably tell you that for several years while I was still in high school and in early college, I worked for the Boston Public Library, and although I was still young and probably didn't appreciate everything the library had to offer, that experience left me with a positive view toward libraries in general. I like libraries. Every library is in place to help the community, and you can't beat that service attitude and mindset in any way I can imagine.

All libraries are different, but they all have some things in common. Most libraries are run by the local city or town, have several separate sections or departments (e.g. children's section, adult section, etc.), and if you are lucky, there will also be a reference librarian who is invariably the black belt of local library employees with regard to research

and use of library resources. And most, if not all, American libraries also now offer an interlibrary loan service. Wowza!

On one of my early adventures in family history I was trying to learn about my wife's family, which had spent many decades living and working in Auburn, New York. As I recall, I was looking for some early obituaries, and connected with the reference librarian. I explained what I was after, and she (out of the blue) asked me if I would be interested in having a copy of the genealogy research done by a family member some years earlier. I, of course, said yes, and she mailed me out a fairly expanded family history, written by hand, that helped me enormously.

Did I say I like libraries? I do.

Several years ago, I lived in Longmont, Colorado, and one of the founders of that second Colorado colony (Greely was the first colony in Colorado Territory) was one Jarvis Marvin Fox. Since I have Fox family members in my own maternal line, I wanted to see if we were somehow related.

I browsed around in the Longmont Library, and looked at records in the St. Vrain's Historical Society, and didn't find very much genealogical information on Fox, so, I eventually decided to create a family history of Jarvis Marvin Fox on my own.

After some research, I was able to answer the root question of whether Jarvis Marvin Fox and I are related... well, sort of. It turns out that Jarvis Marvin Fox is descended from Thomas Fox of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I am descended from Thomas Fox of Concord, Massachusetts.

That all seems simple enough until you realize 1) they were both alleged to be descendants of John Fox of London (author of "The Book of Martyrs"), 2) that Thomas Fox of Cambridge, Massachusetts lived for a while in Concord,

Massachusetts, and 3) that the two Thomas Foxes were believed to be cousins.

Why am I telling you this? After completing the 67 page document, I had a half dozen copies printed up and distributed a copy each to the Longmont Library, the Longmont Historical Society, and the Longmont Genealogical Society. I also placed the Jarvis Marvin Fox family tree on Ancestry.com under the name 'Jarvis Marvin Fox' and this will allow me to add and/or correct information as it becomes available and I have time.

But I suspect that aside from Ancestry.com upload and storage, along with the messaging I get from other Fox family researchers, the Jarvis Marvin Fox history is now safely embedded in the Longmont records depositories, including the library, the first place I tried to find detailed information on J. M. Fox.

Having noted that online tree, I should mention that it has caused maybe a half dozen of the Jarvis Marvin Fox living descendants to contact me, and I have shared information and invariably also sent them a DVD of the supporting documentation I have accumulated while creating the tree. All great fun.

This photo of the fox, by the way, was one I took while reviewing Jarvis Marvin Fox's family burial plot in Longmont. I'm not really a believer in strange occurrences,





but to have a live fox show up while I was looking at a Fox family gravesite was a bit spooky. And he was so cute - I wanted to take him home with me.

These foxes, by the way, lived and raised their families in the cemetery, and they all died off while I was living in Longmont. This was another sad case of human life interfering with traditional animal life. The foxes were there first, and so were the deer, which are now also noticeably absent from the cemetery.

## Cemetery and Funeral Home Resources

And now we get to one of my favorite subjects, namely the subject of cemeteries. When I first started doing family research, I had no thoughts about cemeteries at all. They were, after all, simply the place where people who had died were buried. Now I consider cemeteries an incredibly important part of the history of a town's life, and interestingly enough, rather than being simply focused on dead history, cemeteries actually all have a life of their own – especially the older cemeteries.

### Types of Cemeteries

**Matthew Gillies** has taken the time and effort to define fifteen cemetery types that exist, and I respect that effort, although we family researchers normally deal with only a couple of different cemetery types. Here is what Matthew offers:

*“And while many people may only see a cemetery as just a place where the dead are laid to rest, cemeteries can be divided into fifteen different categories which include: the Church Cemetery, the Public Cemetery, the Customary Cemetery, the Private Cemetery, the Lodge Cemetery, the Ethnic Cemetery, the Family Cemetery, the Veterans’*

*Cemetery, the Monumental Cemetery, the Memorial Park, the Lawn Park Cemetery, the Lawn Beam Cemetery, the Garden Cemetery, the Natural Cemetery, and the Pet Cemetery.”*

*“According to the U.S. National Geological Survey there are about 110,000 cemeteries in the United States. However this number does not include the tens of thousands of family cemeteries.”*

<https://mysendoff.com/2012/05/the-15-types-of-cemeteries/>

To me, active cemeteries are either public owned (city, town, state, or national) and maintained cemeteries, or they are privately owned and maintained cemeteries. And then, of course, we have the abandoned and no longer maintained cemeteries.

### **Types of Cemetery Burials**

One characteristic of cemeteries that may be worthwhile noting in the beginning is that every cemetery I have worked with has allowed for both full body burials, and for cremation ash (aka cremains) burials.

Cemetery burials can be in the ground (full body burials and cremains burials), they can be in mausoleums (full burials above ground), they can be in columbariums (cremains burials above ground), or they can be in above ground individual or family burial crypts or tombs (full body burials or



cremains burials above ground in stand-alone buildings).

Almost every cemetery burial will have a specific burial location address for every grave that you should be looking to identify. Every cemetery has its own unique addressing schema, largely because every cemetery is different. Physical burial addresses often follow the addressing schema of block number, lot number, and grave space number. Sometimes the block number part of the address will be exchanged for a street name or avenue name. In modern times, there are now people assigning GPS coordinates to some known and specific burial locations (both FindaGrave and BillionGraves provide for such GPS addressing data).

Often you will find in-ground burial spaces that have one or more bodies buried in the same burial address location. How is this possible? A full burial space may have one or more full body burials (depending on the soil type, bodies can be stacked 2 or even 3 deep) and possibly one or more buried cremains.

Columbariums usually have only one (or two) cremains allowed per specific burial address, and the individual's name(s) will usually be carved in the door cover of the burial bay.

Mausoleums are similar to columbariums in that they allow one or two (maximum) full body burials, and again, the door cover will usually have the name(s) of those buried within. Depending on the size of a burial crypt, one or more full body burials may be found inside.

Cemetery burial locations can also be either individual burial lots or family burial lots. For family in-ground burial lots, they usually are found in multiples of two, i.e. two, four, six, eight, etc. So, in a family lot, if you find one 'Doyle,' you may have found one or more additional members of the

Doyle family, as well perhaps, as some in-laws, etc. Many lots purchased from cemetery associations will be two space lots, meant for husband and wife burials. The husband is usually buried on the left, and the wife is usually buried on the right.

Which leads us to the subject of cemetery in-ground grave markers. They can be flat (level with the grass), or vertical. Flat markers can be metal (as in military markers), or stone. Vertical gravestones can be made from many different stone types. Modern gravestone material is usually preferred to be made of granite because of its hardness and its longevity. Grave markers can be purchased by the family, or in the case of US military veterans, provided by the federal government.

For most modern towns and cities, there is one, or maybe a few, cemeteries. In some older eastern towns, however, there are often tens or even hundreds of cemeteries, some on public land, and some on private land.

### **Twombly Fogg Cemetery 32**

The small town of Berwick, Maine, for example, has 107 cemeteries that have been identified. The mostly private 107 cemeteries in Berwick were first described in Wilbur Spencer's publication entitled "**Burial Inscriptions and other data of burials in Berwick, York County, Maine to the year 1922.**" Spencer's original document described the total 107 cemeteries, the people buried in the cemeteries, and the gravestone engravings. What a valuable document, eh?

In the 1990s, John and Robert Philbrick went back to Berwick and reviewed many (maybe all) of the original Spencer cemeteries, and found the cemetery I eventually created on FindaGrave (Cemetery # 32) still intact. Their findings are described in their own document entitled "**Berwick Cemeteries**" by John and Robert Philbrick. Not many of these 107 Berwick cemeteries have been identified

online, so that was why I created the cemetery # 32 on FindaGrave - because it was important to me and my own research.

<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2577753/twombly-fogg-cemetery-32>

This small cemetery, named “**Twombly Fogg Cemetery 32**” is on private property, formerly a working farm, and was



originally owned by the Samuel Perkins family. The cemetery is located on the west side of Blackberry Hill Road, in the field behind the present day Dragonfly Farm.

The cemetery itself is found in a grove of trees, enclosed with granite posts and iron rail fencing. This cemetery includes 13 burials from two families: Twombly (5) and Fogg (8). There are four known rows of burials, and graves are numbered left to right.

It should be evident from the photo that this cemetery is one that is not maintained by anyone, although the FindaGrave photographer did mention she found American Legion veteran buttons on some of the gravestones, so I was not the only one who was tracking these particular Berwick burials. She mentioned the American Legion buttons right before she told me she should have brought along a machete to clear her pathway.

And for one final comment about the Twombly Fogg Cemetery 32, there were originally 2 additional burials (for a total of 15 burials) belonging to the original Samuel Perkins family. Town records mention those two graves were moved to the town cemetery and so they are no longer found in cemetery # 32.

### Cemetery records

Cemeteries that are over a century old, whether in big cities or small, may suffer from record maintenance problems. Some older cemeteries, if they have a records system, may be not yet be digitized and may still be paper records, which means that either someone has to look up specific burial information for you (over the phone or via e-mail or fax), or you have to go to the cemetery office yourself and either stand by while someone looks up the records, or look them up yourself. Even then, I have found some records systems to be incomplete and/or dysfunctional.

One cemetery I worked with had a few years of burial cards that were missing. Why? Some decades prior, a local man had bought the cemetery, had taken the burial information home, and many of the records were lost when he moved from the area. So the missing records had to be restored manually, by inspection, and by confirmation of local obituaries and vital records.

Another cemetery, a fairly large cemetery, had through some of its earlier decades listed the date of burial as date of death. Really? So, on some records, there would be legitimate dates of death, and on others, dates of burials. If burials typically occur an average of three days after a death, and if you know there is a problem with the dates, approximations of death can then be made.

Older cemetery records were often written by hand, and deciphering hand writing can sometimes be a challenge.

Some cemetery records are maintained by the town, and I can't tell you how many times I have been told by town clerks in eastern small towns that the records I was looking for were lost in a fire. This always frustrates me. It's as though someone just didn't want these burial records ever seen and used again.

## Mountain View Cemetery, Longmont, CO

Some of the most educational volunteer work I ever did was working with the Longmont Genealogical Society (LGS) and helping the group in the process of taking manual records from the **Mountain View Cemetery**, matching them up with the gravestone images, digitizing the results, and assuring the online FindaGrave burial information was also identical, accurate, and complete. Sometimes resolution to problem areas we identified would require us to use obituaries found on microfiche from local newspapers at the local library, sometimes we would have to talk to funeral homes, or obtain county records, etc. Making certain that every single burial record was accurate was a great mind training exercise.



Mountain View Cemetery has somewhere in excess of 20,000 burials. Many of the burials are veterans, and many veterans were buried without any mention of their prior military service. Identifying veteran burials was also a challenge.

The cemetery actually has one CMOH (Congressional Medal of Honor) recipient from the Civil War (**John Harvey Fisher**), and I ended up creating a family tree for Fisher also. Posting the family tree online led to my corresponding with a Harvard history professor who was related to John Harvey Fisher, and who was also researching the Fisher family history.

This is a photo of the Fisher family plot at Mountain View Cemetery.



All of these cemetery research efforts involving accurately matching up an individual's life with his final disposition are extremely educational and satisfying, and this is an area of research where focus and attention to detail are of great importance.

In Longmont, the several funeral homes were always a great source of backup information regarding specific burials, largely because of their excellent records systems. The funeral homes in Colorado are directly involved in the creation of the death certificates, and they often (maybe always) help generate the obituaries. Funeral Homes also deal with grieving families, so they often understand matters that are not ever documented.

In Longmont, one of the older, most complete funeral home burial records collections was destroyed by fire, well not by the fire itself, but by water used to douse the fire. The records had been stored in the basement and when the firemen used water to douse the fire in the top floor, the water flowed down into the basement and soak damaged the



historical paper burial records. While the police were looking for the individual(s) who started the fire, I was looking for methods of saving the water soaked records. As I recall, the funeral home had the wet records frozen solid in order to keep them from rotting or disintegrating, but that meant the record recovery efforts would take a long time.

It seems no one appreciates the value of records until they are lost or destroyed.

### **Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, MA**

One of my favorite cemeteries is the **Mount Auburn Cemetery** in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The cemetery today occupies about 175 acres, has over 95,000 burials, is a natural park atmosphere, and its burial records are now being protected and shared by a full time genealogist.



But Mount Auburn Cemetery hasn't always been that way. It started out far more humbly.

*“In 1831 the Massachusetts Horticultural Society purchased 72 acres of mature woodland situated in Watertown and Cambridge for the creation of a “rural cemetery” and experimental garden. On September 24, 1831, a crowd [of over 2,000] gathered in the Dell, the natural amphitheater located in the heart of the Cemetery, for the ceremony to consecrate this sacred land.”*

*“In the nineteenth century, Boston was a center of cultural activities and intellectual ferment. Many nationally known Bostonians are buried at Mount Auburn. Among those buried or remembered there are Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz, Philips*

*Brooks, Charles Bulfinch, Dorothea Dix, Mary Baker Eddy, Edward Everett, Asa Gray, Horatio Greenough, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Winslow Homer, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Amy Lowell, James Russell Lowell, and Charles Sumner."*

Perhaps Mount Auburn's most unique attraction to its visitors, aside from its famous residents, is the cemetery's own landscape

which is a combination of topography, water bodies, avenues, paths, living plants and historic monuments, buildings and other structures. It's a beautiful place to visit.



*"The Egyptian Gateway to Mount Auburn was one of the first buildings placed at the new Cemetery. Designed by Dr. Jacob Bigelow, it was first built in wood dusted with sand in 1832. In 1842-43 when funds permitted it was rebuilt in Quincy granite by Octavius T. Rogers who was the only contractor willing to undertake making and placing the carved cap, or cornice stone, in a single piece. This cornice stone is thought to be the largest piece of carved granite placed in a built structure in the United States at that time. The gate is in the "Egyptian style," its height being 25 feet, and whole length, including the lodges, 60 feet."*

If you would like to know more about this great cemetery, here is a link to their website.

<https://mountauburn.org/>

Much of the family research I do these days involves cemeteries, and rarely do I have to contact the funeral homes, many times of which, the original funeral home owners have long since died and have passed on their records to other funeral homes. But it does happen, and I do sometimes ask for help from funeral homes.

Years ago I lived with a woman whose maiden name was Adams, and inasmuch as I knew a fair amount about her, her two brothers were a mystery. So, I created a tree and started looking for the family. I had a difficult time finding burial spaces for her two brothers until I contacted the funeral homes involved. It turns out that while the woman had been full body buried in the family plot in NH, her brothers had been cremated by one large cemetery/funeral home as a service for two other different and smaller funeral homes, located in two different towns, and the brother's ashes were both said to have been taken by 'some member of the family.' So, until I am able to determine otherwise, the ashes may have been scattered, or they may be sitting on someone's fireplace mantel somewhere. I just don't know. But, without contacting the funeral homes directly, I never would have figured out the brothers had not been buried but had been cremated.

In summary, cemeteries and funeral homes may be perhaps the best and final record keepers of those who have passed, but it is still worth your time and effort to check and recheck the information you obtain from them both. The final connection with the truth may be found in a photograph

of a specific grave marker, and inasmuch as cemetery gravestones are sometimes carved incorrectly, combining gravestone information (if still readable) with cemetery records, town records, newspaper obituaries, and maybe even funeral home records will help assure your success at being accurate in your own record keeping efforts. Everything counts.

## Online Resources, Including Ancestry.com

The online information search resource we all use these days is called the Internet, but it didn't just appear out of nowhere. The Internet started out as the ARPANET, a concept that was first publicly discussed at a conference in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in October 1967, and which was finally implemented in 1969.

### The ARPANET

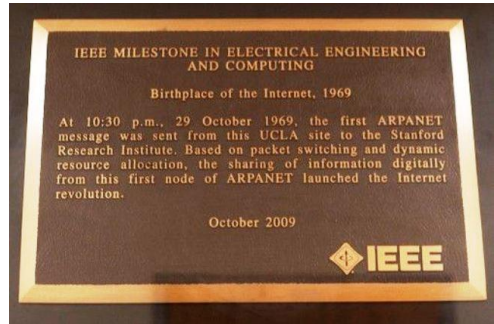
The **ARPANET** was developed under the direction and funding of the U.S. Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), and the ARPANET became a modest reality with the interconnection of four university computers in 1969. The initial purpose of the ARPANET was to communicate with, and share computer resources, among mainly scientific users at the connected universities. Dedicated and pre-programmed minicomputers called **Interface Message Processors (IMPs)** would be used to interface to the network rather than the large mainframes that would be the nodes of the ARPANET. This would mean that any mainframe computer that wanted to talk to another mainframe computer via the ARPANET was required to have its own IMP interface 'box,' the first generation of digital gateways, which today are known as routers.

But the ARPANET worked, and like a virus, the digital communications concept spread like wildfire. The Department of Defense gradually allowed other universities (other than the original universities) to join the network for sharing hardware and software resources.

By June 1974, there were 46 IMPs, and in July 1975, the network numbered 57 IMPs. By

1981, the number had increased to 213 host computers, with another host connecting approximately every twenty days.

Because of its government funding, certain forms of traffic were discouraged or prohibited. A 1982 handbook on computing at MIT's AI Lab (Artificial Intelligence Lab) included this statement:



*“It is considered illegal to use the ARPANet for anything which is not in direct support of Government business ... personal messages to other ARPANet subscribers (for example, to arrange a get-together or check and say a friendly hello) are generally not considered harmful ... Sending electronic mail over the ARPANet for commercial profit or political purposes is both anti-social and illegal. By sending such messages, you can offend many people, and it is possible to get MIT in serious trouble with the Government agencies which manage the ARPANet.”*

## The Internet

In 1982, the **Transmission Control Protocol (TCP)** and **Internet Protocol (IP)**, commonly known as **TCP/IP**, emerged as the standard protocol for ARPANET. This resulted in the

fledgling definition of the **Internet** including computer systems connected by TCP/IP protocols, and even today, TCP/IP remains the standard protocol for the Internet.

By 1983 the world saw creation of the **Domain Name System (DNS)** which established the familiar .com, .edu, .gov, .mil, .org, .net, and .int system for identifying and naming websites. So, the Internet that we all know and love officially started out in the 1980s and has been growing in use ever since. Today there are literally billions of users of the Internet, and what was once a complicated system of connections between people is now a simple plug-and-play system of connections. That's the way things should work; made easier and more powerful through the passage of time.

The Internet is the communications highway we all use today, and we use it to connect from our home or work computers into other computer based websites that appear to have information or data that is important to us. In family research, we look for an individual's data that has been digitized for us by others, or, in the alternative, the location of documents we can buy or borrow. And that leads us to websites like **Ancestry.com** and **FamilySearch.com**.

### **Online Ancestry Search Engines and Databases**

What follows is a list of eight available software products dedicated to family research that have been reviewed this year by a group known as 'TopTenReviews.' It is a pretty good review of products now available, but remember, all computer hardware and software products go through continual states of change, and when evaluating these products, it is best to be thorough yourself in your own review and evaluations of these services because what I write here may change in the near future.

**#1 -- Ancestry.com** -- is considered by some (maybe most) people to be the largest and most complete online family database search website available. It is a **fee based online service**.

*“According to the website, Ancestry gives you access to more than 20 billion records from 80 countries of origin. This is far more than other sites like MyTrees which only has 1 billion resources to search. Ancestry also adds an average of 2 million records to the website daily, so those numbers are constantly changing. You can search as far back as the 13th century, which is when The Crusades were happening. The downside to this is that to get access, you have to pay for a pricey subscription. There are several levels of membership to choose from at varying prices and you can pay less per month if you sign up for one year. You can also hire an expert to do some genealogy research for you, though that service costs extra on top of your subscription.”*

<https://www.toptenreviews.com/services/home/best-genealogy-websites/ancestry-com-review/>

**#2 -- FamilySearch** -- From the same TopTenReviews site, we find that **FamilySearch.com** comes in at second place. This is a **free online service**.

*“FamilySearch is a thorough resource for conducting genealogy research and doesn’t cost anything at all to use, making it our **best value pick**.”*

*“The best part of FamilySearch is that it’s as comprehensive and easy to use as Ancestry.com but **doesn’t cost anything**. You can view scanned documents, look up details about your*

*ancestors and build a family tree complete with photos without spending a dime. The family tree feature is intuitive aside from the fact that it's unclear whether you're supposed to enter a woman's maiden name. We've done this a lot and we're here to tell you: always enter her maiden name. You'll need basic information about your close relatives like their birthdays, but in our tests, we started getting hints connecting to more distant family members almost immediately. When you click on a person who is already in their system it even gives you sourcing information about where they got the data. You can also change the view of your family tree from a traditional vertical tree to a fan chart or several other variations to make viewing the entirety of your family less confusing."*

In prior sections of this book, I've introduced and briefly discussed these top two online databases already. According to the top ten ranking website linked above, there are six other online genealogical databases listed below and including some abridged comments from the TopTenReviews report:

**#3 -- MyHeritage** -- This is a **fee based service**, and the product offers about 9 billion searchable resources. You have to pay for a year at a time regardless of which subscription type you choose. Its interface is easy to use, and it has additional features like the free app and breadth of searchable material which make MyHeritage a great genealogy search choice.

**#4 -- FindMyPast** -- This is a **fee based service**, and the site focuses on British and Irish family histories. Formerly known as the UK's "DC Thomson Family History," this site lets



you search US census records from 1790-1940, Irish Roman Catholic parish records including more than 7 million baptism records and the 1881 census in England, Wales and Scotland, to name a few. There are about 18 million people registered on FindMyPast and its other online entities including Mocavo, Genes Reunited, and the British Newspaper Archive.

**#5 -- Archives** -- This is a **fee based service**, and the cost is relatively affordable with its most expensive membership costing far less than subscriptions at either Ancestry.com or FindMyPast. Archives is ideal if you're trying to look up information about a person. It works better as a supplement to your genealogy data research because the family tree building function isn't the best we tested.

Archives has been in the genealogy business since 2009 and became part of Ancestry.com's business in 2012. According to the website, members have access to 10 billion pages of textual records including maps, charts, and architectural and engineering drawings, photographs and video. You can order certificates of marriage, death and divorce too but it does mean you'll have to pay an additional cost on top of your subscription for each piece of paper you want.

**#6 -- OneGreatFamily** -- This is a **fee based service**, and it is GEDCOM compatible. We found this service to be difficult to use and it doesn't give you access to as many resources as many of the other sites we tested. The genealogy search interface isn't very user-friendly, and with fewer than 1 billion resources it has the least of any we tested.

**#7 -- GenealogyBank** -- This is a **fee based service**, and the price per month is relatively low compared to some of the other services we evaluated, like Ancestry.com. This genealogy website gives you access to roughly 2 billion records, a number that is growing all the time. The database includes thousands of newspapers, obituaries as far back as 1977, historical texts from as far back as 1749, death records and the Social Security Death Index. While this is a lot of information to dig through, GenealogyBank lacks a family tree builder, and other websites, like FamilySearch for example, have even more resources you can search.

Because GenealogyBank lacks a family tree function, it isn't one of our highly-ranked genealogy websites, but it could be useful if you're specifically interested in obituaries and historical documents to flesh out the family tree you're building elsewhere.

**#8 -- MyTrees** -- This is a **fee based service**, and while MyTrees is an affordable genealogy website, it doesn't have as many resources as many of the other sites we tested. You can search for your ancestors and build a family tree, but both functions are clunky and the overall design of the website isn't very intuitive. Put simply, MyTrees has been around since 1996 and it looks like the website design hasn't changed much since then. Customer service is human, personal, and fast.

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In your own evaluation of online searchable genealogical database sites, I would suggest that you review the complete TopTenReviews website, as well as other

review sites that may be available. It appears that except for FamilySearch, all of these genealogical sites are fee based and will cost money to access and use. Look at the cost and benefits of each fee based service to you before you decide to subscribe.

But aside from genealogical online database sites, there are a plethora of other online resources available to the researcher, some of which are better than others. At this point, and because I am not familiar with your specific information goals, I'm not going to try and identify every one I've come across.

### USGenWeb

I would be remiss, however, if I didn't mention **USGenWeb** and their

contribution to helping people become successful in their pursuit of researching their



family history. From USGenWeb's website we have these notes.

*“The USGenWeb Project is a group of volunteers working together and having fun providing free online genealogy help and information for every U.S. state and county. Our national site provides links to state sites, which, in turn, provide gateways to the counties. We also sponsor 20th Anniversary important Special Projects, gathering useful data you can access for free. I'm proud of the variation you'll see in site*

*style and content across our many web sites. It shows the wonderful diversity of our volunteers!*

*“USGenWeb was established in 1996 by a group of genealogists who shared a desire to create online centers for genealogical research. Each of our literally thousands of web sites have been created and are maintained by volunteers. Some of the offerings you're likely to see in these diverse and creative sites include query boards, listings of local sources for records, county and state histories, online genealogy books, research tips, maps, and links to helpful internet resources. You'll even find transcribed records online, accessible for free from the comfort of your home. Our Special Projects, such as the nationally-recognized Tombstone Project, assist in the effort to gather these record transcriptions. The USGenWeb Archives are a major repository of data, which is provided by helpful contributors - people just like you!”*

<http://www.usgenweb.com/>

### **Other Online sources**

I would also be remiss if I did not suggest that there are many other, credible online sources available to help us understand early days in America. One of those online sources comes from **Yale University** in the form of a free access online history course on the **American Revolution** and its time period in American history.

*“Professor Freeman offers an introduction to the course, summarizing the readings and discussing the course’s main goals. She also offers five tips for studying the Revolution: 1) Avoid thinking about the Revolution as a story about facts and dates; 2) Remember that words we take for granted*

*today, like “democracy,” had very different meanings; 3) Think of the “Founders” as real people rather than mythic historic figures; 4) Remember that the “Founders” aren’t the only people who count in the Revolution; 5) Remember the importance of historical contingency: that anything could have happened during the Revolution.”*

<https://oyc.yale.edu/history/hist-116/lecture-1>

Courses like this help us understand more of what was going on during our early days as a country, and as Professor Freeman points out, the revolution, in the colonist’s minds, actually started years before 1775. The resultant physical war was a small, conclusive part of the actual revolution.

Having said all of that, I have already alluded to the fact that much of what we look for is either individual oriented, family oriented, of locality oriented, and that leads us into the next section.

## **Family and Town History Books**

Depending on your own attitude toward obtaining documents for research, and your own financial resources, there are many documents available that will help you find the family information you need. Documents fall into three generic categories, namely; documents you can buy, documents you can borrow, and documents you can download for free to your own computer.

Something magical happened around the timeframe of 1900. Within the period of plus or minus ten years, there were many books written about family histories and about early town histories in America. And, inasmuch as many, if not all of these books are no longer published, both Google (a profit based company) and **Archive.org** (a non-profit, 501c3 company) have scanned and uploaded many hundreds of

copies of these books and have made them publicly available online in several formats, including PDF.

These are documents (with expired copyright protections) you can read online or download digitally and pay nothing – they become yours, and you do not have to return them either.

**Archive.org** is my preferred source of the two companies, and I prefer to download my books in PDF format. If the downloaded PDF document is not text readable, I will use Adobe Acrobat to scan and reveal the searchable text layer of the document.

## PDF Documents

Since I've broached the subject of **PDF** documents, maybe I should elaborate a bit more about PDF documents. The Portable Document Format (PDF) is a digital file format developed in the 1990s in an effort to present documents, including both text formatting and images, in a manner independent of computer application software, hardware, and operating systems, i.e. a universal document standard. Adobe Systems designed the PDF format, and made the PDF specification available free of charge in 1993.

The PDF format was based on the earlier Adobe PostScript language (created in the 1980s to support desktop and electronic publishing), and each PDF file encapsulates a complete description of a fixed-layout flat document, including the text, fonts, vector graphics, raster images and other information needed to display it. Whereas Postscript was developed along with the developing age of dot matrix printers and early laser printers, the PDF format came later, and took advantage of the Postscript features, simplifying them for easier use by everyone.

Interestingly enough, PDF, like computer aided design software, provides layers of information, and that includes

both imaging layers and text layers. It was because of what was found in one or more layers of the PDF document layers of Barack Obama's alleged Hawaiian birth certificate that caused so many people to get upset with him.

You might receive a PDF document in which you can read the text, but not be able to do searches on that same text you can visually see. This is because the text layer of that document has been hidden. Fortunately, if you have one of the Adobe products (like Acrobat), you can scan the PDF document and bring the text formatting to the surface, and thus be able to then search and access the actual text data.

For every PDF document I download, one of my first actions upon receipt is to determine if the text layer is exposed and available, and if it is not, I use Acrobat to scan and bring the text layer to the surface. Then I am able to do text searches inside the document, a necessary research function, in my opinion. I don't have time to read all of the books I have downloaded, and using the text search function is of great value to me.

### **Early Family Histories**

OK, now we can get back to discussing family historical books in the form of PDF documents that you can download and use. Family histories are quite helpful because if done right, they include many tree branches that were known at the time the history was written and that helps us with early family histories.

Let's take an example: Thomas Fox of Concord Massachusetts. I mentioned earlier that I am distantly related to this Thomas Fox of Concord, and so finding a book on him, his family, his ancestors, and his descendants was like striking gold.

Interestingly enough, there are now several sources for information on both Thomas Fox of Concord and Thomas

Fox of Cambridge, but one book written in 1909 about Thomas Fox of Concord was published by **William Freeman Fox** of Albany, NY from material compiled by his cousin **Simeon Moses Fox** and is entitled ***“Thomas Fox of Concord Massachusetts and His Descendants.”*** William Fox’s particular style of describing descendants is a bit unlike some other styles, but the information appears to all be there. The introduction to the book was written by Simeon Moses Fox and Simeon offers us some cautions.

*“For more than a quarter of a century I have been searching among the records of New England in an endeavor to gather additional facts relating to the descendants of Thomas Fox of Concord, Mass. My own line of descent I had perfected long ago, but I desired a more complete knowledge of collateral lines.*

*“During my early search I found how little trust could be placed in the genealogies which are given in the local histories of many New England towns, and, also, that there were many slips in Savage’s great “Genealogical Dictionary.” Mr. Baker in his “History of Montville” makes a sad mix-up of the Foxes of New London.”*

Simeon Fox’s handwritten note in the front of his own copy of the book says:

*“My feeling may be appreciated when I received the printed book, to know that the matter had been re-edited, rearranged, and a very large number of the persistent old-time errors that I had fondly hoped to see eliminated in print, carefully put back in their old places. I remember the story of*



*the boy who used to go out behind the barn to swear - I wish I had a barn."*

So, there we have a few words of caution. The 'Savage' referred to was **James Savage** who, in 1860, published a four volume book series entitled "***A genealogical dictionary of the first settlers of New England showing three generations of those who came before May, 1692, on the basis of Farmer's Register***" by Savage, James, (1784-1873).

Savage was very thorough, even if he was mistaken in some respects, and like all things you research, if you choose to access and use Savage's book(s), check, check, and then check again.

BTW, Savage's four books are all available for free download on Archive.org. I suspect the books will also be available in large city libraries or available via interlibrary loan services.

Note also that Thomas Fox of Cambridge is described in a book entitled "***A History of That Part of The Fox Family Descended from Thomas Fox of Cambridge, Mass.***" written by **Nathanial M. Fox** in 1899, and that too is available from Archives.org.

One of the other books that would be of interest to Fox descendants would be "***The Descendants of Thomas Fox of Concord, Massachusetts***" compiled by **Colonel Charles Barnard Fox** of Boston. But even that document has a caution in its opening pages from yet another now somewhat familiar Fox family member.

*"This compilation cannot be accepted as entirely correct. While it contains very many valuable facts, Col Fox has taken much matter from printed genealogies, and town histories, which are often far from being reliable. I have inserted sheets*

*calling attention to some of the errors.” -- Fox, S. M.  
(Simeon Moses Fox).*

So, who was this critical Simeon Moses Fox? From another interesting online web site (see link below), we learn the following about this particular Fox family member.

Simeon Moses Fox was born on August 28, 1841 in Lansingville, Tompkins County, New York. He was the son of Reverend Dana Fox and Jane Strong. He married as his first wife Ella Kimball, daughter of Joseph L. Kimball and Harriet Putnam, on June 3, 1868 in Leavenworth, Leavenworth County, Kansas, married by his father Reverend Dana Fox. Simeon Moses Fox married as his second wife Esther Butler, daughter of Hiram Greeley Butler and Mary Temple, on September 20, 1875 in Leavenworth, Leavenworth County, Kansas, again married by his father Reverend Dana Fox.

Simeon Fox was an accomplished genealogist, one of the founders of the Riley County Genealogical Society in Manhattan, Kansas, and he published numerous articles in local and national publications.

In 1908, Simeon completed the compilation of the first five generations of the descendants of Thomas Fox of Concord. As noted above, he collaborated with William Freeman Fox to get the material published, and contributed an introduction to the volume. When the book was published, Simeon found that William Freeman Fox had edited and reworked the material and had made numerous errors, in spite of the corrections that Simeon had sent.

Simeon Moses Fox died on March 6, 1938 in Manhattan, Riley County, Kansas, at age 96. He was buried in Sunset Cemetery, Manhattan, Riley County, Kansas.

<http://www.gulbangi.com/5families-o/p2.htm>

And all that reminds us once again that even though people used to talk with each other, they didn't always agree, nor did problems always get fixed to everyone's satisfaction.

I will note here that the website linked above has one of the most complete and thorough individual created family websites I have come across. The link takes you to page 2 of the website. There are 668 pages of data in this website document in August, 2018, and the author (**Ann Fox Gulbransen**) does make some comments and some cautions on the web site's home page.

*"The data [on this website] was compiled using **The Master Genealogist** software which is unfortunately no longer produced. These [web] pages were created by John Cardinal's **Second Site** [software].*

*"The genealogy data on these web pages is a compilation of information from many sources. I am researching 5 primary lines - my father Bertrand Fox, his first wife Mary Kent Ziegler, my mother Patricia Noyes, Marty's mother Mary Ann Green and his father LaMar Dyches Gulbransen. Note: details on the living are suppressed.*

*"Many of the sources have not been thoroughly documented and some of the data is preliminary, but I'm including it all. I have many primary sources and quality secondary sources, but also lots of Internet sources that range from scholarly to downright conjecture and fantasy. My philosophy is to present it all and then correct and augment as I hear from researchers with better information. Since much of the data is from uncorroborated sources, there are plenty of myths and legends, and lots of best guesses on how the folk fit together.*

*If you have any additions and/or corrections I would love to hear from you. I'd also love to hear from cousins, no matter how distant!"*

## **Early Town Histories**

Like early family histories, there are also early town histories. And like the cautions we saw with regard to historical accuracy of family histories, the same cautions should be followed with early town histories, and yes, they often include stories about early individuals in that town. As an example of how town histories can get mixed up with individual histories, let's review the early history of **Meeker**, Colorado – one beautiful small town in northern Colorado.

### ***The Meeker Massacre***

From the **Meeker Historical Society** we learn that the town of Meeker was the site of the last major Indian uprising in the United States, caused by actions initiated by Nathaniel (Nathan) Cook Meeker, Indian Agent at the time. From The Meeker Historical Society website we get these comments.

<http://www.meekercolorado.com/HSociety.htm>

*"To gain some understanding of [Nathaniel Cook] Meeker's problems would involve knowing that at the time Meeker was appointed, the Bureau of Indian Affairs adapted a strict policy that included the provision that if adult Indian males did not participate in agricultural efforts, their food, given to them by the government, would be withheld. The Utes did not believe Meeker as they knew this mandate was not in their treaty. There began a complete lack of trust on the part of the White River Utes who believed Meeker was not telling the truth*

*regarding such policies.”*

*“Meeker’s imperative was to teach the Utes to become self-sufficient farmers. When the Utes would not stay on the reservation and farm, but instead continued following their age old lifestyle of extended hunts, Meeker tried to get them to stay on the reservation and work; at first in a kindly way and as that failed he applied more pressure.*

*“He threatened to have the troops from Ft. Fred Steele at Rawlins, Wyoming come put the Utes in chains and take them away to the Indian Territories in Oklahoma. A threat he did not have the authority to make. The Utes did not believe that he had the authority to do this and Meeker was widely accused of lying to them in this regard. “*

*“On the same day as the battle the Utes had attacked the agency. [Daniel C.] Meeker ignored warnings from Tom and Billy Morgan, ranchers who raced horses with the Utes, and warnings from the Indians themselves; Meeker had signed a death warrant for the 11 men at the agency including himself.” Ooops.*

So, here’s a case where the fog of war and the distance of time causes the loss of details about how things happen, and exactly why things happened as they did. If this story interests you, I suggest that you read more at the website posted above. I’ve extracted only bits and pieces of the whole story, and you might like to know ‘the rest of the story.’

### ***The Meeker Bank Robbery***

But, as interesting as the story of the Ute uprising is, there was one other interesting Meeker story that shows us

pretty clearly what happened, and once again, some details need sorting out by a credible historian. The story surrounds an armed bank robbery in the town of Meeker in the year 1896, a time when all men still carried guns.

This is my own abbreviated summary of the Meeker Bank Robbery article, with data extracted from **The Meeker Herald**, dated Saturday, October 17, 1896.

Three men, Charles Jones, George Harris, and Billy Smith attempted to rob the Bank of Meeker (Colorado) on this date October 13, 1896. Nearly every man in Meeker at the time owned and knew how to use a gun, and all three bank robbers were shot dead by Meeker residents during their attempted escape from the bank.

Charles Jones (age about 45 years), was the gang

leader. Jones was 5 foot, 8 inches tall, had dark hair but was balding in his temples, blueish grey eyes, weight about 155-160 pounds, right leg



about 1-1/2 inches shorter than his left leg. George Harris (age about 35 years), was 5 foot 9 or 10 inches tall, had light reddish hair and moustache, and was 'of fine physique.' Billy Smith (age about 21 years), aka "The Kid," had a large smooth face, thick neck, was about 5 foot 7 or 8 inches tall, had dark hair.

The coroner jury's verdict found that the three robbers had come to their death by gunshot wounds inflicted by the citizens in defense of life and property, and that the

killings were justified. The undertaker put the dead bandits under the sod in the Meeker Highland Cemetery on the afternoon of Wednesday, October 14, 1896. The robbers are buried next to each other in the southeast corner of the cemetery, and each robber has a grave marker.

The gang member's names as identified in the newspaper were obtained from George Harris as he was the last to die, but there appears to be still some name confusion with the three. Charles Jones is buried as Jim Shirley. Billy Smith is buried as "The Kid" Pierce. George Harris is buried with three names: George Bain, alias George Low, and alias George Harvies.

Additional details, including reprints of the actual newspaper article about the robbery, are available from the White River Museum in Meeker, Colorado.

<http://www.meekercolorado.com/museum.htm>

So, who were these guys, really? I was tempted to do a family research project on these men and on this bank robbery, because, to me, it is an interesting story. But, like all things, there are only so many hours in the day, and I like everyone else, have to prioritize the use of my time. I also have no idea who these guys really were.

### *Cambridge and the Salem Witch Trials*

To get back to other perhaps, more thorough local or town histories, we can go back to the early histories of the eastern cities, including the City of **Cambridge**, Massachusetts. There is one 774 page city history available for download from Archives.org entitled "**History of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1630-1877 with a Genealogical Register**" written by Lucius R Paige in 1877, that is quite interesting and probably quite accurate as it quotes actual

documents and describes actual events from the time period. For example:

*"This petition [to remove Mrs. Rebecca Jacobs, of Cambridge, from prison] availed nothing, except perhaps to delay the trial. The poor demented woman was kept in prison until the next January, when she was indicted, tried, and acquitted. Before this January Court, a great change had occurred in the public opinion. A principal reason for such a change is mentioned by Hutchinson : "Ordinarily, persons of the lowest rank in life have had the misfortune to be charged with witchcrafts ; and although many such had suffered, yet there remained in prison a number of women, of as respectable families as any in the towns where they lived, and several persons, of still superior rank, were hinted at by the pretended bewitched, or by the confessing witches. Some had been publicly named.""*

Rebecca Jacobs, daughter of Thomas and Rebecca Andrew, was born in Cambridge on April 18, 1646, and married first, John Frost, on June 26, 1666. John Frost died in 1672, and Rebecca married second, George Jacobs, Jr., of Salem, and hence the connection with the **Salem** witch trials.

George Jacobs, Sr. and Rebecca's own daughter had already been imprisoned, and her husband (George Jr.) had fled Salem to escape a similar fate, when Rebecca was arrested on suspicion of witchcraft. She was long confined in prison, leaving four young children, one of them an infant, to the tender mercies of her neighbors. What made her case the more deplorable was, that she had long been partially deranged.

Rebecca Jacob's father, Thomas Andrew, had died about 1647, and her mother, Rebecca Andrew, had married



second, Nicholas Wyeth, who died on July 19, 1680, and she then married third, Thomas Fox, on December 16, 1685 and died as Rebecca Fox in 1698.

At any rate, this is the link to the actual book, downloadable in PDF format, and you will find Rebecca Jacob's story on pages 352-354. I should note that once you get into the 17<sup>th</sup> century Salem witch trials, you will find there are now many sources available for further research and study.

<https://ia800208.us.archive.org/13/items/historyofcambrid00paigiala/historyofcambrid00paigiala.pdf>

The Massachusetts witch hunts went on for far too long a time, and it was only after Governor William Phips' own wife had been accused of being a witch that he finally took a stand against witch trial imprisonments and forbade any more executions for witchcraft. The nearly 150 men and women who had still been chained to prison walls were finally set free, and the many who had been convicted of witchcraft, were finally pardoned. Whew!

## **Newspapers, Magazines**

Newspapers are one of the most important, versatile, and heavily used information sources used by researchers, genealogists, students, and the public in general. Feature stories, society news, classified and picture advertisements, school and church announcements, news from surrounding towns, birth, marriage, and death announcements, all give the reader a sense of "being there." Often newspapers contain historical information that is simply not found elsewhere. In this respect, newspapers are extremely valuable to us all.

The modern newspaper was evidently a European invention. The earliest direct ancestors of the modern newspaper were the handwritten news sheets that circulated widely in Venice as early as 1566. These weekly news sheets were filled with information on wars and politics in Italy and Europe.

The first printed newspapers were published weekly in Germany starting about 1609. Typically these newspapers were heavily censored by the government and reported only foreign news, and current prices. After the English government relaxed its own censorship of newspapers in 1695, newspapers started to flourish in London and in a few other cities like Boston and Philadelphia.

In 1814, The Times of London acquired a printing press capable of making 1,100 impressions per hour. The press was soon adapted to print on both sides of a page at once. This innovation made newspapers cheaper and thus more available to a larger part of the population.

In 1830, the first penny press newspaper came to the market in the form of Lynde M. Walter's "**Boston Transcript.**" Penny press papers cost about one-sixth the price of other newspapers and thus appealed to an even wider audience. During these earlier days, newspaper editors exchanged copies with each other and freely reprinted material. By the late 1840s telegraph networks linked large and smaller cities and towns and permitted overnight news reporting. The invention of wood pulp papermaking in the 1840s also significantly reduced the cost of newsprint, after having been previously made from rags. Increasing literacy in the 19th century population also helped increase the size of newspapers' audiences.

Like all good things, money and power began to corrupt what was originally an open and honest information

source. Businesses and banks started to secretly pay certain newspapers to promote their own particular financial interests, and hide or cover up possible misbehavior. Publishers began to take payments for favorable notices in news articles of commercial products. Sometimes, a newspaper would actually blackmail a business by threatening to publish unfavorable information unless the business immediately started advertising in the paper. Foreign governments, including Russia and Turkey, were found to secretly pay the newspapers hundreds of thousands of francs a year to guarantee favorable coverage of the bonds they were selling in Paris. When the real news was bad about Russia, as during its 1905 Revolution or during its war with Japan, Russia raised the bribes it paid to millions of francs. Each foreign ministry in Paris had a group of journalists whom it secretly paid and fed stories.

During both World Wars, newspapers became more of a government propaganda agency in support of the country's war efforts, than an objective news agency, and there was little, if any, allowed critical commentary about the wars. In France, for example, the press seldom reported the military achievements of the Allies; instead they credited only the good news concerned with the French army. So, in effect, newspapers were no longer independent champions of the truth, but had slowly and secretly become paid advertisements (propaganda) for special financial interests and for governments.

I think by now most of us are aware of the facts that major news outlets are now controlled by six huge international corporations, that newspapers are being read by fewer people because of their perceived bias, that small town newspapers are in serious decline, and that the digital age has landed and is taking over the distribution of

information. In fact, a 2015 report from the Brookings Institution shows that the number of newspapers per hundred million people fell from 1,200 in 1945, to 400 in 2014. Over that same time period, circulation per capita declined from 35 percent in the mid-1940s to under 15 percent in 2014. Ooops. Is that a good thing, or a bad thing?

That question aside, and as far as older newspaper history is concerned, there are now many efforts being made to save and digitize the older newspapers. However, and as has been mentioned briefly in the story below, largely because of Disney copyright activities, for the period from 1923 through 1977, newspapers published in compliance with all US formalities (i.e., notice, renewal) have copyright protection for 95 years (not 70) after publication date. This means that newspapers printed after 1923 must have specific and individual copyright permission from specific newspapers before their historical papers can be copied, digitized, and saved.

### Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection

In April, 2015, **Mary McCarthy** made a presentation entitled "The Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection" to the Longmont Genealogical Society. McCarthy was working with the **Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection (CHNC)**, a



service supported by the **Colorado State Library**

(Colorado Department of Education) and was deeply involved in the preservation of Colorado newspapers. By that time in 2015, CHNC had accumulated over 600,000 pages of digitized historic Colorado newspapers starting in 1859. Access to the collection was, and still is, free.

Three years later, in 2018, CHNC posted this on their website:

*“A service of the Colorado State Library, the Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection (CHNC) currently includes more than 1,100,000 digitized pages, representing more than 220 individual newspaper titles published in Colorado primarily from 1859 to 1923. Due to copyright restrictions, the CHNC does not always include newspapers published after 1922, but the CHNC can digitize beyond 1922 if publisher permission can be secured.*

*“Ongoing support for maintaining and providing access to the CHNC is paid for with state funds administered by the Colorado State Library. We continue to add new pages to the CHNC when community funding is located to pay the costs of digitization.”*

So, in the period of time between 2015 and 2018, CHNC had almost doubled the amount of digitized newspaper pages. Progress on preserving the older newspapers is being made.

## **Newspaper Announcements**

For the genealogist, perhaps the consistently most important historical information is the birth announcement, the marriage announcement, the death announcement, and the full obituaries. Some of the earlier newspapers would also include on the social pages who was visiting who in their town, and who was traveling where, etc. And that leads us into how to search for material on old newspapers.

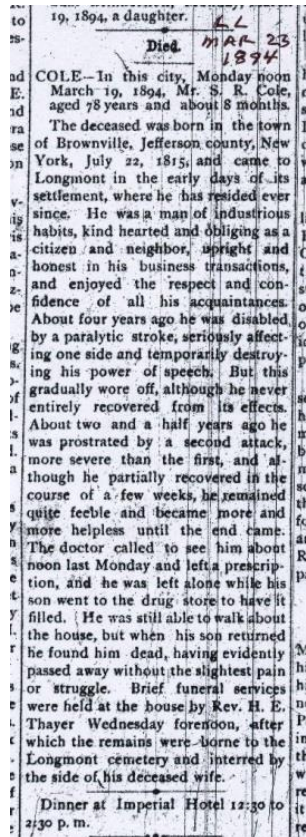
If the old newspapers are merely scanned and recorded on microfiche, then you will often find those saved microfiche tapes at a local library. With any luck at all, there

will be an associated index card file with cards sorted by (alphabetized by) an individual's name and a pointer to the actual edition and page in the local newspaper where the information or article can be found. Assuming the tape you want to read is not broken and the microfiche reader is in good working order, you should be able to find a copy of the record you are looking for. The trick here is that you have to scan all of the card file notated records for that individual or you may miss an important posting.

Other guidelines include knowing that when someone dies, there is not always an obituary written – sometimes there is simply a brief death notice of the death. Also, depending on the individual involved (and their social standing), an obituary may be found on an obituary page, or it may be found on the newspaper's social page. This holds true with birth and marriage records also – they can be found on a dedicated page or on the social page. So, checking all records for an individual will help insure that you find the information you need. And, by the way, sometimes a newspaper will support news from several nearby communities, so it may be of value knowing enough about the area and/or the individual to look in the different and perhaps smaller town areas sections for your data.

Now, once you have found the vital notice you are looking for (e.g. obituary) you need to print off a legible copy, and this may require some fidgeting of the printer settings in the library system in order to get the image and image quality that you want. After that is done, now you head home, trim the newspaper image, and scan the resultant very appropriate image into your computer file for reference and use.

This image on the right is an image of an obituary I obtained when doing work on the Jarvis Marvin Fox tree. Samuel Root Cole was Jarvis Marvin Fox's father in law, so Cole was an important member of the JMF tree. This is a copy of Cole's obituary that I obtained from the Longmont Public Library and which is now stored up in Cole's FindaGrave memorial. BTW, take a look at that Cole gravestone image. It was one of the more interesting grave markers that I've come across.



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60879215/samuel-root-cole>

I also have developed the habit of writing the newspaper source on an obituary printout. Why? In this case (the Cole obituary), the paper was the Longmont Ledger, a newspaper no longer in business under that name. So, my note indicates the publication code and the date of the paper in which the obituary was found. This is sometimes helpful when the reference librarian asks you 'which newspaper are you looking for?'

As an alternative to posting an image of the actual obituary on FindaGrave (or on Ancestry.com), I sometimes draft a summary of (or use the complete version of) the obituary as you see on this memorial for Lida Louise (Cole) Fox.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/53626581/lida-louise-fox>

When it comes to the digitized versions of newspapers, we can use the CHNC website as an example. If you go to their site and type in the term Jarvis Marvin Fox, this will show up as one of the search results. It includes an image of Fox's death notice. I had already obtained a copy from the microfiche system at the Longmont Library. Notice how complete this digital display is, however – in spite of the fogginess of the original scan, the digital page includes a scanned text of the original scan, which is fairly complete.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=LML19220728.2.80.1&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-jarvis+marvin+fox-----0-#>

## **Newspaper Copyrights**

By the way, I have raised the question of the copyright restraints that frustrate organizations like CHNC, but which restraints also seem to be completely ignored by libraries. Why is that?

Newspapers, in order to conserve their own physical storage space of old copies of their own publications, will often donate their older copies to the local library for safe keeping and for future reference use (that's the passage on of the copyright usage approval). This tells us, however, that



when we can't find a digitized copy of a specific newspaper edition, we should check with the newspaper(s) directly (if they are still in business), and then check with the local library. Everything counts.

From a genealogical perspective, magazines don't offer quite as much useful material in quantity as do the newspapers. You can sometimes find a great article about someone in a college magazine, or, if you are lucky, in a national magazine. Many of these magazine articles are found online when you search for someone's name.

Unlike newspapers, however, magazines, invariable theme based, often have an agenda of their own to promote with the articles they publish. For example, you will probably not find an article on General George Patton in either Ladies' Home Journal or in Car and Driver, but you may find an article in Military Times or Soldier of Fortune. Different readership for different magazines – it all makes sense for magazines.

## DNA Testing

The subject of **DNA** testing topic is interesting, if for no other reason than the fact that very few people understand what current DNA testing is all about. And, I suspect that in the coming years DNA testing will become an increasingly involved part of genealogical research.

In fact, Family Tree Maker has just announced a companion product to FTM, called "**Charting Companion 7**" which is of value if you 1) use FTM, and 2) have either already done your own DNA testing, or you and other family members are seriously considering having your DNA tested.

## Types of DNA Tests

As background, there are two basic types of DNA tests, namely, 1) **forensic DNA testing** used by the government to identify individuals and compare their DNA

test results with other individuals, and 2) **genealogical DNA testing** used to determine where an individual's family roots originated.

Government DNA testing may be the more accurate and thorough of the two testing systems. From a private lab, we get these comments on DNA testing by the police.

*“Conclusive DNA test results have innumerable capabilities within the legal system. Thanks to TV crime dramas, the most commonly recognized use of forensic DNA testing is courtroom convictions. However, DNA has also been widely used to exonerate alleged criminals as well. To date, more than 300 people have been freed thanks to DNA analysis; around 20 of those people were on death row.*

*“Cold Cases have been able to be solved thanks to DNA evidence as well as local and national DNA databases like CODIS. Advents in forensic testing like new Rapid DNA technology expedites DNA testing from weeks or months to mere hours. Rapid technologies will enable labs to quickly process new cases providing time to focus on backlogs.*

*“Forensic Paternity testing is useful in missing persons or victim identification when a suspected family member is able to provide a sample. It is also helpful in proving rape or incest cases when conception results.”*

<https://dnacenter.com/blog/forensic-dna-testing/>

*“DNA Diagnostics Center, also known as DDC, is one of the leading and most highly accredited genetic testing laboratories in the world. We provide comprehensive DNA testing services in four areas: paternity and family*

*relationships; lifestyle testing including ancestry, health and wellness, veterinary, and forensics testing.”*

John M. Butler wrote an article in 2015 that discusses the future of forensic DNA testing. The article is quite interesting if you want to learn more about the subject from the government’s perspective. Interestingly enough, and in parallel, there seems to be a great effort by government to get everyone’s DNA sample. Except for purposes of control, why would they want everyone’s DNA? [Rhetorical question]

Here is a link to Butler’s article if you are interested in reading it.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4580997/>

DNA testing done for genealogical purposes may be a lighter duty DNA testing. For example, it is not able to legally determine paternity in legal cases, etc. but it still may be able to help identify someone’s parents. Also, forensic prenatal paternity DNA tests can cost \$1,000 or more, so the expense of such tests is probably prohibitive for most people.

### **How Does DNA Testing Work?**

Basically, the commercial genealogical DNA testing shows two basic test results, namely 1) where (geographically) the individual’s ancestors came from, and 2) how many other individuals in that same company’s DNA database of individuals tested may have a genetic connection with him.

How does the genealogical DNA testing actually work? It’s a pretty simple at-home process that involves you doing the following steps.

1. Go online and purchase a DNA kit to be mailed to you

2. Set up your own personal profile while online
3. After the kit arrives, provide your DNA sample
4. Mail off your sample and wait 4-10 weeks for results
5. Go back online and analyze your test results

## The Big Companies in DNA Testing

In the genealogical DNA testing world, there are a few big companies that should be discussed. Be sensitive to the fact that depending on which DNA tests you want done, your costs will vary from less than \$100 to several hundred dollars.

Once again, because I am not an evaluator of these companies and their product offering, and because I refuse to have my own DNA testing done, I am going to point you to a company that has done the analysis of the top companies in the 2018 DNA testing business. This website provides all of that detailed information for you.

<https://www.exploringlifesmysteries.com/best-dna-test/>

**#1 -- Family Tree DNA (FTDNA)** is the best DNA ancestry test if you're committed to serious genealogy research or if you want to identify living relatives. This company is the only service that offers all three types of tests separately: autosomal, Y-DNA and mtDNA testing. Their Y-DNA and mtDNA tests are much more in-depth than other companies' maternal and paternal-line analysis.

**#2 -- AncestryDNA**, part of the wildly popular genealogical company Ancestry.com, comes in an extremely close second to FTDNA as the best DNA ancestry test. This company offers fairly affordable pricing, an extremely active online community, a huge DNA ancestry database and access to millions of family trees and billions of historical records via the Ancestry website. Their autosomal test analyzes more

than 700,000 genetic markers to find your genetic matches and gives you an unparalleled breakdown of your ethnicity.

**#3 -- 23andMe** comes in third as our best ancestry DNA testing company for the unique services they provide. 23andMe is your best bet if you want to trace your lineage and get disease-risk and carrier-status DNA results. They offer two testing kit types — an autosomal Ancestry test for \$99 or a Health + Ancestry test for \$199.

If you want to learn where your ancestors lived around the world and, at the same time, gain insights into your health and risk for certain diseases, 23andMe's Ancestry + Health test is the way to go.

=====

Interestingly enough, I had always thought that **AncestryDNA** was number one because of its huge database size. So, I looked at another (different) current evaluation site and Ancestry did show up as number one and for the reason I expected – namely its database size.

*“We rate AncestryDNA very high relative to other DNA tests on the market. It has by far the largest customer database which is perfect for those doing family history research because it will match you with living relatives. Whether you're looking for ethnicity estimates or to connect with distant family, AncestryDNA is a fantastic choice.”*

I like this website, by the way, as it provides a lot of detail behind its evaluations, as well as a lot of additional DNA information.

<https://www.smarterhobby.com/genealogy/best-dna-test/>

## Problems with DNA Testing Privacy

Now, perhaps we should discuss the potential problems with DNA testing. As you may have noted, DNA testing is not like paper or computer records you research. It is very specific in some ways, and in other ways, maybe prone to mistakes. Let me explain.

One major problem for having your DNA test done is concerned with the government involvement. While companies like Ancestry.com will tell you that they will protect your privacy, I approached their legal department several years ago (so my information may be obsolete) and asked if they would guarantee that they would never release to the government my DNA test results. What followed was a HUGE period of silence. In my opinion, 'no answer' is the same as a 'no' answer. I have seen Ancestry comments since that time in which they said they have only released someone's DNA under a court order and have done so only a few times. Really? How would we know?

And, also let's not forget that the police are now using genealogical databases to find perps. People of purely African and Asian descent are less vulnerable than whites of European descent for pursuit by the police because fewer people in those groups have had their DNA sequenced and put into a public database.

*"Every genealogical/Service I have researched talks incessantly about Privacy and having control over your own data. All such language is deceptive and misleading, designed to trick people into buying their testing kits. Now that large databases have been built, your data is on display for anyone*

*who can pay or provide a subpoena.” -- Technology News Editor*

<https://www.technocracy.news/study-dna-databases-can-send-police-or-hackers-to-your-door/>

My problem is that I have worked with the government enough to know they will use force, violence, manipulation – any tactic possible – in order to satisfy their own demands. Constitutional law? What’s that? And what about all of that unconstitutional NSA snooping of all domestic and foreign communications? Is anything digital safe from government these days?

*“Two lawmakers — US Representatives Frank Pallone Jr. of New Jersey and Dave Loebsack of Iowa — are now pressing DNA testing companies for more information about their security and privacy policies, Stat News reports. The hope is to resolve any issues around security and privacy.”*

*"You're granting us the rights to share information, but fundamentally you own your data," Elissa Levin, Helix's director of policy, told Business Insider.*

*“23andMe and Ancestry said the same thing — although the companies need some rights in order to analyze your sample and send results back, they don't have total ownership. They can't, say, bar you from taking another DNA test in the future.”*

And it’s not only the government we have to worry about stealing and using our DNA information, only God and the thieves know for what purpose they want that data.

*“23andMe and Ancestry both have research partnerships with pharmaceutical companies that explore things like the genetics of aging, psychiatric disorders, or lupus.*

*“Both companies require you to consent to sharing your information if you want to participate in those programs. Unless you agree, your information will remain with just 23andMe or Ancestry (and the contractors they work with to do the test). The same goes for connecting you with potential family members.”*

<https://www.businessinsider.com/privacy-considerations-for-dna-tests-23andme-ancestry-helix-2017-12>

### **Problems with DNA Testing Accuracy**

Aside from the privacy issues (HUGE issues, in my opinion), we also have test accuracy questions and issues.

*“A lot of English people come up with a low percentage of British. My dad was only 8 percent British and most of his ancestors as far back as I can trace came back from Great Britain,” she told me. “People in America come up with much higher percentage of British, often.”*

<https://gizmodo.com/how-dna-testing-botched-my-familys-heritage-and-probab-1820932637>

*“Although generally quite reliable (particularly in comparison with other forms of evidence often used in criminal trials), DNA tests are not now and have never been infallible. Errors in DNA testing occur regularly. DNA evidence has caused false incriminations and false convictions, and will continue to do so. Although DNA tests incriminate the correct person in the*



*great majority of cases, the risk of false incrimination is high enough to deserve serious consideration in debates about expansion of DNA databases. The risk of false incrimination is borne primarily by individuals whose profiles are included in government databases (and perhaps by their relatives). Because there are racial, ethnic and class disparities in the composition of databases, the risk of false incrimination will fall disproportionately on members of the included groups.”*

<http://www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org/genewatch/GeneWatchPage.aspx?pageId=57>

*“So when a DNA test comes back saying you are 28 percent Finnish, all it’s really saying is that of the DNA analyzed (most companies don’t analyze all of your DNA), 28 percent of it was most similar to that of a completely Finnish person. In the end, these comparisons are a fun but ultimately unreliable way to think about the possibilities of whom your ancestors might have been, rather than definitive proof of your ethnic background.”*

[http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future\\_tense/2016/06/dna\\_testing\\_cannot\\_determine\\_ancestry\\_including\\_elizabeth\\_warren\\_s.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2016/06/dna_testing_cannot_determine_ancestry_including_elizabeth_warren_s.html)

*“Tufts Now: How accurate are these tests when it comes to determining ethnicity and genealogy?*

*“Sheldon Krinsky: We don’t really know, because the companies selling these services — and there are close to 40 of them — don’t share their data, and their methods are not validated by an independent group of scientists and there are not agreed-upon standards of accuracy. People have sent*

*their DNA to several of these companies and found differences in the results — though not necessarily radical differences. So you have to look at the percentages you receive back with skepticism.”*

<https://now.tufts.edu/articles/pulling-back-curtain-dna-ancestry-tests>

So, by now you get the idea – when thinking of DNA testing, it is wise to consider what you are spending your money on, what it all means, and who has control over the test results.

### **DNA Errors and Fraud**

It appears that even government forensic DNA evidence may be rife with errors.

*“Modern technologies can now detect and analyze DNA from samples comprised of only 16 cells. But due to the touch-transfer properties of DNA, determining how those cells reached the surface on which they were found is impossible. Tiny amounts of touch-transferred DNA have placed people at locations they had never visited and implicated people for crimes they did not commit.*

*“However, research conducted at the University of Indianapolis shows that the detection of DNA does not actually indicate presence or contact. In fact, it may not narrow the scope of the investigation at all.*

*“This is because humans shed DNA continuously, and shed DNA transfers freely between people and objects. DNA can be transferred through a handshake or touching an inanimate object, like a doorknob. Every time you shake someone's hand*

*you might receive some of your acquaintance's DNA, and that of other people whose DNA had come into contact with your acquaintance's hand."*

So, in a criminal prosecution, forensic DNA testing has become so good that only 16 cells are needed for confirmation of guilt? Really? The whole story about forensic DNA inaccuracies is told in this Forbes article.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/marinamedvin/2018/09/20/framed-by-your-own-cells-how-dna-evidence-imprisons-the-innocent/>

There is one more area that I've noticed when examining the genealogical DNA testing process: some people don't like the results they get, and actually have the hutzpah to ask the testing lab for different and very specific results. Really? Why would anyone want to do that?

And, as another FYI, there are no religious DNA markers at all, so if you want to find your 'Catholic' roots or your 'Jewish' roots, good luck with that. I say that because the three top DNA testing labs will provide results that often tell you that you are some percentage Jewish. Really? How can they do that? I've noticed that at least one of the labs now indicates 'Ashkenazi Jewish' which is more interesting and more accurate but, once again, someone can have Khazarian or Ashkenazi roots and still not be Jewish. But why is the 'Jewish' tag included? Is someone bugging with the testing lab forms and test results? How would we know?

Like all things relating to history and family genealogy, keep asking questions. No one knows it all and some of us humans lie.

## DNA summary

And, by the way, I don't mean to dissuade you from taking the DNA test pathway – I just want you to do it with your eyes wide open if you voluntarily decide on the choice to have your own DNA testing done.

Just remember, DNA tests are genealogically meaningful only when the results are used in conjunction with traditional documentary research.

So, after all of that info on DNA testing, cautions, and results, there may be one more area that might be considered important, namely looking into exactly what DNA is in some detail, and how DNA test results can be used in family research. It turns out that BillionGraves has recently provided a useful website page dedicated to discussing just that subject matter.

<https://blog.billiongraves.com/2018/12/04/use-dna-results-find-ancestors-graves/>

## Blood Types

There is another aspect of learning about your genealogical background that is sometimes ignored, or at least not emphasized enough, in my opinion, and that is researching your **blood type** and the blood types of your family members.

How important is blood type in doing family research? The answer to that question depends on how much you want to know about yourself and your family, and in some respects it also depends on how you view the origin of life on earth. Certainly traditional family research does not usually address the ancestor's blood type, but, let's face it, depending on where you come from geographically, you will have certain body styles, certain facial features, certain mental styles, etc.

Are those characteristics caused by, or identified by knowing ones blood type? Perhaps.

Some of us believe that all life on Earth was created by a personal God, and so we are all simply human beings, or cats, or dogs, etc. in His eyes. Maybe all of that is true enough.

Others among us believe that the Earth is a giant experimental petri dish, with life planted here by celestial aliens as part of their grand experiments. Or, did those same celestial aliens plant us here to farm us for our productivity?

And still others among us are Deists who do not have a personal god, and have no specific idea of what it is all about or where we came from. It's just a big mystery.

One thing about human history that seems apparent is that there have been different ages of humanoids, and that our history has been fogged over or eradicated enough so that we don't have a clear picture of human history on Earth.

### **Domestic Animal Blood Types**

We are humans, but it seems that every animal life form on Earth has one or more different blood type in their species. Crazy, huh?

For example, domestic cats have what is called the AB blood type system. The most common blood types in cats are type A and type B. Cats with blood type A have naturally occurring anti-B antibodies, and cats with blood type B have naturally occurring anti-A antibodies. There is also a third and less common blood type in domestic cats known as type "AB." Cats with the less common "AB" blood type are thought of as the universal recipients.

Domestic dogs, on the other hand, have more than 12 blood types, and their red blood cells may contain any combination of these since each blood group is inherited independently.

Knowing blood types in domestic animals like dogs and cats, is often important because of the need for a blood transfusion caused by an emergency, such as severe bleeding, the sudden destruction of red blood cells due to some disease, or maybe to treat anemia. This is true for humans also.

## Human Blood Types

Now we get into our own human species and its blood types. Not wanting to get too technical on this subject, in humans there are eight generic blood types, including type A, type B, type AB, and type O and, and each of these four basic blood types has its own Rh positive or Rh negative variation.

The Rh designation (sometimes called 'Rh factor,' 'rhesus factor,' 'factor' or 'protein') is named for the rhesus monkey, which also carries the same gene, and is a protein that lives on the surface of some people's red blood cells. A person with O Rh positive (or simply O+) blood type has this **rhesus** monkey gene, and a person with O Rh negative (O-) blood type does not.

In the United States, approximately 85% of the population has an Rh positive blood type, and about 15% have Rh negative. And just as we inherit our generic blood type (A, B, AB, and O) from our parents, we also inherit the Rh factor from them as well.

But now, and thinking philosophically, comes the tricky part. Those with Rh positive blood types are shown to be related to other animal life forms on Earth. Those with Rh negative blood types appear to NOT be related to any other animal life forms on Earth. So we are all one human race, eh? Really? Where did the Rh negatives come from?

Similar to other animal blood types, humans try to maintain consistency with regard to blood types when it comes to blood transfusions as this next chart (Red Blood Cell

Compatibility Chart) shows us. In the chart, you will note that the blood type O- is the universal blood donor type, that is, any human can accept O- blood type in a transfusion. But it doesn't work the other way around. Anyone who has Rh positive blood type can receive blood from someone who is Rh negative, but those with Rh negative blood types cannot receive blood from those with an Rh positive blood type.

Red Blood Cell Compatibility Chart								
Recipient	Donor							
	O-	O+	A-	A+	B-	B+	AB-	AB+
O-	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
O+	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
A-	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
A+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
B-	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
B+	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
AB-	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
AB+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Reviewing this chart, and thinking about blood transfusions for ourselves and for our family, this should be telling us that knowing our own blood type is important. But, unless you have donated blood at the Red Cross, or have had other medical reasons for specifically knowing your own blood type, chances are that you probably don't know it.

How important is knowing your own blood type in 2018? Well, if you are in an accident, and you get taken to a fairly good sized hospital, the ER nurse will determine your blood type before he/she gives you blood, or, alternatively, he/she will often give you type O- blood.

I asked a family physician once what his blood type was (he looked like an Rh negative) and he said he had no idea. I asked him 'Really?' His response was that hospitals now check blood types of patients as a matter of course. I suspect that he just didn't want to tell me his blood type. Why? There seems to be some covert conspiracy that

intends to keep us from knowing our own blood types. Why? I have no idea why.

So, how does one learn their blood type? There appear to be four primary methods of learning your blood type. You can join the military, you can donate blood, you can ask your doctor to run a blood type test for you, or you can buy a home blood test kit.

If you don't want to join the military, visit your doctor, or donate blood, you can find a home blood type test kit online or at a pharmacy for the cost of about \$10 USD.

In the twentieth century, blood tests were used for paternity testing, but in 2018 blood type is probably no longer used. DNA testing is now used to resolve paternity questions. The child's DNA is tested and determined and the alleged father's DNA is determined, and if there is one or more DNA markers that line up, the man is shown to be the father. The same can be said for evidence of the mother's connection.

Notice that most commercial DNA testing typically focuses on DNA markers, not on blood type, so when, and if, you choose to have ancestral DNA testing done for yourself or other members of your family, you may or may not receive estimations of your blood type. The commercial DNA testing services do not appear to specifically post your blood type as one of their test results. I also suspect that forensic DNA testing labs no longer include blood type in their DNA test results.

## Rh Negative Blood Types

So, why all of the discussion about blood types if no one uses blood types for identifying people anymore? The answer is because the **Rh negatives** are an integral part of human history and because they have certain identifiable



traits and characteristics that are, or may be, important parts of our own history.

As a family researcher and historian, you are part of the history profession, whether you think so or not. In your own research of history, everything you discover counts. If knowing your own blood type helps you find and identify your ancestors, then good for you.

So what you ask. Aside from not being DNA connected to any other earthly life form, what makes Rh negatives special? Only deeper research can provide that answer.

## Google and Internet Privacy and Security

Maybe it is a good thing to save this more controversial subject for later in the book. For most of us, we go online and search for all kinds of information, and behind most of this online searching is our dear friend and ally, Google. I'm being a bit facetious when I call Google our friend and ally, because, from observation, it has grown into another big business with all that 'big' change implies.

I was quite enamored with Google search capabilities when Google first became available on the Internet. I was so amazed when doing a search and I found myself inside a library in Australia, looking at the contents of a book written by a professor at ANU (Australia National University). It was incredible. I never would have envisioned that capability coming to the Internet world. To me, it was simply amazing, pure and simple. But that was decades ago.

Getting into the history of Google a bit, we have this from Google's own website:

*"The Google story begins in 1995 at Stanford University. Larry Page was considering Stanford for grad school and Sergey Brin, a student there, was assigned to show him around.*

*“By some accounts, they disagreed about nearly everything during that first meeting, but by the following year they struck a partnership. Working from their dorm rooms, they built a search engine that used links to determine the importance of individual pages on the World Wide Web. They called this search engine Backrub.*

*“Soon after, Backrub was renamed Google (phew). The name was a play on the mathematical expression for the number 1 followed by 100 zeros and aptly reflected Larry and Sergey's mission “to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.”*

<https://www.google.com/about/our-story/>

Today, in 2018, almost a quarter century later, Google has more than 60,000 employees, is located in 50 different countries, the company makes hundreds of products, and is used by billions of people across the globe, from YouTube and Android, to Smartbox.

### **FaceBook, Twitter, and Google Privacy and Security**

So good for Google, eh? Maybe, but what about the users of Google products - how have they benefited? Maybe we should be sensitive to the fact that many people today, including Paul Craig Roberts, now distrust Google as well as many other large online service companies. Really?

*“Facebook, Twitter, Google are information monopolies that intentionally violate the US Constitution's protected First Amendment right. These organizations are evil and they are destroying the public's right to know. These organizations should be nationalized without compensation and put under*

*the governance of known and committed defenders of the First Amendment. Facebook, Twitter, and Google are inconsistent with a free society. They are functionaries in Big Brother's police state.*

*"If an investigative journalist looked into these organizations, I believe many links to the CIA and deep state would be found."*

<https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/09/01/facebook-is-an-intolerant-authoritarian-organization-that-suppresses-free-speech/>

But, if you notice, Roberts criticizes several big online service offerors, not just Google, and perhaps focuses on FaceBook, the world's allegedly largest social media platform.

So, what is the real story here? Have Google and the other large Internet information providers really gone over to the dark side?

### **The Good Side of Google**

Before we get very far into the discussion of what is wrong with Google, let's first look at how Google can help us in our family research efforts.

The **Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Michigan** offered an excellent one day seminar in September, 2015 authored by **Katherine Willson** entitled ***"Little-Known & Rarely-Used Google Resources & Search Tips."***

From my perspective, this PDF document is a keeper, and I encourage you, regardless of your expertise in using Google, to read and review the material that Katherine presents.

[https://washtenawgenealogy.org/upload/Program\\_Handouts/google-handout\\_1443382539.pdf](https://washtenawgenealogy.org/upload/Program_Handouts/google-handout_1443382539.pdf)

Of course, one of the subtleties that was missed in the Willson Google course, given in Augusta, Michigan, was notice that in Michigan, there are two towns named Augusta, namely the **Village of Augusta**, located in Kalamazoo County in SW Michigan, and the **Augusta Township** located in Washtenaw County in SE Michigan. If you are using Google and are searching for Childs Cemetery in Augusta, Michigan, for example, you will find that it is in the Township of Augusta, not in the Village of Augusta. The Village People (my feeble attempt at humor) have no idea who James Webster Childs was, where the Childs Cemetery is located, nor why the cemetery was named after J.W. Childs - Childs Cemetery is in the 'other Augusta.'

Continuing onward in the Google discussion, when doing research I try to stay as far away from dealing directly with Google as possible. I often, maybe usually, use **StartPage** as my preferred search engine. Why? Largely because of my own privacy concerns and StartPage's discreet, non-tracked use of Google search results. Startpage and Ixquick do not track you, they don't save your history, nor do they log your personal information. As such they do not have the 'filter bubble' problem that plagues direct Google users. Eli Pariser, co-founder of Avaaz.org, coined the phrase 'filter bubble' to describe how users receive information online that reinforces their viewpoint and don't receive information that challenges it. What researcher wants that?

*"StartPage uses results from Google, which is a good thing if you prefer Google's result without the tracking. Ixquick, which is an independent search engine that uses its own results,*

*developed StartPage to include results from Google. Its features include a proxy service, URL generator, and HTTPS support. The URL generator is a unique feature that eliminates the need for cookies. It remembers your settings in a privacy friendly way.”*

## **Other Search Engines**

But there are also other, perhaps more preferred search engines, that are far more concerned with user privacy than is Google.

*“This private search engine [Search Encrypt] uses local encryption to secure your searches. It combines AES-256 encryption with Secure Sockets Layer encryption. Search Encrypt then retrieves your search results from its network of search partners. After you’re done searching, your search terms expire so they are private even if someone else has access to your computer.*

*“Search Encrypt recently added more new features, including privacy-friendly videos, news and maps search. It’s videos search lets you watch videos directly on the search engine with additional privacy protection, and without pre-roll ads. This search engine’s encryption and perfect forward secrecy actually give it better privacy by default than DuckDuckGo.”*

<https://hackernoon.com/untraceable-search-engines-alternatives-to-google-811b09d5a873>

I’ve worked a bit in the encryption field, and 256-bit AES encryption is pretty robust. It’s not quite as secure as Blowfish or some of the other modern encryption algorithms, but it will keep out most criminal entities. Will it keep out government? Probably not. Government, with its limitless

spending programs for ‘national security’ purposes, has the latest and the fastest computer driven solutions available.

And, as noted earlier, the use of Google directly is down to about 70% in 2018. Message - we learn more, and we benefit more, when there is marketplace competition. So, we have lots of alternatives in the software search engine world, and that’s a good thing. Be happy.

### Computer System Privacy

By the way, if you are concerned with privacy and you want to learn how vulnerable you and your computer system are right now, there are a couple of websites that can help you determine what can be easily found out about you.

Go first to **MyBrowserInfo.com** which appears to be the fastest and easiest way to determine your own IP Address as well as some fairly detailed information about your own Web browser. When you go to this site, click on the “See Detailed Location and Browser Information” and be ready to see it all.

After accessing MyBrowserInfo, and after you have obtained your own current IP Address, go to **BrowserLeaks.com** for a different look at your system information. Links to both sites are below.

<http://mybrowserinfo.com/>

<https://browserleaks.com/ip>

Not knowing who you are, nor what system you are using for research, I’m suspecting that you normally use one of the more popular Internet browsers, one like FireFox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, etc. so the information that will pop up on these two browser info sites should be quite revealing.

If, however, you are using the **TOR Browser**, you will find that much of that revealed information is really not accurate in its description about you, especially the IP address. TOR masks your origin point, so you will appear to be originating from The Netherlands, or maybe some other country than your own.

We need a couple of definitions here. When I use the term **IP Address**, I am referring to an Internet Protocol Address, which is a numerical label assigned to your computer by your Internet service provider. An IP address serves two principal functions: it is a host or network interface identification and a location addressing code. If someone is looking for you and they can determine your IP Address, they can find you.

### **The Onion Router (TOR) Browser**

I used the term TOR Browser earlier. TOR is an acronym for '**The Onion Router**,' and it is one of life's great gifts.

*"TOR helps to reduce the risks of both simple and sophisticated traffic analysis by distributing your transactions over several places on the Internet, so no single point can link you to your destination. The idea is similar to using a twisty, hard-to-follow route in order to throw off somebody who is tailing you — and then periodically erasing your footprints. Instead of taking a direct route from source to destination, data packets on the Tor network take a random pathway through several relays that cover your tracks so no observer at any single point can tell where the data came from or where it's going."*

*"Ongoing trends in law, policy, and technology threaten anonymity as never before, undermining our ability to speak*

*and read freely online. These trends also undermine national security and critical infrastructure by making communication among individuals, organizations, corporations, and governments more vulnerable to analysis. Each new user and relay provides additional diversity, enhancing Tor's ability to put control over your security and privacy back into your hands."*

<https://www.torproject.org/about/overview.html.en>

So, there you have it. One final basic rule of thumb concerned with Internet safety is, don't expose anything valuable or confidential to outsider attacks via the Internet. It's a jungle out there.

I hope I've discussed enough here so that you can figure out for yourself the best method of accessing data and then protecting that same data.

## Photographs and Videos

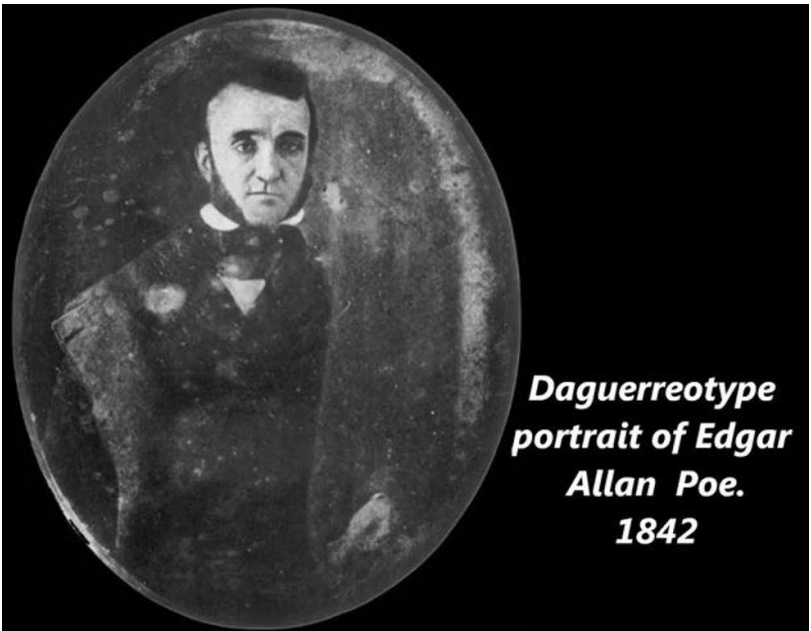
Most of what we have been discussing so far has been associated with documents and/or text issues, with a couple of references to photographs in the cemetery photography section. So, now maybe we should address the subject of photographs, videos, and imaging a bit deeper. Photographs can, and often do, represent some important parts of our earlier family life.

### Early Photographs

The year 1839 is the date generally accepted as the birth year of practical photography, and that was with the use of the **Daguerreotype** process, the first publicly announced and commercially available photographic process. So, don't look for many photos before that time period.



To make an image, a daguerreotypist would polish a sheet or plate of silver-plated copper to a mirror finish, treat it with fumes that would make its surface light sensitive, expose the plate in a camera for as long as was judged to be necessary, which could be as little as a few seconds for brightly sunlit subjects, to a much longer time period when there was less intense lighting available. To create the resulting latent image on the plate visible to the eye required fuming the plate with mercury vapor, removing its sensitivity to light by liquid chemical treatment, rinsing and drying it, and then sealing the easily marred result behind a plate of glass as a protective measure.



Quite a process, eh? The resulting image was created on a mirror-like silver surface, normally kept under glass, and would appear either positive or negative, depending on the

angle at which the Daguerreotype was viewed, how the image was lit and whether a light or dark background was being reflected in the metal. The darkest areas of the image were simply bare silver, and lighter areas would have a microscopically fine light-scattering texture. The Daguerreotype surface was very delicate, and even the lightest wiping could permanently scuff it. Some tarnish around the edges is normal.

Perhaps because of its operating challenges and its frailty, and in spite of its genius creation, the Daguerreotype didn't last a very long time before it was replaced with other faster and better photographic processes. The metal-based Daguerreotype process soon had some competition from the paper-based calotype negative and salt print processes invented by William Henry Fox Talbot. All of the original photographs in those days were in black and white. It wasn't until the 1950s, that amateurs were able to buy color cameras and take color photographs.

In fact, I can remember working with a group of young bucks in the early 1960s using a former military camera (still black and white film images) to try and photograph the first few satellites that flew in the skies above Earth (Phototrack Program). Even then, when compared to the technology that is available today, the technology we used at the time was quite primitive - and that was 120 years after the Daguerreotype cameras were used.

### **But What About Movies and Videos?**

*“The origin of movies and motion pictures began in the late 1800’s, with the invention of “motion toys” designed to trick the eye into seeing an illusion of motion from a display of still frames in quick succession, such as the thaumatrope and the zoetrope. In 1872, Edward Muybridge created the first true*

*“motion picture” by placing twelve cameras on a racetrack and rigging the cameras to capture shots in quick sequence as a horse crossed in front of their lenses.”*

*“Around 1905, “Nickelodeons”, or 5-cent movie theaters, began to offer an easy and inexpensive way for the public to watch movies. Nickelodeons helped the movie industry move into the 1920’s by increasing the public appeal of film and generate more money for filmmakers, alongside the widespread use of theaters to screen World War I propaganda. After World War I ended and ushered the United States into a cultural boom, a new industry center was on the rise: Hollywood, the home of motion pictures in America.”*

*“According to industry myth, the first movie made in Hollywood was Cecil B. DeMille’s The Squaw Man in 1914 when its director decided last-minute to shoot in Los Angeles, but In Old California, an earlier film by DW Griffith, had been filmed entirely in the village of Hollywood in 1910. By 1919, “Hollywood” had transformed into the face of American cinema and all the glamour it would come to embody.”*

<http://historycooperative.org/the-history-of-the-hollywood-movie-industry/>

### **What About Home Movies?**

*“In 1965, Eastman Kodak released the Super 8mm film format into the market. It was a huge technological leap up from previous machines and allowed for shortened versions of movies to be played at home. However, its high price tag kept home movies a small niche market of film enthusiast. The*

*Super 8 enjoyed most of its financial success by allowing people to record their own home movies.*

*“When Sony released Betamax to the Japanese market on May 10, 1975, the world of home viewing entertainment would begin its transformation. This new analog videocassette magnetic tape recording devices eventually created an affordable way for people to watch movies at home, whenever they wanted. Originally, film studios and video distributors thought the public would only want to rent movies, but as these machines became affordable, more and more people wanted to build their own movie libraries. The society we lived in was about to change forever.”*

<https://reelrundown.com/film-industry/The-History-Of-Home-Movie-Entertainment>

Today, of course, anyone who has a cell phone also has a camera that can take color photos and/or video clips, and now car and truck dashcams and human body cams are being increasingly used by government agencies and by some individuals. So we have entered a photographic era in human evolution.

I suspect we are all fairly well versed in modern cameras and photograph techniques, and in that respect, we are creating history that will be researched by future genealogists. But, for those in the future, it will be more a case of information overload, than it will be looking for that rare photo of Aunt Tilly. So, our job as family researchers, is to do what we do very well, and to find what older photos and videos we can find, and preserve them, perhaps even convert and restore them, and then scan them, digitize them, and save them for future generations.

There is a huge difference between taking a photograph and displaying it, and taking an old and damaged photograph and restoring it until is once again enjoyable to review. How do you take that old photo and remove scratches or fill in the torn section? How do you take a photo whose image has become faded and give it renewed life?

Enter the world of the image restorers – the people who can fix and repair damaged photos and even videos. I should note now that it is not only photos that get damaged by time and exposure to sunlight and/or air contaminants. Videos, before the digital age, were invariably made on movie film, and movie films age and bleed their images, and their images simply fade with time. This, by the way, is the same problem NASA experienced with images taken during the early space flights. Age destroys all imaging on film and/or magnetic media.

Most of the restoration process of old photos today is done digitally via software programs like PhotoShop. **ShutterFly** thinks anyone can repair old photos and even shows us how to do the job.

*“It doesn’t take a professional photographer to know how to restore old photos. With Photoshop, anyone can do it with a few basic tricks to even the most discolored or cracked images to give them new life.”*

<https://www.shutterfly.com/ideas/how-to-restore-old-photos/>

Not being right brained at a serious level, I have always asked others to help restore my older photos, and they have done an excellent job in restoring them. I suspect that if you find someone locally who is adept at restoring

photos, they will also be technically savvy these days. But, if you have an instinct for good art, and if you are willing to give it a try, what can you lose? This could end up being a good job for you.

Restoring videos may be another story. I know that Hollywood is very capable in repairing many old movie videos, but how about everyone else? Regarding Hollywood movies:

*“Unfortunately, many films have been left by the wayside over the passage of time. According to the U.S. Library of Congress, less than 20 percent of American feature films from the silent era remain intact. Meanwhile, half of the movies produced in the U.S. before 1950 have already been lost.*

*“The good news is that researchers and film buffs are working to restore and preserve the movies that we still have.”*

<https://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/film-restoration.htm>

Home movies are different though. For one thing, they were recorded at different speeds. Regular 8mm film is typically 16 fps, super 8mm films is typically 18 fps, and VHS or Beta video is typically 30 fps. In the old days, one would try and take an 8 mm home video and convert it to Beta or VHS tapes. Today the restoration/conversion would probably be from 8 mm, VHS, or Beta formats to DVD or Blu-ray Disc. Blu-ray or Blu-ray Disc (BD) is the digital optical disc data storage format designed to supersede the DVD format. The Blu-ray format is capable of storing several hours of video in high-definition (HDTV 720p and 1080p) and ultra high-definition resolution (2160p).

This site (date unknown) discusses the problems of saving older 8 mm home videos.

*“In general, quality costs money. Real time transfer will be the least expensive, frame-by-frame capture more expensive, and film scanning will be more expensive yet. There is a large variation in pricing, and the cost per foot drops if you have a large order. However, to give you some estimate, real time capture can be \$4-\$8 for a 50 foot reel of 8mm film; older scanning equipment can run \$15-\$25 for a 50 foot reel. I've seen quotes as high as \$40 per 50 foot reel; as I didn't opt for that service, I don't know if it delivers superior results or is simply more expensive.”*

[https://www.thebattles.net/video/8mm\\_restoration.html](https://www.thebattles.net/video/8mm_restoration.html)

And that may lead us into a further discussion about transferring films from different video formats. For example, there are probably still some VHS/DVD players available that allow one to transfer contents of a VHS tape (record) on to a blank DVD. That's a capability I've used myself. But what happens when you have lived in England, created a PAL formatted VHS tape library, and now want to view those same videos in the US (NTSC format)? For me, I had a local photo shop do the transfers from PAL format VHS tapes to NTSC DVD. They did an excellent job, and I watched while they did part of the transfer, and they used equipment I had never seen before.

So, my suggestion is that if you don't have the talent and/or the equipment that you subcontract the video conversion or restoration work out to someone who knows how to do it and is in the business of doing such video work.

Here's an online site that does 8 mm conversion and enhancement work.

*"There are two aspect to 8mm or Super 8 film restoration. The first is scanning resolution. The second is correcting for the film degradation that has happened over the years. Film restoration is not intended to fix original recording problems like film that was shot too dark, too light, or out of focus. So, the customer needs to keep this in mind as they set their expectations for any film restoration project."*

<http://www.videoconversionexperts.com/film-restoration.html>

## **Paper Maps, and GPS Locators**

I like and use paper maps whenever possible. Old maps are sometimes quite valuable for helping with early research. For example:

*"Many believe that Plymouth [Massachusetts] was named after the Pilgrims' port of departure in Plymouth, England, but [Captain John] Smith was actually the first to call the site "New Plimouth" on his map four years earlier. In fact, in A Description of New England, Smith astutely noted that Plymouth was "an excellent good harbor, good land; and now want of any thing, but industrious people."*

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/john-smith-coined-the-term-new-england-on-this-1616-map-180953383/>

The Smithsonian article includes a replication of John Smith's map of 'New England,' dated 1614. From this earlier map we can clearly see Cape Ann, which is about 30 miles northeast of Boston and marks the northern limit of



Massachusetts Bay. Modern Cape Ann includes the city of Gloucester and the towns of Essex, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Rockport.

*“He and his foolhardy band of sailors, nonetheless, covered 350 miles, from the Bay of Fundy down to Cape Cod, in an open boat probably no more than 30 feet long. And, with a humble set of surveying tools — a crude compass, astrolabe, sextant, a lead line to measure depth, a quill pen and paper — they gathered notes for their very own map of what Smith named “New England.” The official map was published alongside Smith’s book, A Description of New England, in 1616.”*

## Satellites

Shifting focus a little bit, modern maps are much more accurate than ancient maps, and are now mostly generated by way of satellite imaging satellites. But we have not always had satellites.

The first manmade **satellite** that was orbited around our spherical planet was the Russian satellite **Sputnik**, aka Satellite 1, or PS-1. The Soviet Union launched Sputnik into an elliptical low Earth orbit on October 4, 1957. Sputnik, weighing in at 184 pounds and travelling at 18,000 mph, orbited the earth for 21 days before its batteries died, and then it went silent for two more months before falling back into the Earth’s atmosphere on January 4, 1958. All total, Sputnik completed 1,440 orbits around the Earth.

For those of us in the United States, Sputnik was a huge wake-up call – something we should thank the Russians for. We had been taught we were the best, and with one small, 21 inch round beeping satellite, we learned we weren’t that special after all. But Sputnik was the kick start that we all needed. Thanks, Russia, for opening new doors for us all.

*“The **Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)** keeps a record of the operational satellites and their latest update records details to the end of April 2018. Using this database together with the UNOOSA Index shows that there are currently 1,980 active satellites in orbit. Whilst this is 13.92% increase over the number of active satellites last year, it still represents only 40% of the satellites orbiting the planet.*

*“This means that there are 2, 877 pieces of useless metal hurtling around the Earth at high speed! Interestingly this is actually 20 less than when we did the 2017 update, meaning a number of inactive satellites either deorbited and came back to Earth or burnt up in the atmosphere. This is not as rare as you might think, as on average, about one satellite a week returns to Earth in one form or another.”*

<https://www.pixalytics.com/sats-orbiting-the-earth-2018/>

This is an interesting site if you want to know more about all the satellites in Earth orbit in 2018. But we should really talk more about satellite mapping applications and GPS.

### **NAVSTAR and GPS**

*“**Navstar** is a network of U.S. satellites that provide global positioning system (GPS) services. They are used for navigation by both the military and civilians.*

*“These 24 main GPS satellites orbit Earth every 12 hours, sending a synchronized signal from each individual satellite. Because the satellites are moving in different directions, a user on the ground receives the signals at slightly different times. When at least four satellites get in touch with the*

*receiver, the receiver can calculate where the user is – often to a precision of just a few feet, for civilian use.”*

<https://www.space.com/19794-navstar.html>

*GPS is defined as “A system of radio-emitting and -receiving satellites used for determining positions on the earth. The orbiting satellites transmit signals that allow a GPS receiver anywhere on earth to calculate its own location through trilateration. Developed and operated by the U.S. Department of Defense, the system is used in navigation, mapping, surveying, and other applications in which precise positioning is necessary.”*

### **Focusing on GPS**

So, that’s basically how the Navstar satellites help us know more accurately about where we are located, and those of us with smart phones can even use this GPS positioning system to tell us where to go. I don’t want to get into all of the GPS applications because that would be just too much. But this use of the GPS location system is exactly what BillionGraves counts on to specifically and accurately identify an individual grave location.

This Penn State University Library website does a great job of providing information on GPS technology, equipment, and its uses.

<http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/GPS>

From this site, we learn there are three types of GPS units and systems available:

**“Navigation/Recreational grade:** *These are GPS units used in vehicles and for recreational purposes, which can range in*

accuracy from 5 to 15 meters. Typically, these range in cost from \$200-\$500.

**Mapping grade:** These include a range of positional accuracy; however, with WAAS enabled this can improve to under 3 meters. Accuracy improves with the use of differential correction and the use of higher quality antennas. These can range from \$500 to thousands of dollars. Additional features may be present to identify different map features from the GPS unit, use a stylus for GPS unit navigation, and additional accessories to increase functionality. With the use of differential GPS, accuracy can increase to be less a meter.

**Survey grade:** These include GPS receivers which can receive accuracy levels in the 1 meter range or better in terms of less than a foot, centimeter, and millimeter. Based on the USGS Global Positioning Application and Practice site, for a GPS receiver to be considered survey grade, the receiver must record the full range of signal strengths and frequencies (dual-frequencies), and simultaneously track eight satellites.”

If you want to use the BillionGraves app for photographing and uploading gravestone images to BillionGraves, then you need to make certain that your device has the proper capabilities (such as a GPS chip). Here is a link to the BillionGraves that lists the devices (hardware) that work well with their apps.

<https://billiongraves.com/recommended-devices>

Please be sensitive to the fact that this linked list is not a comprehensive list of all devices that work with BillionGraves, but is simply a list of the most popular devices.

Most imaging devices with a rear facing camera, GPS hardware, and Wifi will work well with BillionGraves.

Now, if you are enamored with the idea of GPS locating abilities, and don't want to consider using them to photograph grave sites for BillionGraves, there are some non-photographic units available that you might consider buying and using.

*"There are several choices of GPS "receiver" units, all of which differ in features and capability. Overall, GPS units are separated into three categories: recreation-grade, mapping-grade, and survey-grade. This guide focuses on recreational and basic mapping grade units only (with horizontal accuracies of approximately 1-30m)."*

[http://gif.berkeley.edu/documents/Handheld\\_GPS\\_Buyers\\_Guide.pdf](http://gif.berkeley.edu/documents/Handheld_GPS_Buyers_Guide.pdf)

I should also offer my thoughts on GPS locators and onboard computer systems like GM's OnStar and Ford's Sync digital service installed in cars and trucks. Because of the general capability of these units to receive remote instructions and control a car/truck according to those instructions, the government, specifically the CIA, has picked up on this designed-in capability and uses this remote control capability to basically kill people. Here's an article that discusses some of that.

*"I am told this game started with the CIA back in Boston, not with planes, but cars. Car wrecks were mechanically staged using the "Boston Brakes" method, not always fatal but always a good way of communicating to someone your displeasure. Sending a college age daughter into a light pole,*

*reporting her speedometer was stuck at 200 mph and fudging her blood test to show she was “double drunk” has been done countless times.”*

<https://www.veteranstoday.com/2013/07/13/boston-brakes-no-skidmarks-in-the-sky/>

*“OnStar was the pioneering remote-safety and -security service when General Motors hatched it more than 20 years ago, but over the years the person-to-person OnStar brand got tangled up in the broader emerging universe of digital connectivity.”*

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dalebuss/2018/03/30/onstar-goes-back-to-safety-in-rebranding-leaving-gm-vehicle-brands-to-pick-up-digital-services/#886ed286cd63>

So, if you are concerned about the government and its spying and controls over you, you are probably already aware of this problem, but maybe not. And, while the use of GPS as a locator is sometimes very helpful, I hope you are aware that it sometimes should be viewed as a double edged sword.

## **Genealogical Numbering Systems**

There are several genealogical numbering systems that have been used through the centuries for presenting family trees and pedigree charts in text format. Number systems either sequence up the tree (starting with you), or they sequence down the tree (starting with an ancestor down to you). If you are just starting out in family research, and don't have an ancestor's tree to work from, you might consider the ascending sequence numbering systems.

Among the currently more popular ascending genealogical numbering systems is the **Ahnentafel** (Sosa-

Stradonitz Method). But there are others. See this link for a description of many other genealogical numbering schemas.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogical\\_numbering\\_systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogical_numbering_systems)

The Ahnentafel method of numbering the people in your family history is to start by assigning yourself the number 1. If you (first generation) are assigned number 1, then your father (second generation) is number 2, your mother is number 3, your paternal grandfather (third generation) is number 4, your paternal grandmother is number 5, your maternal grandfather is number 6, etc. Thus, in the Ahnentafel system, an individual's father's number is always twice the individual's number and his or her mother's number is twice the individual's number plus one.

For example:

(First Generation)

1 Subject

(Second Generation - parents)

2 Father

3 Mother

(Third Generation - grandparents)

4 Father's father

5 Father's mother

6 Mother's father

7 Mother's mother

(Fourth Generation – great grandparents)

8 Father's father's father

- 9 Father's father's mother
- 10 Father's mother's father
- 11 Father's mother's mother
- 12 Mother's father's father
- 13 Mother's father's mother
- 14 Mother's mother's father
- 15 Mother's mother's mother

Interestingly enough, some people (like me) start their family tree from their children's level so that the children would be able to see both of their parent's ancestors from the developed family tree. Thus, from a child's perspective, they become generation number 1, and their parents (you and your spouse) become generation number 2. As may be evident, under these circumstances, all of the children from each mother and father grouping have the same ancestral tree. Adopted children's trees need special attention and focus, largely because birth parent identities are often shielded by government from the public and from the children.

If a man is married more than once, and has children by more than one wife, then he basically develops a tree for every separate husband/wife family unit. The same rule would hold true for a woman who was married to more than one man and who has had children by each husband.

In the appendices, I'll include three reduced size basic data forms, one for the individual, one for the spouse(s), and one for the child(ren). If an individual has more than two spouses, or more than three children per wife, then repeatedly using the same forms will work out well. Just remember to keep track of the individual number so that you don't get people mixed up.



I include reduced size images of these data forms so that if you are interested in starting your tree and don't yet have a computer and genealogical software to use, you can create your tree on paper. Once on paper, it is pretty easy to transfer the information to the genealogical software program.

I'll also try to get original 8 ½ x 11 inch PDF forms suitable for download on **Highlander.com**, my website.

Keeping track of everyone in your tree is difficult at best, impossible at worst. This may be the best argument yet for having all of this individual data calculated and stored by a good genealogical software package. When that happens, you tend to care much less about keeping track of people (or their numbers) in your tree. You simply grow to trust the software. Remember, however, that even with an automated tracking software package like Family Tree Maker, if you enter bad data, your tree will suffer. And source information and such things are not always straightforward when doing research.

For example, in my tree, I have two brothers with similar first names who married two sisters with similar names, and even worse, all four of them were born within about one year of each other. In Newfoundland. In the 1800s. Records? What records? After wrestling with these four people's identities for some period of time, I am not convinced I have them sorted out properly. It is one of my ongoing back burner mental challenges.

And remember to back up your data. I don't care whether you choose to back up via an upload of your tree to Ancestry.com, burn a CD backup, print copies, or whatever. Just make certain you back up your data. Its importance will be obvious to you when things go sideways – and they will.

## Chapter 7 – Wrapping It All Up

After all that, maybe the question of whether or not to do family research has become an interesting one for you, or maybe not. I hope that this document has, or will, help you answer that question. The field of research is not one embraced by everyone, and it may or may not appeal to you. I hope it does.

To the researcher there is nothing that beats that feeling inside yourself that comes when you have finally figured out the answer to your own question(s) about something, and that you are now able to reveal the solution to some mystery from the past that was previously hidden or unknown.

### About Communicating with Others

But, being a successful researcher raises the question about you and your relations with others. We are all individuals and we are all different. What is interesting and important to me may not be interesting and important to you. I can never do your job as you would have it done. So, when you ask me a question, don't rely on me to provide you with the answer that best for you. At best, I can add to your knowledge base, but at worst, I may, either intentionally or by my own ignorance, give you bad information. So, in my opinion, all answers to your questions and your inquiries, will always come from you, not from me.

And that raises another sub-topic subject. When we communicate with each other, and when questions arise, are

we using the same definitions of terms, and are we truly communicating well enough with each other so that we understand clearly what the other person is saying?

If I could have us all study and learn one subject area, it would probably be the subject of law. Why? Because lawyers, for however good or evil you view them, are users of a well defined language set. In their world, they are forced to define terms that the other individual may not understand. In fact, in motions submitted to the court, if there are possible misunderstandings of terms used in the document, the lawyer's paper will include a set of definitions right at the beginning of the document. That assures that all parties, including the court, understand exactly what the submitting party is saying. If you think back on the earlier sections of this book, I was pretty careful to define what I was talking about, either by inserting my own definitions or by referring to what others have said.

I try very hard to be clearly understood by others, and so should you. If you are really new to family research, be aware that you will be communicating with many other people, many of whom, maybe most of whom, will not know you personally, and will not clearly understand why you are saying the words that they read or hear.

The responsibility for being clearly understood is going to be yours, not the other party. In the beginning, this communications challenge may be easy for you, or not – it's all part of the growth aspect of family research. The better you are as a communicator, the more you will be successful in gaining information from others.

And be nice. Always be nice. No one likes a jerk, and no one owes you anything.

## Keep Asking Questions

As a neophyte, your best method of gaining access to information from others may depend on you being nice, being polite, and will probably also depend on the specific questions you ask.

For example, while researching some data found on the Internet, I came across some interesting material in the Archives of Boston. In fact it was very interesting. So, I asked the archives lady what was involved in getting copies of some of their archived material. The answer, of course, was that I could come into their office and they would make the material available for me to review and copy. After explaining that I lived about 2,000 miles away and that 'popping in' was probably not going to happen, the very nice lady responded that she would have an intern copy the whole document and send it along to me. In her mind, the Boston Archives was helping another citizen, and in my mind, I was getting what I wanted. That's win-win as far as I am concerned. And yes, the lady sent me a PDF copy of the document by e-mail as I had requested.

Of course, knowing the right questions to ask can often also be a challenge, so my next suggestion is to be open and honest in your dealings with others. In this age of fraud and disinformation, honesty may actually be the best policy after all. Even if you feel dumber than a post when asking a question, your sincerity will be appreciated by the other person. Good to know, eh?

Here is a suggestion that may help you get information from people who are distant from you and who you communicate with by way of the phone or by way of e-mail. Research the organization or the individual you are about to contact. Learn about him, her, or them. If you are contacting a cemetery admin, try to figure out ahead of time

how the cemetery burial addressing schema is defined. Is it a big cemetery? Is it an old cemetery? Are their records still intact?

If it's funeral home you are contacting, think about whether the admin will have to go into their own archives to get your information, or not. This is usually the case for old funerals and burials.

Tell both of these entities what you know so far, and tell them what information you are specifically looking for. Be patient, even if they are snippy. They are doing you the favor. Whatever information they give you, thank them for their efforts on your behalf.

I should note, by the way, that even getting information from relatives can sometimes be dodgy or troublesome, especially when it comes to revealing 'secret' information. For example, most people don't want to acknowledge that Uncle George, depressed because of his terminal illness, had decided to take the black pill and end it all. But he did, regardless of what you find is written on the death certificate.

I've had two memorable experiences with relatives in which I was simply denied information – it was none of my business, relative or not. In one case, the story was about a child who had not grown to adulthood in a healthy manner because of something the mother chose to do before birth, and in the other case, there was an unacknowledged child in an Italian family by way of an Irish father at a time in life when the Italians and the Irish were not the best of friends.

Interestingly enough, I was able to find a work-around for both stories and finally figured out what happened in each case. But now what do you do on a public family tree when you know the back-end of the story? You be nice and figure a polite and gentle way to describe the facts by using 'foggy'

words to describe what you learned. Your object is not to hurt anyone, living or dead, in your searches – your object is to seek the truth. But, be nice. Always be nice.

### **But, What If...?**

What if there are still many questions that need to be answered? OK, let's look at a few questions that might pop up in your own research efforts. I'll address a few and leave the rest up to you to ask and answer for yourself. Hopefully this book has asked and answered many questions for you already.

#### **Q1. What's the best way to resolve what looks like a rabbit hole or a dead-end?**

A1. Great question. Running into **dead-ends** happens all the time. That's a time when I often put everything down and take a nap, or go for a walk, or whatever. Dead-ends often mean that I am simply missing something, maybe something obvious.

I usually ask myself how important is this individual who has me stuck. If he/she is an important ancestral connection, then I will 'dig in' and continue the serious research until I find my answers. If he/she is on an ancestral side branch, then maybe I'll be tempted to document what I know and simply move on.

Noting all of this, I consider my several family trees to be living documents (I keep them active and work on them off and on) and, because I subscribe to Ancestry.com, I get ticklers from Ancestry all the time. So, in that respect, and inadvertently, I have others also looking up data for me. And then, as I mentioned earlier, there are other researchers who will reach out for connections, and they often send me back into my original search pattern.

And let's not forget that historical records are being added to the genealogical databases, or are being made

available to researchers all the time, so maybe going back after six months will reveal new data on your individual. This research is just an ongoing process. It never ends. If you are serious, you will eventually find your answers.

**Q2. What kinds of documents are the easiest to hunt down and are the most informative to find?**

A2. Interesting question. Maybe there are really two questions here. The easiest documents to find are probably the documents you can find online at Ancestry.com, on FamilySearch, or other online databases. These would include census reports, some earlier vital docs, etc. I also have found that old town histories are of great value, and many are now available online.

As far as the most informative documents to find, that is a much more complex question, and the answer depends on what information you already have in your possession. I like and look for birth records, marriage records, and death records (detailed death certs are my favorite). Sometimes cemetery records, funeral home records, FindaGrave data are all of great value.

Regarding which documents are both the easiest to hunt down and also the most informative, may ultimately depend on where the person lived and died. I've noted that some states are better at providing vital documents than are other states. It's kind of like fishing. Some water holes have more and bigger fish than do other water holes.

**Q3. Where do I go looking for such things, and how much information do I need to have already?**

A3. This is where I tell you to follow your nose and go where you think you will find your answers. The obvious trait

that you mentally need is persistence. Stay with your search until you find the answers you are seeking.

**Q4. What are the different types of historical records, why they were created, what they are telling you, and what not-so-obvious clues you can draw from each of them?**

A4. I think I've addressed and answered this question in the body of the text.

**Q5. What are strategies for linking bits and shards of evidence from many sources to reconstruct each life and build a reliable case for each identity and kinship?**

A5. I'm pretty certain that strategies will come from within you, not from within me. Remember what I wrote earlier about us all being different and that I would not try to manipulate you into conforming to my world? I meant that.

My own life experiences are computer related, technology related, legally related, and people related. All of my own experiences make me look at things in methods that are often different than others. Statistically, I'm an outlier – I'm outside the box. Having noted that, I spent many years learning how the box works and what are the box's limitations and boundaries.

Just do your best. That will suffice.

**Q6. What are some basic legal concepts and how to find the laws that governed what our ancestors could or could not do — in a particular place and time — according to age, gender, race, social status and similar factors?**

A6. Wow. Another interesting question. If you ask a lawyer, he'll likely tell that you must go to law school, but I should note that in my own legal pursuits as a pro se litigant,



I've ended up teaching a few lawyers some things that they were never taught in law school.

I would send you to history books, rather than law school. I've already mentioned town history books, and depending on how far back you are going, they may be of your best help. But the legal part of life was not ever as complicated as it is today – life was much simpler in earlier times. Not so many laws.

And then we have a problem of the government's laws being changed in order to either ignore an existing law, or to put in place some new control mechanism. Let's face it, laws are used by government to control the people, whether they like being controlled or not.

For example, we may all be familiar with the US Constitution, aka the 'Constitution for the united States.' Attached to the basic federal constitution, there are 25 functional amendments. One of those amendments (# 13) has been authorized and implemented three times, with only the last one surviving. Why three times? Now we get into the question of who really runs this country. Hint – it's not us.

This link takes you to a pretty good discussion and description of what the three 13 amendments story is all about.

<http://www.ionchristianryter.com/2009/091213.html>

By the way, it may be worth noting that law schools (at least Harvard Law School) no longer requires law students to study constitutional law as a degree requirement. Interesting eh? This fact should make us wonder if we are still a country that operates under constitutional law. Perhaps not.

I suspect that in order to understand more clearly what was going on in an ancestor's life, we have to abandon our own modern way of thinking and just immerse ourselves into life in the past. Once we do that, things may become obvious once again.

**Q7. What are some tips for finding "missing" ancestors on census reports?**

A7. There really are a couple of areas that come to mind immediately. First of all, and as an example, one or more children may have died or moved in the ten year window between census reports. To validate that individual's existence often requires some scratching around. I look at people buried in family plots. I look for different name spellings. I look for family histories and match notes.

For example, on one family I researched, the mother died and one of the family's two children dropped off the father's census report. Woops. What was that all about?

Well, it turns out that the living family resided in Massachusetts, but the mother had been born in Maine. That family was recorded in the first census in Massachusetts. But by the next census, the mother had lived briefly with her parents before she died, and she was buried in Maine. After her death, the father kept one of the two boys and raised him in Massachusetts. The other boy moved to Maine and lived with the mother's parents in Maine. He showed up on the next census in Maine. That next census showed the father and the one son in the Massachusetts census.

A second area that comes to mind immediately is that in earlier times, women got married at earlier ages, and once that happened, the new family often went off on its own, and the woman would show up on the next census with a new married name.

Resolving the disappearing people questions often requires finding the burial grounds in which people were buried. Unlike today, when many people are cremated, many, if not most, earlier burials were full body burials. That is the great value of cemetery physical records and online cemetery databases like FindaGrave.

**Q8. What are some work-arounds for lost or destroyed records?**

A8. Find other records, or do without. As humans, we often leave behind many traces that show our existence. Put on your investigator's hat and go find those traces. Sadly, in some situations like the case of the burned 1890 census, we can never recover all of that information. It's simply gone.

**Q9. What are some techniques for correctly identifying and researching ancestors with common names?**

A9. Now we get into the question of name spellings, and where these people are from. For example, in some areas, like Southern California, there are huge Mexican descendants living, and their ties to their ancestors are tied in with the family names. Having noted that, if you are searching for Jimmy Gonzales, be prepared for finding many by that name in areas like Southern California. The question of legals vs illegals has caused many people to simply live below the radar, or to change names.

For some of the earlier white man settled parts of the country, like Massachusetts, expect to find popular names like Collins, Smith, Brown, Sullivan, etc. – all names from England, Scotland, and Ireland. They were the original colonists who settled in the area. Unfortunately, the really original settlers (the Native Americans) have been largely

wiped out, so you will not find many Native surnames in New England.

At this point, I should suggest that this specific name identification challenge may be one of the greatest you will come across. It is aggravated by the fact that many families chose to use the same names as kings or biblical names, and sorting them all out often requires that you have to expand your research to include researching other, adjacent families with the same name. And yes, this ends up being missionary duty, that is, you are finding and identifying people who are not in your own tree. This happens.

Did I promise you this research stuff was easy, or that it always worked out in the end?

#### **Q10. What are some methods for finding ancestors who lived before 1850?**

A10. In some ways, to answer that question, you have to understand more about what happened during that earlier time period in America. I made note earlier in this book about a free online Yale course dedicated to the time period of the American Revolution, and I think programs like that are extremely helpful. I also believe that college courses in American history are of value, as are written histories from that time period.

Also, finding ancestors usually depends on where the ancestor lived and died, and how common the family name is. I often look in the earlier printed town histories and family histories that are now available online. This is often effective for families with common names, but of course, if the family name is something like Schmidlap, I would not expect to find a huge family history. And, if one of the daughters married into a family that does have a family history book, then search in that history book for clues.

Assuming that the individual (or the parents) you are looking for came from Europe, he or she came by ship, so look for ships passenger lists. Note that many early ship's records have been lost, but this is still a worthwhile effort. Also try to determine where the individual came from and may have landed, because many of the earlier ships worked on regular east/west trips.

Once you know one or more of these basic facts, then Ancestry.com may be able to help search for specifics. I suspect the Ancestry database focuses on ports of arrival in the United States, and will not include Canadian or Central American ports of arrival. But this could also change with time. Here is a link to their passenger list search function.

<https://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=112>

Be aware that there are other databases available online for passenger ship lists.

If you know the individual's religious preferences, look for church records, including birth, baptism, marriage, and death records. The early US census reports were not very specific, but family heads were identified. And then we have cemetery records and databases.

Look for legal documents like wills and land grants. Look for early military records. Everything counts.

**Q11. If I subscribe and then cancel my Ancestry.com subscription, is there any way to retain the family ancestry information I've created on Ancestry.com?**

A11. This is really a question for Ancestry.com to answer. Briefly, the answer is yes. Here is Ancestry's more complete answer to that question, as of October, 2018.

<https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Accounts-after-Cancellation>

## Final Thoughts

In the Introduction, I said I would try to provide you with enough information and suggestions to help you get started doing your own family research. I hope I've done that.

We started out with a discussion on record keeping, which branched us into computing tools, and that led us into software applications. We then delved into research tools, collecting data, and cemetery databases.

In Chapter 6 we got into discussing the actual performance of our research, and that led us into discussions about historical societies and genealogy societies.

We discussed names and dates, records helpers and records sources, cemeteries, and then went into online Internet resources. We discussed family and town histories, newspapers, and spent a fair amount of time on the subject of DNA testing.

Chapter 6 finished off with discussions about photographs and videos, and finally paper maps and GPS locators. That led us into Chapter 7 where we added a few additional thoughts and considerations, and tried to answer a few additional questions.

The tail end of this 'Final Thoughts' chapter is followed up with a few appendices and an index, both of which I hope you also find useful.

When I was younger and just getting started in my adult life, I was a computer programmer. Interestingly enough, I never felt that any program I wrote was ever

finished. I could always go back to my programs and make improvements on my earlier coding efforts.

So it is with this book on family research. It's not finished, and if you find errors or omissions, or simply areas that are not clear and could be improved upon, please let me know. My contact information is noted below.

Thanks for the investment of your time and energy in reading this book. I really wish you huge success in your own personal family search activities.

There is an old question that is often asked by genealogists of others, and that is 'how good an ancestor are you?' Well, now, with you becoming a family researcher, we know that your answer will be 'Excellent – thanks for asking.'

Have a great day!

*John Sutherland*

Colorado, USA

October 31, 2018

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## **Appendices**

- A. List of Abbreviations
- B. Individual Data Form
- C. Individual's Spouse(s) Data Form
- D. Individual's Children Data Form
- E. Family Pedigree Form



## Appendix A -- List of Abbreviations

<b><u>Abbreviation</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>
Ab./abt.	About
Æ, ae	Age, typically at death
b.	Date of Birth
bap., bp.	Baptized, refers to date, church, and place
bur.	Buried, burial, refers to date and place
c, or ca	Circa, or about, refers to a date
co.	County, Company
d.	Date of Death
div.	Divorced, can include date and place
d/o, s/o	Daughter of, Son of
DoB	Date of Birth
DoD	Date of Death
d.s.p.	Decessit sine prole (died without children)
d.y.	Died young
et al.	And others
FAG	FindaGrave, refers to memorial number
int.	Intention of marriage
m.	Married, can include date and place
née	Maiden or birth family name
n.f.r.	No further record (after marriage)
N.S.	New Style (Gregorian) calendar
O.S.	Old Style (Julian) calendar
PoB	Place of Birth
PoD	Place of Death
sic	Copied exactly from original, includes errors
unm.	Unmarried
unk.	Unknown
viz.	Namely
yeo.	Yeoman (farmer)

# Appendix B -- Individual Data Form

## 1 - Individual Data Form

### Individual:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

### Father:

Birth Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

### Mother:

Birth Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Appendix C -- Individual's Spouse(s) Data Form

## 2 - Spouse Data Form

Individual:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
Spouse Number \_\_\_\_:  
Birth Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_  
Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother: \_\_\_\_\_  
Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Married: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Divorced: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Divorce: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_  
=====

=====  
Spouse Number \_\_\_\_:  
Birth Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_  
Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother: \_\_\_\_\_  
Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Married: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Marriage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Divorced: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Divorce: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Appendix D -- Individual's Children Data Form

## 3 - Children Data Form

Individual:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

Child Number \_\_\_\_:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

Child Number \_\_\_\_:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

Child Number \_\_\_\_:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Military: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_


Date of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ City of Burial: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery Burial Address: \_\_\_\_\_ FindaGrave Memorial #: \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

# Appendix E -- Family Pedigree Form



## Four Generation Family Tree (Pedigree Chart)

Chart Number \_\_\_\_\_

Person #1 on this chart is the same person as person # \_\_\_\_\_ on chart # \_\_\_\_\_

www.GoogleYourFamilyTree.com

<p><b>1.</b> born place wed place died place</p> <p>spouse</p> <p>siblings</p>	<p><b>2.</b> born place wed place died place place siblings</p>	<p><b>3.</b> born place wed place</p> <p>siblings</p>	<p><b>4.</b> born place wed place died place</p>
<p><b>5.</b> born place wed place died place</p>	<p><b>6.</b> born place wed place died place</p>	<p><b>7.</b> born place wed place</p>	<p><b>8.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>
<p><b>9.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>	<p><b>10.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>	<p><b>11.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>	<p><b>12.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>
<p><b>13.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>	<p><b>14.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>	<p><b>15.</b> born wed died</p> <p>continued on chart _____</p>	<p>continued on chart _____</p>

1 is you  
 2 is father of 1 (paternal line)  
 3 is mother of 1 (maternal line)  
 4 is father of 2 (your paternal grandfather)  
 5 is mother of 2 (your paternal grandmother)  
 6 is father of 3 (your maternal grandfather)  
 7 is mother of 3 (your maternal grandmother)

# Index

## 1

1890 Census, 61

## 2

**23andMe**, 127, 129, 130

## A

**Ahnentafel**, 160, 161

Amazon.com, 13

**American Legion**, 77, 87

**American Revolution**, 7, 102, 174

**Ancestry.com**, 10, 11, 12, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 37, 79, 82, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 122, 126, 128, 163, 168, 169, 175

**AncestryDNA**, 126, 127

application software, 12, 24, 25, 28, 54, 104

**Archive.org**, 103, 104, 107

**Archives**, 78, 79, 99, 102, 107, 113, 166

**ARPANET**, 94, 95

## B

**BG**, 37, 39

**BillionGraves**, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 45, 85, 134, 157, 158, 159

**blood type**, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139

**Boston Transcript**, 116

**BrowserLeaks.com**, 144

## C

**Cambridge**, 81, 91, 106, 107, 113, 114

Canadian census, 64

**Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection**, 118, 119

## D

Daguerreotype, 146, 148

**dead-ends**, 168

digital records, 9

disk drives, 14, 16, 17, 30

**DNA**, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 138, 139, 176

double dates, 55, 56

**DSL**, 18, 19, 20

## F

**Family History Centers**, 47

**Family Tree Maker**, 25, 26, 29, 31, 37, 48, 52, 54, 123, 163

**FamilySearch**, 10, 26, 27, 37, 47, 48, 74, 75, 96, 97, 100, 101, 169

Federal Census Records, 57

**Fiber**, 19

Find A Grave, 34, 37, 38

**FindAGrave**, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 43, 45, 52, 54, 85, 86, 87, 89, 121, 122, 169, 173, 179

**FindMyPast**, 98, 99

**Fold3**, 78, 79

FTM, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 48, 54, 123

## G

GEDCOM, 26, 28, 29, 99

**Genealogical societies**, 48

**Genealogical Society**, 48, 73, 82, 89, 108, 118, 141

**GenealogyBank**, 100

**Google**, 19, 103, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144

GPS, 38, 85, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 176

**Gregorian**, 55, 179

## H

**historical societies**, 48, 50, 74, 176

## I

**Internet**, 1, 10, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 33, 36, 47, 50, 94, 95, 96, 109, 139, 141, 144, 145, 146, 166, 176

## J

**James Savage**, 107

**John Harvey Fisher**, 90

**Julian**, 55, 179

Jumonville Glen, 65

## K

Kingston, 17

## L

laptop, 10, 21, 22

**LeHand**, 32, 37, 39, 40, 72

## M

Maps, 154

**Matthew Gillies**, 83

**Meeker**, 110, 111, 112, 113

modems, 18, 20

**Mount Auburn Cemetery**, 91

**Mountain View Cemetery**, 89, 90

**MyBrowserInfo.com**, 144

**MyHeritage**, 98

**MyTrees**, 97, 100

## N

**Nathanial M. Fox**, 107

**Navstar**, 156, 157



## O

**OneGreatFamily**, 99  
operating system, 15, 17, 24, 25

## P

paper records, 9, 10, 88  
**PDF**, 104, 105, 115, 141, 163, 166

## R

**Rh negatives**, 138  
**rhesus**, 136  
**RootsMagic**, 26, 27

## S

**Salem**, 113, 114, 115  
**satellite**, 155, 156  
**Search Encrypt**, 143  
**ShutterFly**, 151  
**Simeon Moses Fox**, 106, 108  
Smedley Butler, 75  
**Social Security**, 67, 68, 100  
solid state drives, 16  
SSD, 16, 17, 22

## T

**The Master Genealogist**, 27, 109  
**TMG**, 27, 28  
TopTenReviews, 96, 97, 98, 100  
**TOR**, 145  
**Twombly Fogg Cemetery 32**, 86, 87, 88

## U

**Union of Concerned Scientists**, 156  
**USGenWeb**, 101, 102

## **V**

**Veterans of Foreign Wars, 77**

## **W**

**William Freeman Fox, 106, 108**

## **Y**

**Yale University, 102**

