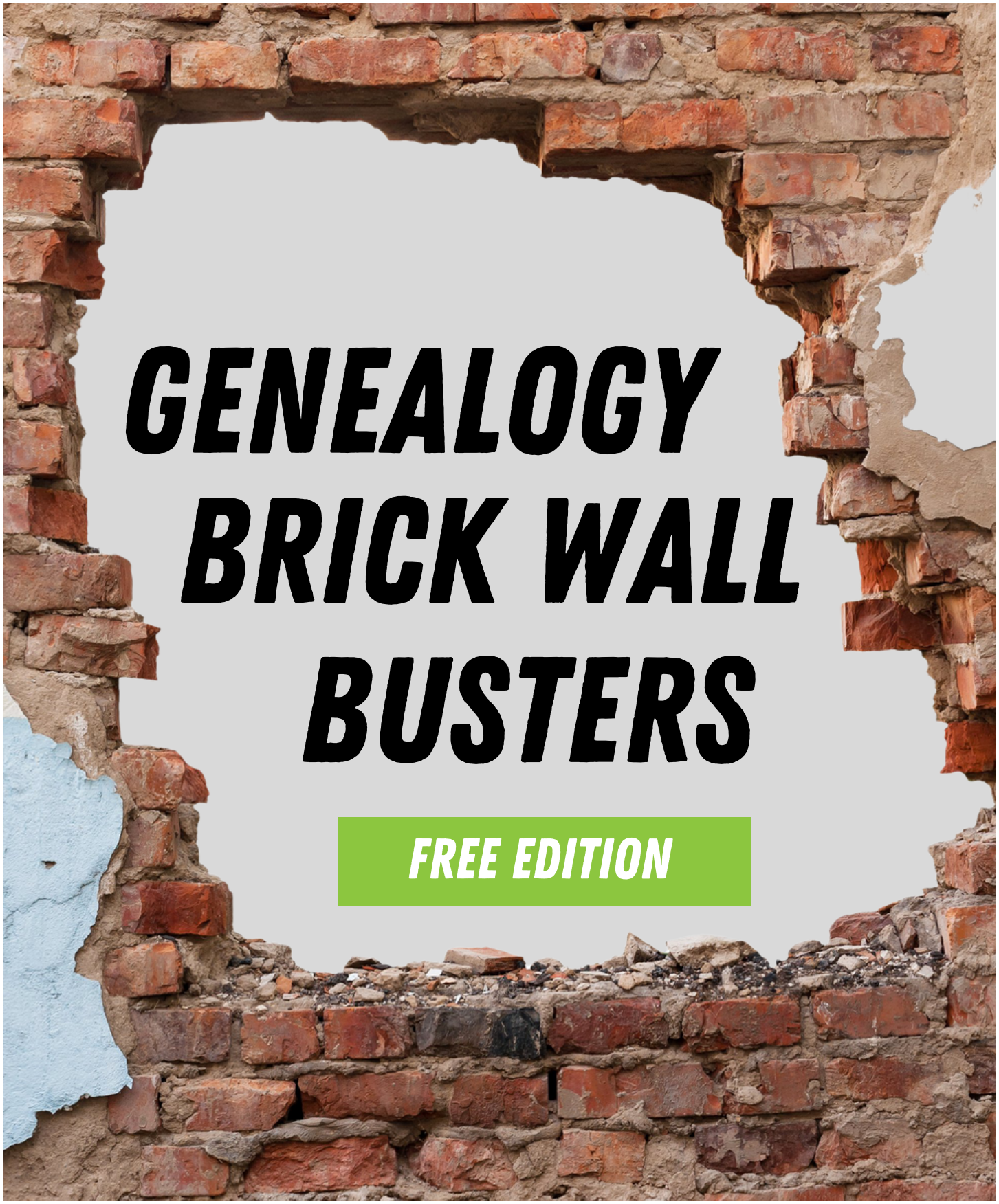



familytree

# HOLES in HISTORY

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

by SUNNY JANE MORTON

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

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

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

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

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

## 1890 CENSUS FIRE

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

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

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

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

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

Late in the afternoon of Jan. 19, 1921, Commerce Building watchmen reported smoke emerging from pipes. They traced the source to the basement. When the fire department arrived a half hour later, they first evacuated employees from the top floors. By that time, intensifying smoke blocked access to the basement. Thousands of bystanders watched fire crews punch holes in the concrete floors and pour streams of water into the basement. Firemen continued the deluge for 45 minutes after the fire had gone out. Then they opened the windows to diffuse the smoke and went home.

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

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

### 1890 Census Fire

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

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

Of the nearly 63 million people enumerated on the 1890 census population schedule, only about 6,300 entries (0.0001 percent) survive. Worse yet, a backup protocol followed for previous censuses had just been dropped: The 1890 census was the first for which the government didn't require copies to be filed in local government offices.

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

## National Personnel Records Center Fire

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

### DISASTER AT THE NPRC

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

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

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

## Document disasters in history

**1618-1648**
German church records in the Thirty Years War

**1688-1697**
More German records in the Nine Years' War

**1755**
Royal Library of Portugal collections in the Great Lisbon earthquake

**1922**
Irish censuses, wills and parish registers at the Four Courts bombing in Dublin

**1923**
Collections of several Japanese libraries in an earthquake and subsequent fires

**1940s**
WWI British service records and many others in bombings across Europe and China

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

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

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

## WHEN ELLIS ISLAND BURNED

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

The story of the "first" Ellis Island is also a story about the federal government assuming control of immigrant processing, which was previously left to individual states. Castle Garden, on the tip of Lower Manhattan, had opened in 1855 as New York's official immigrant station. But by 1890, it was clear the facility (and its operators) weren't properly managing the increasing immigrant traffic.

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

## Ellis Island Fire

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

**1976**
Most collections of the National Library of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge

**1989**
Collections of University of Bucharest library and archive in the Romanian Revolution

**2003**
Iraq National Library and Archives and other Iraqi repositories burned and looted

**2004**
Sweeping losses across South Asia after Indian Ocean earthquake

**2014**
Historical documents spanning centuries in fire at National Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina

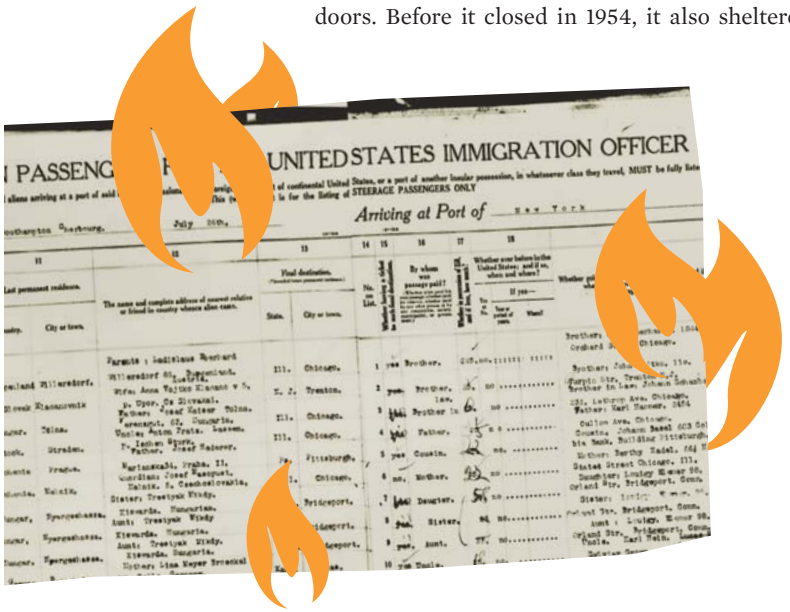
**The passenger arrival lists lost in the 1897 Ellis Island fire didn't include arrivals at ports outside New York.**

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

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

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

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




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

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

## COURTHOUSE CATASTROPHES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Courthouse Disasters

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

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

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

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

# How I Did It

Three genealogy experts share how they broke down brick walls in their research.

**Researching your family history is fun**, but it's not always easy. Even the most experienced genealogists sometimes stumble in their research goals, struggling to find missing records or overcome the dreaded burned courthouse.

But with dutiful planning, hard work and a little bit of luck, you can scale even the highest brick walls. Read on for how these three genealogists did just that.

VLADGANS/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

# Tragedy in Tunbridge:

## UNCOVERING A VICTORIAN ANCESTOR

BY LISA LOUISE COOKE

My husband's great-grandmother has always been a bit of a mystery. We knew that Mary Ann Susannah Cooke, wife of carriage builder Harry Cooke and mother of one son, was a talented musician who played the violin at English garden parties and balls in Victorian England. We also knew she supplemented the family's income by renting their spare room to actors who performed at the Tunbridge Wells Opera House around the corner. However, we had no photographs of her. And in my initial research, she appears to vanish just after the turn of the century.

The first time I laid eyes on Mary Ann Susannah Cooke was when a cousin delivered a 50-year-old box to my doorstep. The box included a photograph of Mary Ann, along with the family Bible (image A). On the back, her son, Raymond (well into his nineties) had written what he remembered of his mother: "Mother passed away about 1915. Her birthday was September 3. Buried in cemetery at Tonbride Wells."

This burial site made perfect sense. Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England was Raymond's birthplace and home until he and his father left and immigrated to Canada in 1912.

In order to verify the information Raymond provided, I turned to FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org>. There, in the Birth, Marriage, and Death Index (BMD), I discovered a death register that indicated Mary Ann actually died much earlier—in 1908. Armed with the transcription (which is also available at FreeBMD.org.uk <www.freereg.org.uk>), I headed to Findmypast <www.findmypast.com>. My goal was to obtain a copy of the image for verification.

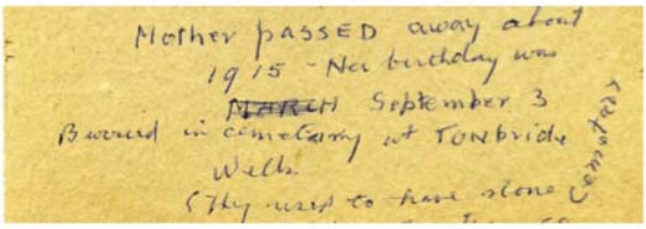
Mary Ann's death at the relatively young age of 41 left me with additional questions. What was her cause of death? Where did she die?

The Tunbridge Wells Cemetery burial records shed more light by revealing she died at home at 49 Kirkdale Road. (Dying at home was not unusual for the time.)

The record did not provide a cause of death, but it did provide another clue. Mary Ann was buried in unconsecrated ground. This could have been because she was a non-conformist, but there may also have been other reasons.

I used the information from the BMD entry to order a copy of the death certificate from the National Archives (UK) website <www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>. These days, obtaining certificates is easier than ever. The National Archives now offers an

A




B

Registration District Tonbridge

Sub-District Tunbridge Wells

1908 DEATHS in the Sub-District of Tunbridge Wells in the Count y of Kent

| Columns:— 1. No. | 1. When and Where Died. | 2. Name and Surname. | 3 Sex. | 4. Age. | 5. Rank or Profession. | 6. Cause of Death. | 7. Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant. | 8. When registered. | 9 Signature of Registrar. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 52 | Fourteenth August 1908 49 Kirkdale Road Tunbridge Wells | Mary Ann Cooke | Female | 41 years | wife of Harry Cooke a Coach Builder | Committed suicide by drowning she being at the time in an unsound state of mind | Certificate received from Thomas Buzo Coroner for Kent Inquest held 15 August 1908 | Fourteenth August 1908 | A Silverman Registrar |

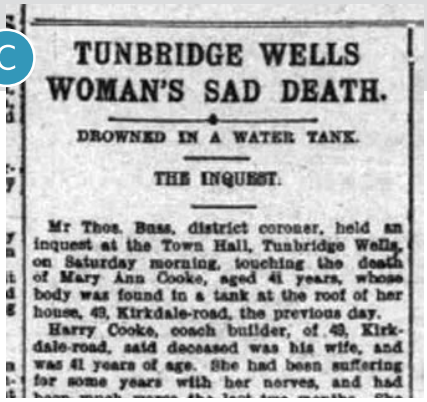
emailed PDF service. Within five business days, I received an answer.

Plain as day, the record (image B) read: "Committed suicide by drowning, she being at the time in an unsound state of mind." It was a tragic end to a woman who was an accomplished violinist, played in the local opera house and was dearly loved by her son.

Turning back to the burial record, I capitalized on another clue it contained: Mary's home address. Knowing that the address might bring up a reporting of the death even if family names were not mentioned, I searched the British Newspaper Archive <www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>. Almost immediately, a startling discovery appeared on my screen. It was a lengthy article found in *The Kent & Sussex Courier* dated August 21, 1908, entitled "Tunbridge Wells Woman's Sad Death."

As was not uncommon at the time, the newspaper published the detailed coroner's inquest (image C). After a long depression, Mary Ann took her own life by drowning herself in the family home cistern. To add to the tragedy, her 14-year-old son Raymond discovered her body. The lengthy article offers a detailed account of

C



TUNBRIDGE WELLS WOMAN'S SAD DEATH.

DROWNED IN A WATER TANK.

THE INQUEST.

Mr Thos. Bass, district coroner, held an inquest at the Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells, on Saturday morning, touching the death of Mary Ann Cooke, aged 41 years, whose body was found in a tank at the roof of her house, 49, Kirkdale-road, the previous day.

Harry Cooke, coach builder, of 49, Kirkdale-road, said deceased was his wife, and was 41 years of age. She had been suffering for some years with her nerves, and had

her last day, the people involved in the search after her disappearance, and the coroner's final ruling.

That address search of the British Newspaper Archive delivered one final connection between this sad ending and the new beginning that Raymond and his father Harry embarked on just four years later.

An advertisement in one issue declares "Owner going abroad," then lists the furnishings and contents up for sale at 49 Kirkdale Road. Harry, who had recently remarried, had decided to start a new life in Regina, Canada. And now my genealogical journey follows theirs across the sea.

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**Lisa Louise Cooke** is a columnist for *Family Tree Magazine* and the founder of Genealogy Gems LLC.

# The Marvelous Mrs. Maia:

## RESEARCHING A 'DECEASED' ANCESTOR

BY DAVID A. FRYXELL

How did I discover what became of my third-great-grandmother? I first realized she didn't die when I thought she did—a good lesson in always questioning your assumptions. Maia Kaisa Nilsdotter, born in Sweden in 1809, married Peter Jönsson in 1832. Several years ago I found his 1870 estate inventory index entry, describing him as "widower." So Maia must have died before her husband—a "fact" I dutifully noted in my tree.

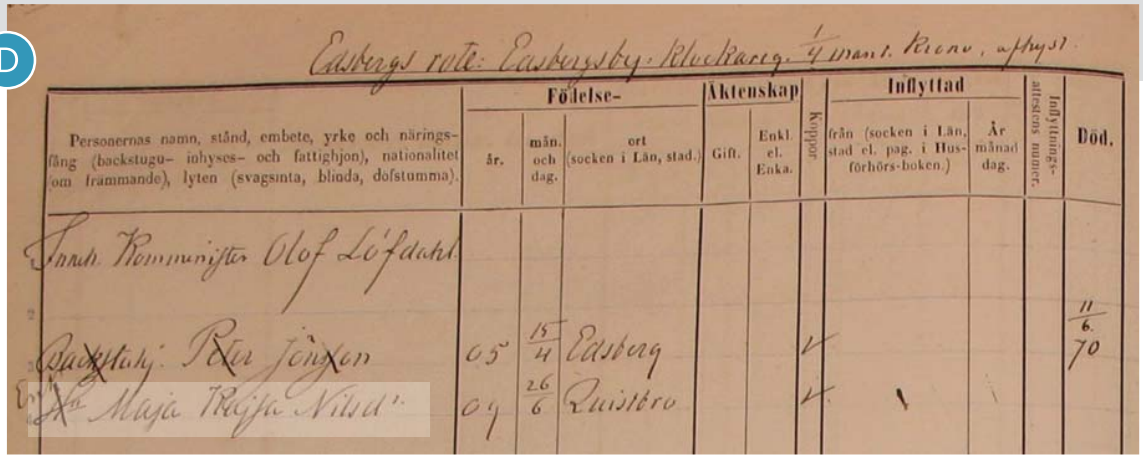
When I recently revisited that branch—another good genealogical practice—I couldn't find Maia in Sweden's well-preserved church death records. Weird. So I looked up her husband's last entry in the church household examination books (much like an annual census). Sure enough, the document noted his 1870 death. Maia was listed below him, but without a death date—even though this page covered 1866 to 1870.

Maybe she wasn't dead by 1870, after all. Sure enough, tracking down the actual estate inventory (image D), it looked like the word was *änka* (widow), referring to her instead of him. A useful reminder to look at actual records instead of relying on transcriptions. Oops.

But if Maia wasn't dead, where was she? I searched for her in the recently updated collection of Swedish household examination books at MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com>, but failed to find her. Spelling variations of her name or birthplace might be to blame.

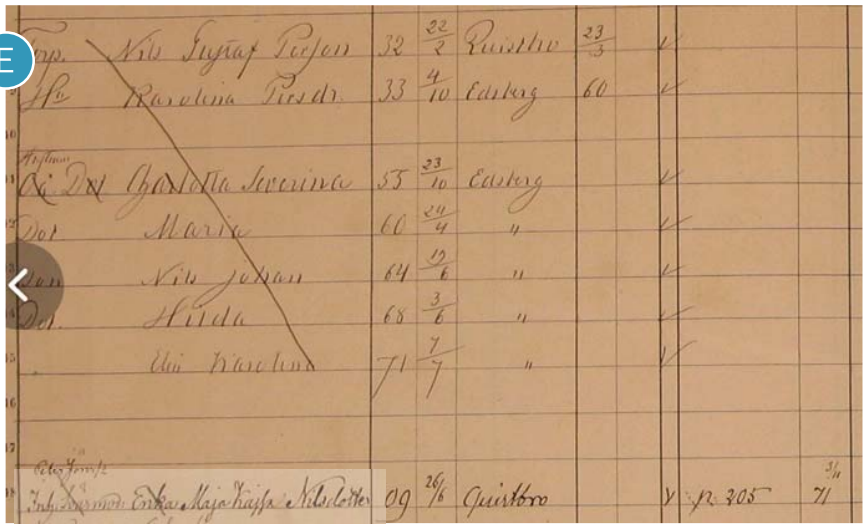
So I tried another go-to genealogy strategy: searching for relatives—in this case her children who'd stayed behind in Sweden. I couldn't find her

D



| Personernas namn, stånd, embete, yrke och näringsfång (backstugu- inhyses- och fattighjon), nationalitet om främmande), lyten (svagsinta, blinda, dofstumma). | Födelse- år. | Födelse- mån. och dag. | Födelse- ort (socken i Län, stad.) | Äktenskap Gift. | Äktenskap Enkl. el. Enka. | Kopior | Inflyttad från (socken i Län, stad el. pag. i Husförhörs-boken.) | Inflyttad År månad dag. | Inflyttnings-attestens nummer. | Död. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inrätt. Kommunister Olof Löfdahl | | | | | | | | | | |
| Backstuhj. Nils Jonsson | 05 | 15/4 | Easberg | | | 1 | | | | 11/6 70 |
| Hr Maja Kaisa Nilsd. | 09 | 26/6 | Quistbro | | | 1 | | | | |

E



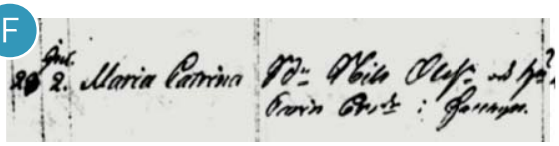
| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inp. | Nils Ingvar Persson | 32 | 22/2 | Quistbro | 23/3 | 1 | | |
| Hr | Karolina Persdr. | 33 | 4/10 | Easberg | 60 | 1 | | |
| Inpl. Dr | Charlotta Severina | 55 | 23/10 | Easberg | | 1 | | |
| Dot | Maria | 60 | 24/4 | " | | 1 | | |
| Son | Nils Johan | 64 | 12/6 | " | | 1 | | |
| Dot. | Hilda | 68 | 3/6 | " | | 1 | | |
| | Ulr Karlsd | 71 | 7/7 | " | | 1 | | |
| Utf. Inpl. | Enka Maja Kaisa Nilsdotter | 09 | 26/6 | Quistbro | | 1 | fr. 305 | 3/11 71 |

son, and her daughter (my great-great-grandmother) left for the New World. Thanks to Sweden's tradition of married women keeping their maiden names, however, I could search for her daughter, Karolina Persdotter.

I quickly found Karolina and her family in the book beginning with 1871 (image E). This reinforced another key genealogy tip: Always look at the whole page of a record, and maybe the pages just before and just after. Scrolling down the page, I spotted the missing Maia a few lines down, very much alive. In fact, as a quest for Karolina's entries for the following years revealed, Maia didn't die until June 19, 1887, living all the while near or with her daughter's family.

If questioning assumptions and revisiting sources could solve that mystery, could they also help me find Maia's missing birth record? I'd previously noted a failure to find it in Kvistbro parish, where the household books said she was born on June 26, 1809. I looked again and found a birth record on that date

F



for "Maria Catrina" (image F) daughter of Nils Olofsson and (illegible)—making her surname Nilsdotter.

FamilySearch has a helpful list of interchangeable Swedish first names <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Sweden_Names,_Personal>. "Maria" and "Maia," it turns out, are interchangeable. Ditto for "Catrina" and "Kaisa." So this was my ancestor, after all.

I now had Maia's birth record and the correct date of her death, as well as her father's name. From there, I can start hunting for her mother's hard-to-decipher name in other records. When I do, I'll be sure to question my assumptions and check everything twice.

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**David A. Fryxell** is the founding editor of *Family Tree Magazine*. His book on Scandinavian genealogy is scheduled to publish this fall.

# Answers at Last:

## FINDING A BIRTH FATHER USING DNA

BY NANCY HENDRICKSON

When my mother was 90 years old, a family mystery that plagued her for years was finally solved: Who was her father? I wish I could tell you that it was my super-sleuth skills that cracked the case. But the truth is that perseverance, time and a DNA match found my mom's dad.

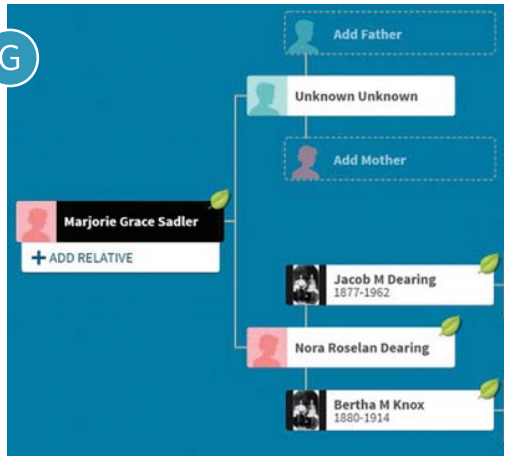
The search began decades ago when we requested Mom's birth certificate for a passport. Following protocol, Mom filled out the appropriate forms, had witnesses sign it, and promptly received the certificate. But the document that came didn't name a father. For whatever reason, my grandmother would never disclose his name. That left us with one-quarter of our family tree unknown (image G).

As it turns out, I made a miscalculation early on: I ordered a birth certificate in my grandmother's *married* name. I tried again, this time using my grandmother's *maiden* name. After a wait, we received the record of Mom's birth. There, in the space for father was handwritten the surname Goodwin. At last, a clue!

From there, we turned our attention to anyone named Goodwin who (according to census records) lived near my grandmother. We even searched through names of teachers at a school close to where Grandma lived. Though we identified some prime suspects, nothing came of the search. So we stopped looking.

Then, when FamilyTreeDNA <www.familytreedna.com> first launched, both Mom and one of my brothers took a DNA test in the hopes of finding the mysterious Mr. Goodwin. But after years of waiting, no match appeared.

G




H

Finally, as Mom neared her 90th birthday, my sister took the AncestryDNA <www.ancestry.com/dna> test. Within months, a DNA match popped up. The match was listed as a first or second cousin, with "extremely high confidence." This meant that my sister and the match likely shared a grandparent or great-grandparent. Since we knew all of the other grandparents and great-grandparents on both sides of the family, we knew this match had to be for Mom's real father.

That night, we sent an email to Marilyn, the DNA match, explaining the details. Though our message likely came as a shock, she answered quickly, sharing details about her grandfather—the man who was Mom's father. Later, Marilyn sent family photos of her aunts—Mom's half-sisters. Interestingly, one of the sisters and Mom looked so much alike they could have been twins. When I showed Mom the photo (image H), she thought it was one of her own.

Although most of Mom's new half-sisters lived in the Midwest (far from our home in Southern California), she did get to meet one of them, along with our new cousin. At long last, the search was over.

Though we followed all the best research leads, we owe our success to perseverance—and, of course, to new testing technology and the database of test takers growing large enough. It took Mom 90 years, but (in the end) she had her answer.

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**Nancy Hendrickson** is the author of the *Unofficial Guide to Ancestry.com* and the *Unofficial Ancestry.com Workbook*.

# Digging Through the Ashes

Is the 1890 census *really* missing? With record substitutes and the right frame of mind, the answer is not so simple.

by DR. SHELLEY VIOLA MURPHY

**As researchers, we have our** favorite go-to's. We tend to get set in our ways and continue down the same paths. But sometimes, consulting the same records and making the same assumptions means we end up with the same result: a brick wall.

Notably, as soon as we have a new lead or a new ancestor's line to research, we jump right to the federal population census. The federal census, as we know, is taken every 10 years, but it also contains numerous inaccuracies and isn't a foolproof source.

For one thing, there's the issue of the 1890 census. We often hear the returns are missing and make assumptions. We run! We expect a huge loss of information and records, and jump right to the 1900 census.

Why do we do that? There are 20 years between the 1880 and 1900 censuses. Do we really think *nothing* was going on in our ancestors' counties and communities during that time? No one is beyond having brick walls or research challenges, but let's not create our own by simply giving up.

Instead, we can change our thinking and reframe record-loss events like the 1890 census as challenges that can be overcome. I now teach the three E's of challenges in genealogy: We *expect* them, *embrace* them, and let them *enhance* our research skills. Take them as an opportunity to find another way to get the information you need, and to go "back to the basics" of genealogy research: researching a time and place, and asking the right questions. There's no magic in conducting genealogical research—just deeper dives!

So how can we deal with the challenges of not having the 1890 census? Years ago, I developed "Murphy's tips," five factors that researchers should consider when studying ancestors: the

ALICJA WARGUŁA / ISTOCK

*Money*, the *Land*, the *Water*, the *Community* and the *Faith* of the people. Each of those five generate records that can provide valuable genealogical information, since (at any given time) people are still being born, dying, getting married, getting divorced, buying and selling land, and (of course) paying taxes.

Let's take a deep dive into what information the 1890 census contained, and what kinds of records can provide us with the same details. As we'll see, with the right attitude, we are likely not missing much information from the 1890 census after all.

## UNDERSTANDING THE 1890 CENSUS

A critical way of handling a records-related challenge is to review the document's contents, as well as the record-keeper's intent. Like in other federal censuses, paid enumerators asked residents specific questions, and were given instructions on how to handle various responses. You can view and download enumerator instructions for the 1890 census at <www.census.gov/history/pdf/1890instructions.pdf>

We've listed the 1890 questionnaire in the sidebar on pages 44 and 45. As you'll see, enumerators asked a total of 30 questions. Some were demographic in nature or about families: Who is in the household, and how are they related? But others asked about land: Who owns it, is there a mortgage on the property, etc. Don't forget to consult questions 26 through 30, which are on the second page. These were asked just once of each family and farm visited.

In addition to the numbered questions, the top of the sheet provided organizational questions about the enumerator's process and where the community was within the county or neighborhood. Letters A through E indicate number of dwellings in the order of visitation, as well as the number of families and persons within a dwelling.

Once you've reviewed the census questions, ask yourself some questions. Which of those details do you already know about your family during that 20-year period? Consider the following:

- Are the individuals in the same place as they were in the 1880 population census? What about the 1900, or even the 1910 census?
- Do you have contemporary city directories, newspaper articles or other references that might have some information?
- Has anyone in the family died? If so, do you have the death record, obituary, etc., that will give you place, time and names?
- Has anyone married between 1880 and 1890?
- Was anyone in the family a soldier or veteran?

Keep in mind what questions were asked in the 1880 and 1900 censuses, as well. Some of the details will overlap with what was asked in the 1890 census. You can find a list of questions for all censuses (1790–2010; 2020 questions haven't been uploaded yet) at <www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires>.

## GATHERING SUBSTITUTE RECORDS

Now that you've assessed what information you already have, consider what documents could produce the details you still need. What other genealogical records provide the same information that was gathered in the 1890 census?

Birth records, for example, provide: name; birth date and place; parents' names and maybe birth locations; and even possibly occupations. Death and marriage records often do the same—useful, since vital records may be available for the 1880–1900 period and earlier. Don't forget to check vital records both for the subject of interest as well as their children.

## The Fate of the 1890 Census

In January 1921, a fire consumed the Commerce Building in Washington, DC. Fire, smoke and water damage destroyed a substantial portion of 1890 census returns, leading to an almost total loss of the record set.

Of the nearly 63 million people recorded in the census, only about 6,160 total names were spared the fire and flood. The surviving records—hardly enough to cover even just a couple of counties—cover small parts of Alabama, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota and Texas.

Note that, though the main enumeration has been lost, part of a supplemental veterans' schedule from 1890 remains. The Civil War Union veterans and widows census survives for states that are alphabetically from Kentucky to Wyoming. You can find surviving records on FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1877095>.

FAMILY SCHEDULE—1 TO 10 PERSONS.

Supervisor's District No. _____

Enumeration District No. _____

[7—556 b.]

Eleventh Census of the United States.

SCHEDULE No. 1.

POPULATION AND SOCIAL STATISTICS.

Name of city, town, township, precinct, district, beat, or other minor civil division. _____; County: _____; State: _____

Street and No.: _____; Ward: _____; Name of Institution: _____

Enumerated by me on the _____ day of June, 1890. 1890

_____, Enumerator.

| A.—Number of Dwelling-house in the order of visitation. | B.—Number of families in this dwelling-house. | C.—Number of persons in this dwelling-house. | D.—Number of Family in the order of visitation. | E.—No. of Persons in this family. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

| | INQUIRIES. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Christian name in full, and initial of middle name. | | | | | |
| | Surname. | | | | | |
| 2 | Whether a soldier, sailor, or marine during the civil war (U. S. or Conf.), or widow of such person. | | | | | |
| 3 | Relationship to head of family. | | | | | |
| 4 | Whether white, black, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian. | | | | | |
| 5 | Sex. | | | | | |
| 6 | Age at nearest birthday. If under one year, give age in months. | | | | | |
| 7 | Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced. | | | | | |
| 8 | Whether married during the census year (June 1, 1889, to May 31, 1890). | | | | | |
| 9 | Mother of how many children, and number of these children living. | | | | | |
| 10 | Place of birth. | | | | | |
| 11 | Place of birth of **Father.** | | | | | |
| 12 | Place of birth of **Mother.** | | | | | |
| 13 | Number of years in the United States. | | | | | |
| 14 | Whether naturalized. | | | | | |
| 15 | Whether naturalization papers have been taken out. | | | | | |
| 16 | Profession, trade, or occupation. | | | | | |
| 17 | Months unemployed during the census year (June 1, 1889, to May 31, 1890). | | | | | |
| 18 | Attendance at school (in months) during the census year (June 1, 1889, to May 31, 1890). | | | | | |
| 19 | Able to **Read.** | | | | | |
| 20 | Able to **Write.** | | | | | |
| 21 | Able to speak English. If not, the language or dialect spoken. | | | | | |
| 22 | Whether suffering from **acute** or **chronic** disease, with name of disease and length of time afflicted. | | | | | |
| 23 | Whether defective in mind, sight, hearing, or speech, or whether crippled, maimed, or deformed, with name of defect. | | | | | |
| 24 | Whether a prisoner, convict, homeless child, or pauper. | | | | | |
| 25 | Supplemental schedule and page. | | | | | |

TO ENUMERATORS.—See inquiries numbered 26 to 3( concerning

| | |
|---|---|
| 26 | Is the home you live in hired, or is it owned by the head or by a member of the family? |
| 27 | If owned by head or member of family, is the home free from mortgage incumbrance? |
| 28 | If the head of family is a farmer, is the farm which he cultivates hired, or is it owned by him or by a member of his family? |
| 29 | If owned by head or member of family, is the farm free from mortgage incumbrance? |
| 30 | If the home or farm is owned by head or member of family, **and mortgaged,** give the post-office address of owner. |

(19279—1,780,000.) 1 b 34

Reprinted, 1935

States may have taken their own enumerations, including between the 1880 and 1900 federal censuses. Kansas, for example, took censuses in 1885 and 1895, and Michigan in 1884 and 1894. The details in them will vary, but your ancestors' listings will still help you fill in that 20-year gap. (See the *Family Tree Magazine* has a list of state censuses at <www.familytreemagazine.com/records/census/state-censuses-list>.

Other sources to consider include:

- **School records** for children (see a sample enrollment list in the sidebar on page 46)
- **Institutional records** for those in hospitals, orphanages, prisons or insane asylums
- **Church or religious records,** such as baptisms, burials, confirmation/bar mitzvah records, and parish directories
- **Community-specific censuses** such as the Dawes Rolls taken of the "Five Civilized Tribes" (1898–1914)
- **Local publications,** such as newspapers, city directories, newsletters and quarterlies
- **Organizational records** from professional or civic societies

In addition, look to see if your ancestors were listed in the supplemental "Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent" (DDD) Schedules of the 1880 census. Separate schedules covered the

## 1890 Census Questions

1. Name
2. Civil War veteran or widow status
3. Relationship to the head of the family
4. Race
5. Sex
6. Age
7. Marital status
8. If married within the last year
9. Number of children, and how many children are living
10. Place of birth
11. Father's place of birth
12. Mother's place of birth
13. Number of year in the United States
14. Naturalization status
15. Whether naturalization papers have been filed
16. Profession, trade or occupation
17. Number of months unemployed in the past year
18. Number of months attended school in the past year
19. Able to read
20. Able to write
21. Able to speak English, or what other language/dialect is spoken
22. Is the person suffering from an acute chronic disease? If so, what is the name of that disease and the length of time affected?
23. Is the person defective of mind, sight, hearing, or speech? Is the person crippled, maimed, or deformed? If yes, what was the name of his defect?
24. Is the person a prisoner, convict, homeless child, or pauper?
25. Supplement schedule and page (if questions 22–24 require additional documentation)

The following questions (on page 2) were asked just once of each family or farm:

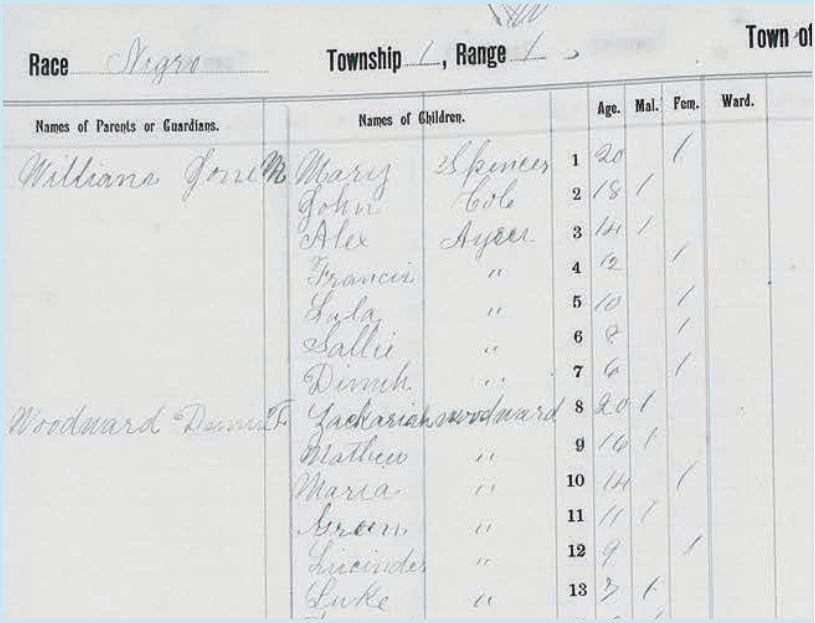
26. Is the home rented ("hired") or owned?
27. If home owned, is there a mortgage on the home?
28. Is the farm (if indicated) rented or owned?
29. If farm owned, is there a mortgage on the farm?
30. Address of home or farm owner, if property mortgaged

**Find a free downloadable 1890 census extraction form at <www.familytreemagazine.com/records/census/1890-census-records>.**

## Sample Record Substitutes

Ahira and Elizabeth (Boyer) Worden stand for a photo together. The medal worn by Ahira (left) is a clue to possible military service.

This 1892 school enrollment list from Benton County, Mo., includes each child's name, age, race (see the line at top), and sex, as well as the names of their parents. (The address field is unfortunately left blank.)



Race Negro Township 1, Range 1 Town of

| Names of Parents or Guardians. | Names of Children. | | Age. | Mal. | Fem. | Ward. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Williana Smith | Mary | Spencer | 20 | | ✓ | |
| | John | Cole | 18 | ✓ | | |
| | Alex | Ayers | 14 | ✓ | | |
| | Francis | " | 12 | | ✓ | |
| | Lula | " | 10 | | ✓ | |
| | Sallie | " | 8 | | ✓ | |
| | Dimah | " | 6 | | ✓ | |
| Woodward Daniel | Zachariah | Woodward | 20 | ✓ | | |
| | Mathew | " | 16 | ✓ | | |
| | Maria | " | 14 | | ✓ | |
| | Green | " | 11 | ✓ | | |
| | Lucinder | " | 9 | | ✓ | |
| | Luke | " | 7 | ✓ | | |

incarcerated, the blind, the deaf, and those with mental illness or developmental disabilities. An ancestor's presence in one of those lists may be a clue to look for them in institutional records from the era.

You might also consider creating a timeline of your ancestor's life. For each event, ask yourself "So what?"—that is, what documentation might be associated with that milestone, and what ramifications it has on other parts of your research.

### RE-CREATING AN 1890 ENTRY: A CASE STUDY

Now that we've changed our thinking about the 1890 census, let's try to locate more information about my ancestor Ahira H. Worden. Here's what I already knew about him:

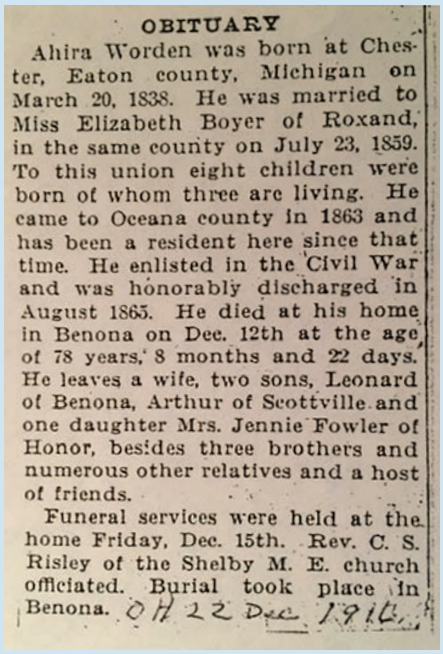
- He was born in Eaton County, Mich., the son of Parley and Lydoriana (Boyer) Worden.
- Ahira's parents came from Rensselaer, Herkimer and Onondaga Counties in New York.
- Ahira married Elizabeth Boyer on 23 July 1859 in Eaton County, Mich.
- Parley and Lydoriana relocated from Eaton to Oceana County about 1860.
- Ahira wore some sort of medal in a photo (see the Sample 1890 Record Substitutes sidebar), perhaps indicating Civil War service.
- Ahira and Elizabeth had an undetermined number of children, three of whom lived to adulthood.
- Ahira died in 1916 in Oceana County, Mich.

But, of course, I couldn't find Ahira or his family in the 1890 census, which would have provided some of the information above. For example: Were he and Elizabeth in the same place from 1880 to 1900? Had anyone gotten married during that time span? And was Ahira a Civil War veteran?

To essentially re-create Ahira's census entry, I would need to research more records. I hadn't yet found him in the 1880 or 1900 censuses, nor had I consulted city directories or vital records for the family. But here's what I was able to find in other documents:

- **Birth records:** Ahira's son, Arthur, was born in Oceana County in 1882.

PHOTO OF AHIRA AND ELIZABETH: COURTESY DR. SHELLEY VIOLA MURPHY; ENROLLMENT LIST: FAMILYSEARCH; OBITUARY: COURTESY OCEANA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



OBITUARY

Ahira Worden was born at Chester, Eaton county, Michigan on March 20, 1838. He was married to Miss Elizabeth Boyer of Roxand, in the same county on July 23, 1859. To this union eight children were born of whom three are living. He came to Oceana county in 1863 and has been a resident here since that time. He enlisted in the Civil War and was honorably discharged in August 1865. He died at his home in Benona on Dec. 12th at the age of 78 years, 8 months and 22 days. He leaves a wife, two sons, Leonard of Benona, Arthur of Scottville and one daughter Mrs. Jennie Fowler of Honor, besides three brothers and numerous other relatives and a host of friends.

Funeral services were held at the home Friday, Dec. 15th. Rev. C. S. Risley of the Shelby M. E. church officiated. Burial took place in Benona. OH 22 Dec 1916

Ahira Worden's obituary (courtesy the Oceana County Historical Society) provides his birth date and place, plus information about his family.

- **Military records:** Registration records on Ancestry.com revealed that Ahira (as well as his brother) registered for the Civil War in 1863 in Michigan. According to pension records, Ahira had been applying for a pension since 1881, but only had success in 1907. I obtained his pension file, which confirmed he lived in the same area and gave Elizabeth's age as 70 when she took over the pension in 1916.
- **Organizational records:** I ran a Google Search and discovered that Ahira was a member of his local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a Civil War veterans' organization. The medal I'd seen in his photograph was a GAR medal. Another Google search uncovered that the chapter was founded in July 1882.
- **Federal censuses:** The 1880, 1900 and 1910 counties verified Ahira was in Oceana County.
- **State censuses:** Ahira is listed by name in a statistical return of the 1894 Michigan state census.
- **Obituaries:** Thanks to the Oceana County Historical Society, I was able to obtain Ahira's obituary, which included a birth date (20 March 1838). Parley's 1862 obituary from the same source indicates Ahira and Elizabeth first came to the area in 1863.

Now we've gathered more information, let's "respond" to the 1890 census questionnaire on behalf of Ahira H. Worden. We have his name, race, sex, age and birth place/citizenship status from various sources (questions 1, 4–6, 10, 13–15), and we've found evidence of his Civil War service (2). He was likely head of his household (3) and married in 1859, with his wife still living (7–8). He had at least one child (9), and we have his parents' places of birth from their marriage record, previous censuses, and newspaper articles (11–12).

Previous censuses also list Ahira as a farmer (16), and we don't have any evidence of him being unemployed at the time (17). He wasn't of school age in 1890 (18), and was able to read, write and speak English (19–21). From the 1880 census, we know he was not suffering any diseases or disabilities, nor was he a prisoner or convict (22–25).

We were also able to piece together information about the Worden household. Ahira owned the house outright (26), and we weren't able to find evidence of a mortgage for either his home (27) or his farm (28 and 29). We admittedly don't have an address for the family in 1890, but it's reasonable to assume that Ahira and Elizabeth were in the same residence they occupied in the 1880 and 1900 censuses (30).

Instead of shying away from the 1890 census, we were able to find almost all the same details using other sources. By focusing on what we didn't already know, we were able to consult the most relevant records and resources while employing the basics of genealogical research. So the next time you hit a supposed brick wall, remember: Don't think "outside the box"—dig deeper into the information you already have instead. Happy digging!

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**Dr. Shelley Viola Murphy** is the Descendant Project Researcher for the University of Virginia and the President and Coordinator of the Midwest African American Genealogy Institute (MAAGI), where she also instructs. She serves on the boards of the Library of Virginia, the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, and the Fluvanna County Historical Society, and has developed educational programs for the International African American Museum's Center for Family History.

# Be Kind, Rewind

## Follow these four steps to fact-check your research using family tree software and websites.

by RICK CRUME

Someone has probably asked how you could possibly research your family history for so long and *still* not have it finished. But, as any genealogist knows, there are always more ancestors to find—and better ways of organizing the research you've already done. In fact, a thorough review of your family tree might reveal new avenues for research.

By "rewinding" your research, you can take your genealogy back to the basics to help you identify potential errors you've made. Returning to your roots can also give you a fresh perspective on your family and help you better understand the research challenges you face.

Fortunately, redoing your research doesn't have to be difficult or feel redundant. Genealogy software and online family trees offer many tools that automate the process. Here are four steps you can take to rewind your research with easy-to-use features from the following services.

### 1 FIND AND FIX DATA PROBLEMS IN YOUR TREE.

You don't necessarily have to go over your whole family tree with a fine-tooth comb looking for errors. Most genealogy software and online family trees can help you find and correct common problems, such as a child born before his parent or an incorrect place name.

#### ANCESTRY MEMBER TREES

The site will alert you to a potential problem if you attempt to enter unlikely or impossible vital event dates, such as someone dying before

he was born. However, there's currently no tool to find errors already in your tree or that get added via other methods.

#### THE FAMILYSEARCH FAMILY TREE

A data-problem icon—a red square with a white exclamation mark—signals impossible or unlikely data. For example, it flags someone being married before he was born or a person living for more than 120 years.

#### FAMILY TREE MAKER

By default, the program alerts you when you enter an unlikely birth, marriage or death date or an unrecognized place name.

Several options under the Tools menu will help you find and fix data problems already in your file. Select Resolve All Place Names to find unrecognized place names. For example, if you entered *Stonington, CT*, the program suggests Stonington, New London, Connecticut, USA. To accept a suggestion, check the box for the suggested place name and click OK. Likewise, the Convert Names option is useful if your file has names in all capital letters. You can convert names like JOHN WILLIAM SMITH to either John William SMITH or John William Smith.

#### LEGACY FAMILY TREE

Select Potential Problems from the Tools menu to check for common issues, such as someone being born after his date of marriage or non-standard entries in a name field. Also from the Tools menu, select US County Verifier, then USA County Verification to check for invalid county names in US locations. This tool will flag a county that didn't exist on the specified date, as well as misspellings and (if you choose) place names in your tree that don't include a county.

#### ROOTSMAGIC

Select Tools > Problem Search > Problem List to check for problems, such as someone born before a parent was born or after a parent had died. Select Data Clean from the Tools menu to find and correct problems or inconsistencies with names and place names, such as abbreviations or improper capitalization.

Select CountyCheck Explorer from the Tools menu to find when counties were created (and, if relevant, disbanded) in the United States, Canada, Australia and Great Britain. The Explorer also tells you the parent counties from which a county was formed, as well as the counties that were formed from it.

## 2 TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HINTS.

The major genealogy websites continually add new family trees and historical records, but you don't need to keep repeating your searches to find new matches. Genealogy software and online family trees do that job for you automatically—though, of course, you'll want to assess the hints' accuracy before adding anything to your tree.

#### ANCESTRY MEMBER TREES

Ancestry works in the background to find matches among people in your Member Tree, its historical record collections and Public Member Trees. Look for a green leaf while viewing your tree in pedigree view, as these indicate Ancestry

## Rewinding Your Research at a Glance

1. **Find and fix data problems in your tree.**
   - Make sure vital event dates are at least possible.
   - Standardize place names.
   - Avoid abbreviations.
2. **Take advantage of hints.**
   - Carefully analyze hints before adding new information to your tree.
   - Manually search collections not included in the site's record hinting.
3. **Follow up on clues and fill in gaps.**
   - Re-examine records (especially census returns) for clues to other sources.
   - Use tools such as the Record Detective on MyHeritage to find more record matches.
4. **Document all your facts.**
   - Record where you found each piece of information so you and other researchers can evaluate accuracy.
   - Use your genealogy software or online family tree to find facts lacking source documentation.

**By "rewinding" your research, you can take your genealogy back to the basics to help you identify potential errors you've made.**

has found potential record matches in your tree. To review them, click on the person's name in the tree, then on the link showing the number of Ancestry hints.

You can also review hints by clicking the Hints tab on a person's profile page. Click Ignore if a hint doesn't pertain to this person. Click Review to view more details about the hint. If it looks like a good match, click Yes. Then you can compare information in your tree with information in the record. Check the boxes beside information in the record that you want to copy to your tree then click Save to Your Tree.

Keep in mind that hints find possible matches only in censuses, vital records and Public Member Trees. Most of Ancestry's collections aren't covered by hints, so you still need to search them manually.

In certain cases, Ancestry will also provide record hints directly in your family tree. When viewing your family tree in pedigree or family view, you'll notice that end-of-line people have links to Add Father or Add Mother. Ancestry sometimes suggests a Potential Father or Potential Mother for these individuals based on record hints, saving you from having to add them manually. Click on the potential parent's link to review the details. Carefully analyze the potential parent's profile and evaluate the source citations, then click Yes to add the parent if the hint is a match.

### FAMILYSEARCH FAMILY TREE

In tree view, click Options in the upper-right corner to select items to display in the tree, such as record hints, research suggestions, data problems and more. Those items also appear in person view. In either view, click the blue icon to view record hints for that person. You can review each hint, determine if it's a good match and select information to extract to a profile in the Family Tree, along with an image of the original record.

For example, my grandmother's cousin DuBois Hasbrouck Cornish had eight record hints that revealed a lot of interesting details. His passport application from 1919 contained a photo of him and indicated he was a musician planning to get married in Luxembourg and study music in France. Fast-forward to the 1940 census: The 43-year-old lived with his wife in Arizona and worked as a musician in an orchestra. His WWII draft registration card from 1942 showed that he was age 46 and living in Glendale, California. By viewing an image of the record, I was able to see his physical description on the reverse side of the card: 168 pounds; 5 feet, 10.5 inches tall; and a ruddy complexion.

### FINDMYPAST

Your home page on Findmypast has a link to view hints in your family tree. Whether you display your tree in family, pedigree or another view, an orange circle shows how many hints were found for each person in historical records on Findmypast. Click on a circle to view the hint or on My Hints in the upper-right corner to view all new hints in the tree. After clicking on a hint, you can reject it outright or review it. After reviewing a record to determine if it's a valid match, you can extract information from it to a profile in your tree, along with an image of the original record.

My Findmypast trees have hints in a variety of records from both sides of the Atlantic: US, Canadian and British census records, US vital records, English and Welsh parish registers, English and Welsh civil registration indexes and British army service records. For example, William Morgan, my immigrant ancestor's brother who remained in Wales, initially had 18 hints, including the 1841 census, which shows him and his family still living on the family farm.

### MYHERITAGE TREES

Icons indicating record hints appear in both family and pedigree views when MyHeritage finds a match between someone in your tree and the trees and/or historical record collections on MyHeritage. A green icon indicates pending

## Re-examine records for information you missed. US census records, in particular, often have overlooked clues.

Smart Matches (matches in family trees), and a brown icon signals pending Record Matches. Click on a person's name to display an individual summary, which shows the number of both types of matches. Or click on an icon to go directly to the matches.

To review all the matches in your tree, hover your cursor over the Discoveries tab and select matches by people or matches by source. You can also view Smart Matches and Record Matches in Family Tree Builder <www.myheritage.com/family-tree-builder>, the free genealogy software from MyHeritage.

It pays to check matches for your direct ancestors, and their relatives, too. My great-great-grandfather Ithamar Cooley had MyHeritage Smart Matches in many family trees, plus five Record Matches, including the 1880 census. But his brother Dennis Nelson Cooley had even more Record Matches, including entries in the Compilation of Published Sources, a free collection of books and journals. A Record Match from one 1924 book showed his line of descent from a Revolutionary War soldier, and another Record Match (a Cleveland genealogy published in 1899) gave detailed information on each generation of the family back to another 17th-century immigrant.

### LEGACY FAMILY TREE (DELUXE EDITION ONLY)

To adjust hint settings, click on the Options tab, then Customize. Then click View and scroll down to "8.13 Perform Background Legacy Hints." To get hints, make sure the box to "Show hint result icons in Legacy" is checked. Click on Select Background Hints to choose where you want to get hints. (You can also right-click on an orange hint icon in family or pedigree view to change the hint settings.) By default, only MyHeritage was checked. I added FamilySearch, Findmypast and GenealogyBank.

When Legacy finds hints, an orange circle icon appears next to the person's name in family and pedigree view. Click an icon to view a summary of the hints, then click a hint to open the website with more details. Most of my hints are Smart Matches—that is, matches with family trees on MyHeritage. After reviewing a potential match, you can confirm or reject it. Hint results in Legacy show how many hints are pending, confirmed and rejected from each service. You can manually extract information from a hint to Legacy.

### ROOTSMAGIC

Use RootsMagic as your genealogy hub, and you can get hints from the four largest genealogy websites—Ancestry, FamilySearch, Findmypast and MyHeritage. A light bulb next to a name in Pedigree, Family or Descendant view indicates that hints exist. Just click on the bulb to see them. RootsMagic will display the number of pending, confirmed, rejected and total WebHints on each site. Click on a hint count to view the actual hints.

Select File Options from the Tools menu to enable WebHints for one or more of the four websites and then select options for each one. You must enter your FamilySearch login and password to get hints from that site. To get WebHints from Ancestry, you must upload your tree to Ancestry or download your Ancestry Member Tree to RootsMagic.

WebHints quickly turned up lots of information on Jacob Imboden, a captain in the Confederate army who later settled in Honduras, where he had a large mining operation and was killed in 1899. FamilySearch has a record of his marriage to Rebecah J. Mims in Kentucky in 1869. Likewise, WebHints flagged matches in Ancestry Member Trees, which provided key details on his family, including names, dates and places. Also on Ancestry: his passport application from

tip

**Make sure you download records you don't want to lose, especially documents from subscription sites.**

1884, which gave a physical description and said he intended to travel to Central America and South America. MyHeritage had an article from *The Pittsburgh Press* reporting his murder.

## 3 FOLLOW UP ON CLUES AND FILL IN GAPS.

Re-examine records for information you missed the first time. US census records, in particular, often have clues that you may have overlooked. Have you found everyone who might appear in them, and investigated all the details in each entry?

For example, are you missing children who died in infancy? The 1900 and 1910 censuses indicated how many children a woman had borne and how many were still living, and a discrepancy between the two numbers can provide additional avenues of research.

And have you checked passenger lists and naturalization records? The censuses from 1900 to 1930 asked for both the year of immigration and whether the person was naturalized or alien. Information in either column should prompt you to look for those kinds of records.

The four largest genealogy websites have every-name indexes to the US federal census from 1790 to 1940. But FamilySearch and MyHeritage each have additional tools that help you identify missing ancestors in census records:

- **FamilySearch**: Research suggestions appear as purple icons in landscape, portrait and descendancy tree views and on the person page. (If you don't see them, click Options at the upper right of the screen and select Research Suggestions.) A suggestion might say "Possible Missing Child" or "Person May Have Another Spouse." In the latter case, the site has flagged the person simply because he or she outlived his or her most recent spouse long enough to have remarried.
- **MyHeritage**: When you get hints or use SuperSearch to find historical records, Record Detective examines the matching records to see if they're connected to any other people in MyHeritage family trees. If so, those people might be linked to records that pertain to your target person. For example, when I click the brown Record Matches icon for my grandfather Frank Miles Crume (or select census records from the Research tab, then search on him), the matches include family trees and census records. If I click on one of those matches to review the record, but keep scrolling down, I come to the Record Detective results with matches in additional family trees and census years.

## 4 DOCUMENT ALL YOUR FACTS.

Naturally, you want to make sure your family history is as accurate as possible. When compiling names, dates, places and relationships from multiple sources, you're bound to come across conflicting information. And some family stories might be more legend than fact. But as long you document the source—that is, you note where you found each piece of information, whether it was a family Bible record or an oral interview—people can assess your research's reliability and maybe even re-examine it.

Some genealogy software and online family trees give you tools to help you improve your source documentation.

### FAMILYSEARCH FAMILY TREE

Click on a purple icon—the one used for research suggestions—and sometimes you'll find that it says, "This person has no sources attached to his or her information." Click Show Details to review hints to records on FamilySearch, but you can also cite sources you've found elsewhere. In Person view, click on the Sources tab, then Add Source. Fill out the form and optionally link the citation to a link or a FamilySearch Memory, such as a scanned document or some other piece of media. Check the box to Add Source to My Source Box so you can reuse the source without having to retype it.

### FAMILY TREE MAKER

Click Publish > Collections > Source Reports > Undocumented Facts to create a report of facts without sources. If you save the report as a TXT file, you can open it in Excel and sort by place.

### ROOTSMAGIC

Select Reports > Lists > Fact List, then click Create Report. Then you can create a list of facts without sources. You can optionally limit it to selected people. ●

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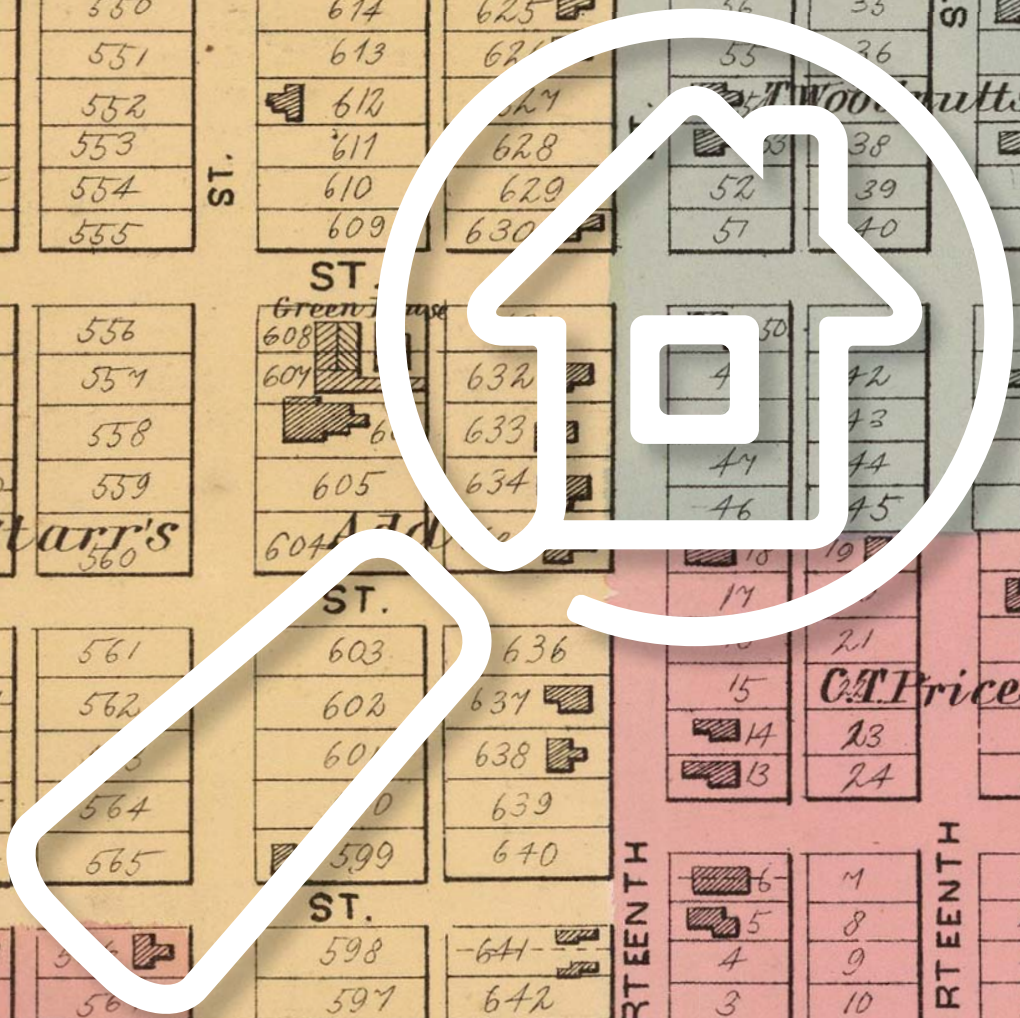
Contributing Editor **Rick Crume** documents, and re-documents, his ancestors from his home in Glyndon, Minn.

# MOVING TARGETS



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

BY RANDY MAJORS AND SUNNY JANE MORTON

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

You may eventually find your kin somewhere else and piece together an explanation behind their move. On the other hand, your family might still be exactly where you last saw them, but something else changed: the city or county boundary, the street name or their address. To figure out which scenario applies to your situation, ask yourself four questions about the place where your family lived and the neighbors who resided nearby. Once you determine whether it's your family or their address that was the moving target, you'll be able to track down that census, city directory, tax or other record you need.

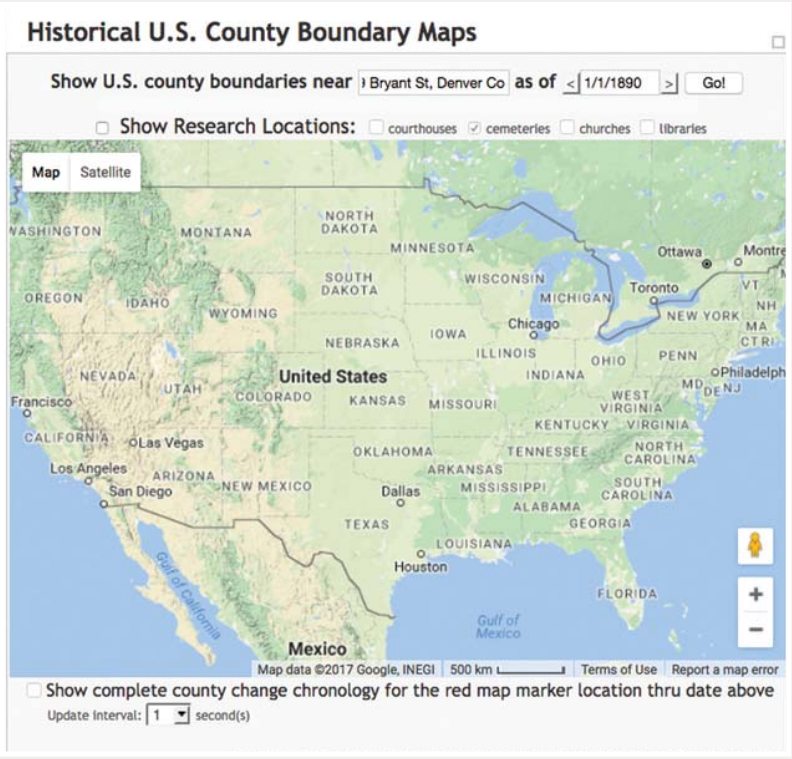
## 1 Are you looking in the right state and county?

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

## Breaking Boundaries

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

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



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

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

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

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

## 2 Are you looking in the right locales?

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

Look first for place clues in genealogical documents. Confirm the name and type of locale (such as a town, city, village, township or military district). Note whether the county is mentioned, as well as any nearby towns that may help you find it on a map. US census listings typically have the city, county and state written across the top of each page. Digitized city directories may include this information in the front pages.

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

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

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

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

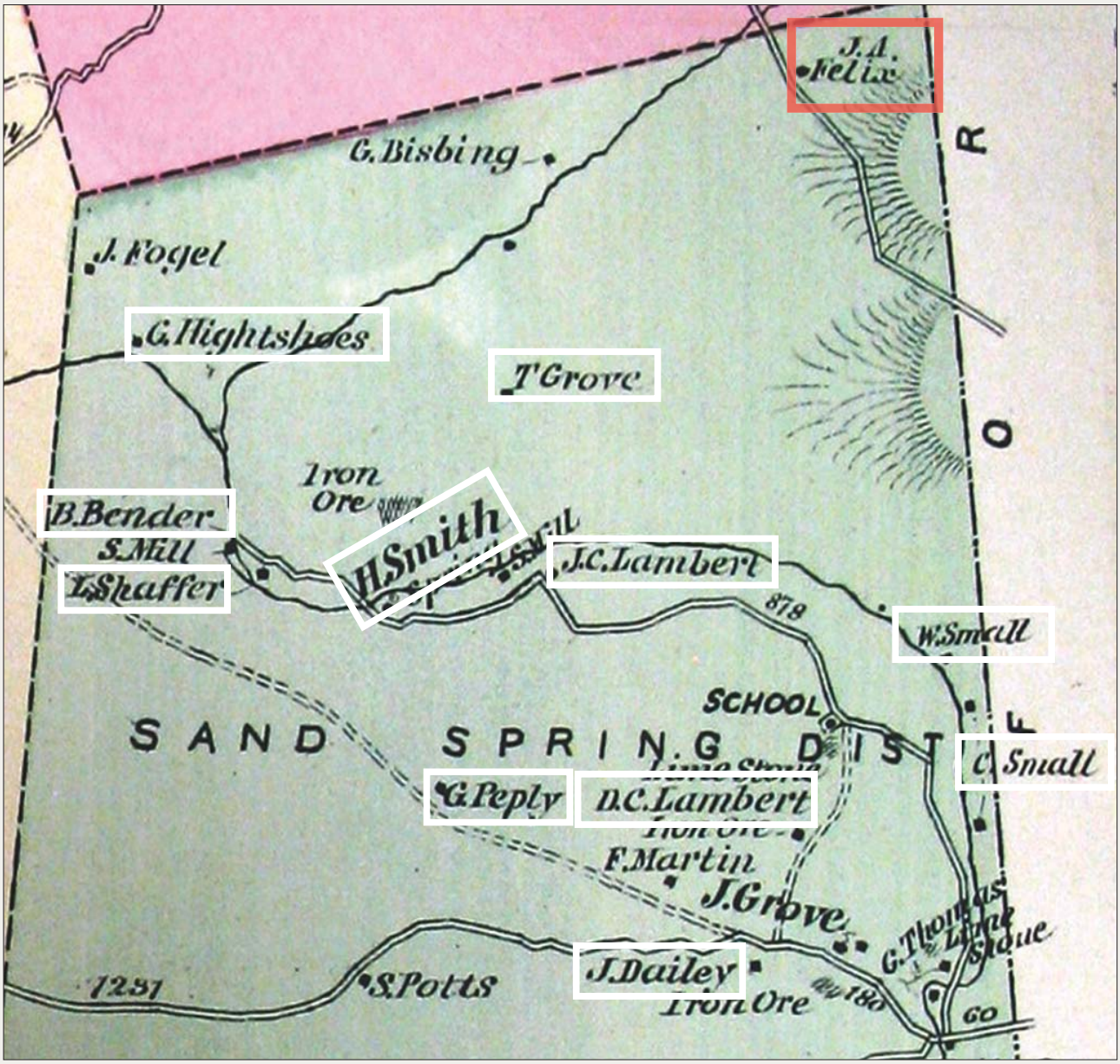
## Match-Making

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

**Heads of Household in the 1880 Census**

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

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




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

## Case Study: The House on Bryant Street

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

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

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

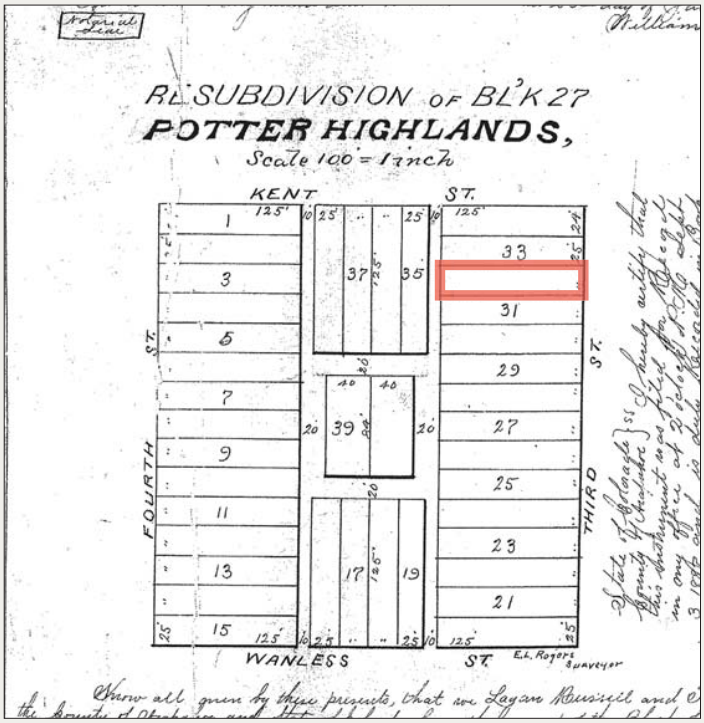
Moving forward in time, I found a circa 1897 assessor's map showing Block 27 fronting Bryant Street, with "3rd St" crossed out: evidence that Bryant used to be Third.

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

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

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

1887




City and County of Denver, <www.denvergov.org/subdivisionsurveys/Result?SubId=3888>

1897


City and County of Denver Engineer's Office, <www.denvergov.org/subdivisionsurveys/Result?SubId=3888>

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

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

Next I tried a different tactic: triangulation, or using two known reference points to locate a third. In the 1898 city directory, I looked up the residents of the houses on either side of 3349 Bryant. Alfred H. Lomax lived at 3345 Bryant. Going back another year, I found Alfred H. Lomax at 2029 Third in Highlands. (Remember how Third Street in Highlands became Bryant Street in Denver?) I repeated this step with the other neighbor. In the 1898 city directory, a keyword search on *3353 Bryant* reveals resident William O. Vinacke. Going back one more year put him at 2033 Third Street in Highlands.

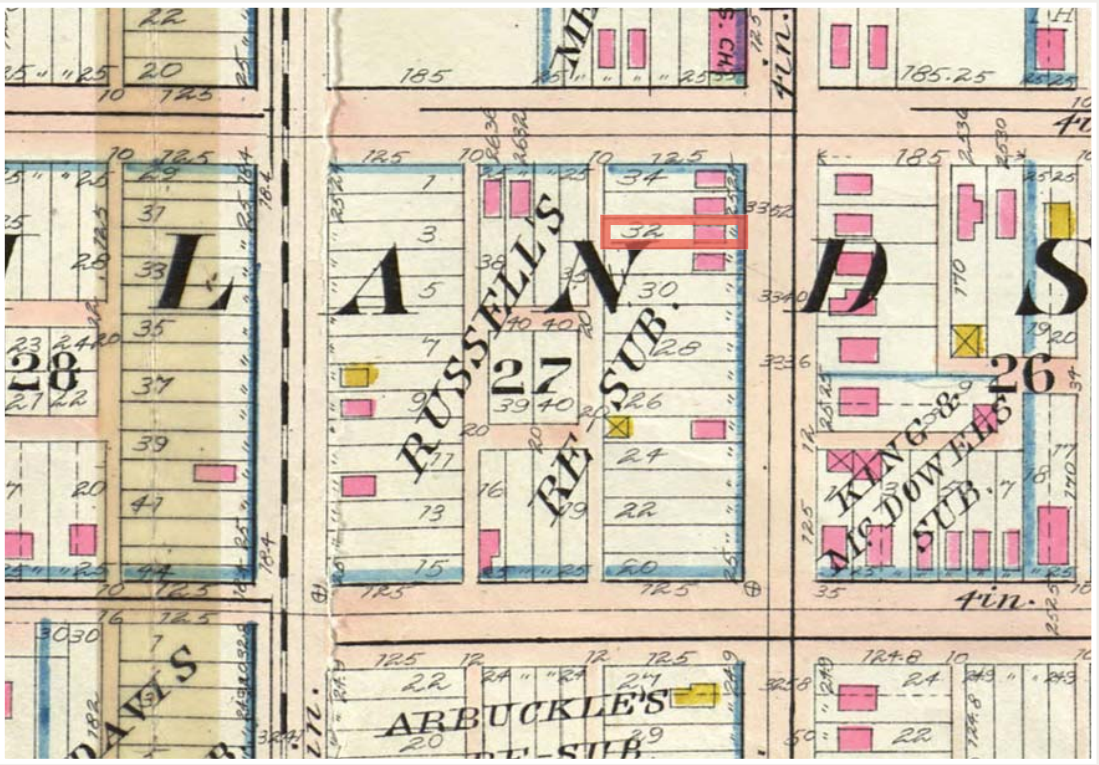
Given that 2029 and 2033 Third Street in Highlands each had the same occupants as 3345 and 3353 Bryant Street a year later, I could surmise that the house known today as 3349 Bryant Street, Denver, was originally 2031 Third Street, Highlands. City directories listed a series of renter-occupants in this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

There was no 2029, 2031 or 2033 Third Street in the 1891 city directory. So was my friend's house built in 1891? Likely not. Information in directories could be up to a year old by the time the area was canvassed and the data published. (Recall that the change from Third to Bryant occurred between the 1897 and 1898 directories, even though Highlands was annexed to Denver and the street names changed in 1896). A deed search, which might shed further light, has so far proven fruitless, but it's safe to deduce that my friend's house was built—or at least first occupied—in 1890.

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

**» Randy Majors**

1905




*Baist's real estate atlas of surveys of Denver Col.* (Baist, G. Wm.), 1905, Plate 9. Digitized image at Denver Public Library <digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15330coll2/id/1450>.

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

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

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

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

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

## 3 Did the street name or address change?

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

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

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

## Searching Records by Address

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

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

**2. FIND THE RIGHT ED FOR THE ADDRESS.** Choose the state, county (which you've determined from the Historical US County Boundary Maps website), and city or town, if applicable. Fill in the house number and street name as of the selected census year. If the deeds or maps you've checked show cross streets near your address, choose them to narrow your results. Run the search.

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

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

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

- **LOOK FOR OLD PLAT MAPS** created by the local or county assessor showing property ownership, lot boundaries, block names and neighborhood developments. Ask for these at town or government offices, local historical and genealogical societies and libraries. Search online in your favorite web browser with the city, state and the phrase *plat map*. Browse major online map collections such as David Rumsey Map Collection **<www.davidrumsey.com>** and the Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection **<www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>**.
- **CHECK SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS** (find a large collection at **<www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn>**) or historical atlases such as Baist's real estate atlases (search for *Baist real estate atlas* and a city name) to see building structures and possibly street addresses.
- **LOOK FOR A GUIDE TO LOCAL STREET NAME CHANGES** in the local history or genealogy section of your local library, or an online database such as that hosted by the New Orleans Public Library **<nutrias.org/facts/streetnames/namesa.htm>**. Local genealogical society websites often have information on changes, and you may find them detailed in city directories published that year.
- **ONCE YOU HAVE AN ADDRESS, SEARCH US CENSUS RECORDS** by street name and house number, following the step-by-step instructions in the box on the previous page. This can help you find elusive ancestors in the census; see whether other relatives lived there previously or subsequently and learn more about the history of the home.

## 4 Can the neighbors help?

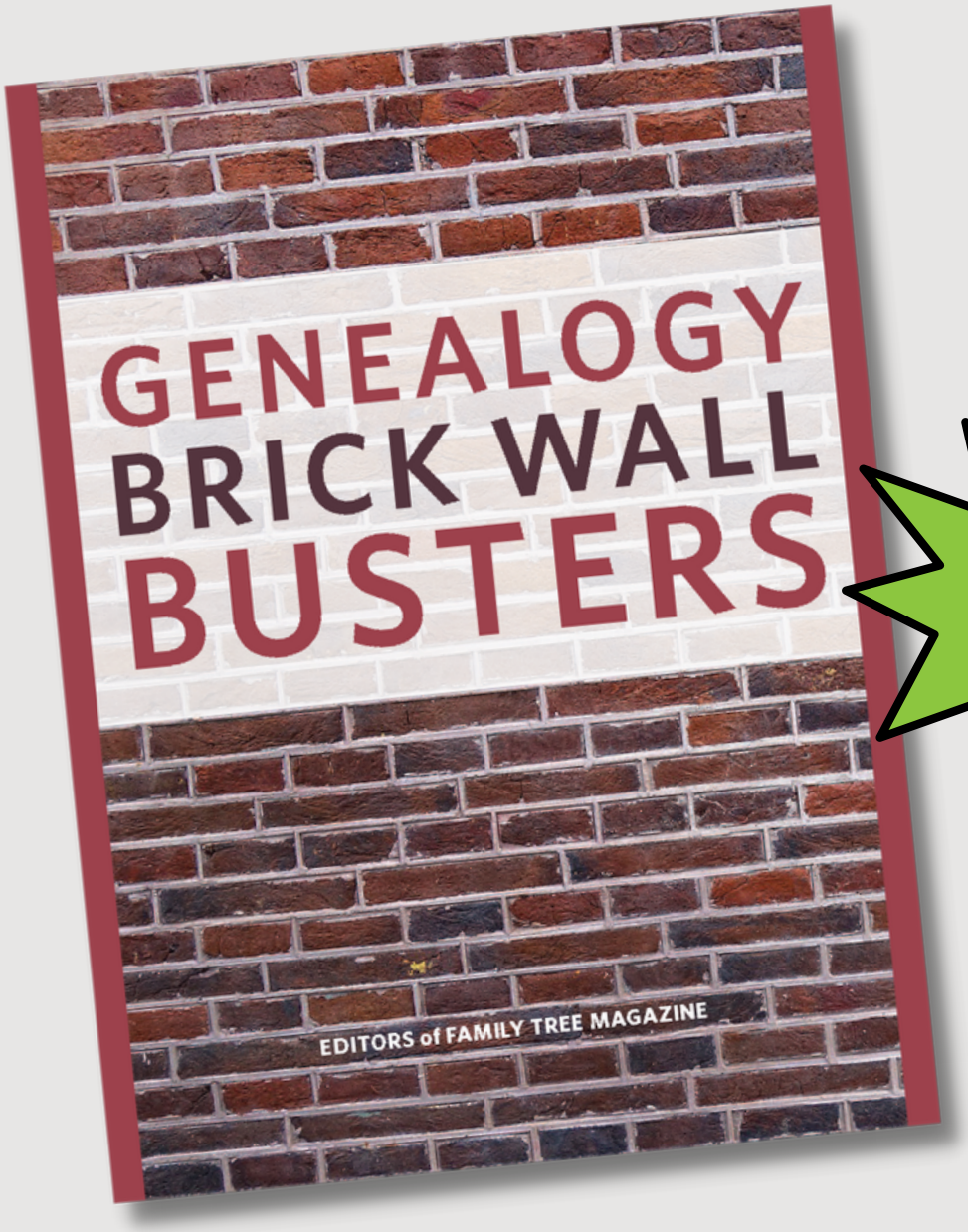
If you can't find your family's home in a given census or city directory, their neighbors may be able to point you in the right direction. First, note the names of your family's neighbors in previous or later censuses and city directories. For the latter, keyword-search for the address in digitized directories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

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

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

**Sunny Jane Morton** is a *Family Tree Magazine* contributing editor who lives on Lake Erie, the country's "North Coast." Colorado-based **Randy Majors** **<www.randymajors.com>** created the Historical U.S. County Boundary Maps online tool.

# READ MORE!

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