
Siblings and Cousins Matter! Expanding Family Trees and Moving Forward

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If you can't break down that brick wall, go around it. All genealogists experience setbacks, but when this happens, sometimes all that is needed is a different route to the desired destination.

When you hit a brick wall:

- Re-analyze, and take a closer look the documents you have.
- Look at the documents in different ways.
- Check documents surrounding your focus record.
- Keep a list of surnames tied to the project.
- The principles apply to every record type.

Newspapers:

- Newspapers.com (partnership with Ancestry)
- Find My Past, Ancestry, FamilySearch & My Heritage
- Local and State Libraries (i.e., Utah Digital Library digitalnewspapers.org)
- Newspaper Databases (through universities)

Probate:

- Probate files are often found in court records, legal records, or church records.
- If someone left a will, besides that record there may be documents generated from proving the will.
- If someone died intestate there can still be probate records, perhaps with inventories of the estate and a list of claimants.
- Names are not always spelled correctly so be creative.
- Searching for siblings is useful.
- Even if the person sought for is not listed, clues can be found in other relationships that lead to more information.

Land:

- Places are clues and can be used in many ways.
- Deeds may give addresses, leading to other documents.
- Historical and modern maps are very useful.
- Look for relatives living near each other and for applicable surnames in records documenting exchange of property.

Oral History and Artifacts:

- We learn about women through artifacts, heirlooms, personal journals, scrapbooks, family bibles, and stories.
- Living memory goes back a surprisingly distance in time and oral history may hold clues leading to new documents.
- Reach out to extended family, including young people.
- Casual conversations and formal interviews both have their places in genealogical research.

Searching:

- Use the FamilySearch Wiki for the place of interest and then in the "Wiki Topics" column will link to different record types.
- Use the catalogs on FamilySearch, Ancestry, FindMyPast, and MyHeritage.
- Websites with a locality or subject focus can be good resources for specific record types.
- Use the beta "Full Text" experiment on FamilySearch for probate, court, land, notarial records, and more.

Hit A Brick Wall? Try These Research Strategies by Record Type

Birth/Christening: Pay attention to naming patterns, middle names, parents, godparents, locations, and the church.

Burial: On sites like Find A Grave check information in the memorial for hints, contact the person who created the memorial, search for additional family members buried nearby.

Census: Explore multiple pages, use an address to seek land records, find historical maps, items like investigate occupations and schools, use city directories to track movement and relationships between census years, consider different types of schedules like state or non-population schedules such as veterans, agricultural, slave, mortality, social statistics, industry, pensioners, and others.

Church: Beyond christening, marriage, and burial files churches may have member reports, ecclesiastical courts, social service records, adoption and other documents; Be sure to identify the denomination and locate the churches.

City Directories: Check for surnames, especially maiden surnames, occupations can be researched, use addresses.

Death: Identify the relationship of the informant, see if any of the addresses or places listed can lead to other records.

Education: Search yearbooks, newspapers queries by school name or extracurricular groups, awards or graduation announcements. Get creative!

Emigration/Immigration: Every boundary, each change of location, and every mode of transportation presents the opportunity for records, pick apart events of movement for small clues and details that might lead to other records.

Marriage: Siblings may be witnesses, note the residences of the bride and groom, what can be inferred by dates and ages?

Military: Draft cards contain relationships and addresses, look up maps and histories for theaters of operation.

Newspapers: Obituaries can substitute for censuses or vital records, articles with details about weddings, reunions, visitors, and funerals can also be found in newspapers.

Notarial/Court Records: These collections contain unexpected finds that get into the details of ancestor's lives.

Oral History/Living Memory: Access repositories of memory held by living relatives, stories/traditions hold clues, ask family members about their siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts, and uncles; Younger generations may have information about great-aunts/uncles and kin on other lines.

Personal Possessions: Journals, photos, scrapbooks, heirlooms, awards, certificates, documents, etc. may be in your home or held by other family members.

Probate: Establish relationships and guardianship, lead to married surnames of females, may outline generations.

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