



"You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late." --- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

In all of us there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage—to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainment in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness and the most disquieting loneliness. —**Alex Haley**

Volume 22, Issue 3

September, 2002

Want to see your name in print? Submissions welcomed and will be used eventually.

The Editor

## A Rose By Any Other Name

Michael John Neill

If each ancestor had one precise name, family history research would be significantly easier. However, genealogists live in an imperfect world. Nicknames, diminutives, and Anglicizations of non-English names frequently create genealogical confusion. They can easily cause the family historian to see two individuals where only one really existed.

### Thomas' Will

The will of Thomas Chaney was admitted to probate in Bedford County in 1856. The following children are named: William, Thomas, Sally, Betsy, and Rebecca. No other children are mentioned and from other records it is clear that Thomas had ten children. Sally and Betsy do not appear in the list of Thomas children from his biography, but I should not immediately assume that Thomas has two addi-

tional children not listed in the biography. The references to Sally and Betsy are likely to already known children Sarah and Elizabeth. Sally was a common nickname for Sarah, and Betsy is still a common nickname for Elizabeth. Nicknames will get me in trouble if I'm not careful. When the genealogist uses a variety of records for one family (which they should), the chance they encounter nicknames increases. Census records are an excellent place to get additional names for family members. They are also an excellent place (if one is not careful) to accidentally create additional children where none existed. Comparing ages and dates of birth is one place to begin seeing potential duplication of individuals via nicknames. It may also be helpful to use lists of known nicknames to determine if two different names

are actually references to the same person.

Of course, some families break all the rules. This is why research beyond census records is imperative. Vital records, obituaries on the parents, probate and will records on the parents, land records transferring property after the parents death, and other records may help clarify some of these issues. Of course if you think one person went by two names, clearly indicate your reasons in your research notes. While we may use intuition or instinct to get our research started, your research source should not be your gut.

### Middle Names Too

Your ancestor may have used a combination of first and mid-

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Ahnentafel Charts

Ron Wild explains what they are and why you need one.

AHNENTAFEL IS GERMAN for ancestor (ahnen) table (tafel). Preparing an ahnentafel chart is a very efficient way of organizing your pedigree chart in order to make it quickly understandable by others.

On a standard pedigree chart, each person is assigned a number. These numbers are worth remembering since, if you follow the traditional numbering system, just by looking at a number you can know the relationship of any person on the chart to yourself. You are always 1, your father 2, your mother 3, paternal grandfather 4, paternal grandmother 5, maternal grandfather 6, maternal grandmother 7, patrilineal great grandfather 8, and so on in

consecutive fashion.

Using this system, one quickly notices some patterns. First, each new generation has double the number of ancestors of the previous generation. Thus you have four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents and so on. By the 10<sup>th</sup> generation, you will have completed research on more than 1,000 ancestors; many will be unknown and others will be duplicates because of cousin intermarriage (it is estimated that before 1800 about 40 percent of marriages were between first, second or third

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# MESA DWELLERS

## SOCIETY OFFICERS

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
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The Mesa County Genealogical Society was established in 1980 as a non-profit organization to promote an interest in genealogy. A Newsletter is published in March, June, September, and December. **Note: All Society meetings are held at the Museum of Western Colorado 7:00 p. m., on the second Thursday of each month.** Visitors are welcome. The Museum is located at 4<sup>th</sup> and Ute. The meetings are held in the conference room located in the Whitman School Building.

## BOARD MEMBERS

Don Fifiield  
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Dennis Jenkins

## COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

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Annual Dues: \$10 Singles; \$12 Family. Membership period is March 1st to April 30th. Those with **UNPAID DUES (after April 30th.)** will not receive the Newsletter. **Send a SASE to receive a current membership card if you do not attend regular meetings.**

Contributions of neatly typed or written stories, requests for/or giving information, queries, or other information of importance to the membership are welcomed.

The Society disclaims responsibility for statement of fact or opinion made by contributors and will not accept material with obvious errors

## UpComing Programs And Events

**October 10 2002 Judy Prosser-Armstrong**

**Nov 14, 2002**

**December 12, 2002 Potluck Dinner  
6:00 P.M.**

## October 2002

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|     |     | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   |
| 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  |
| 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  |
| 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  |
| 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  | 31  |     |     |

## November 2002

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|     |     |     |     |     | 1   | 2   |
| 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   |
| 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  |
| 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  |
| 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  |

## December 2002

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| 22  | 23  | 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  |
| 29  | 30  | 31  |     |     |     |     |



**U.S. FEDERAL CENSUS IMAGES ONLINE UPDATES****--- 1930 Images Available for 94% of U.S.****--- Every-name index added for New Hampshire**

Over the past few weeks Ancestry.com has released more images of the 1930 U.S. Federal Census and now has over 94% of the U.S. Federal Census available.

**STATES AVAILABLE AND ESTIMATED COMPLETION PERCENTAGES**

--- Alabama (100%)  
 --- Alaska Territory (100%)  
 --- American Samoa (100%)  
 --- Arizona (78%)  
 --- Arkansas (97%)  
 --- California (99%)  
 --- Colorado (100%)  
 --- Connecticut (100%)  
 --- Consular Service (100%)  
 --- Delaware (100%--with every-name index)  
 --- District of Columbia (100%--with every-name index)  
 --- Florida (70%)  
 --- Georgia (100%)  
 --- Hawaii Territory (100%)

--- Idaho (100%)  
 --- Illinois (91%)  
 --- Indiana (82%)  
 --- Iowa (100%)  
 --- Kansas (97%)  
 --- Kentucky (98%)  
 --- Louisiana (100%)  
 --- Maine (100%--with every-name index)  
 --- Maryland (100%)  
 --- Massachusetts (99%)  
 --- Michigan (100%)  
 --- Minnesota (97%)  
 --- Mississippi (84%)  
 --- Missouri (100%)  
 --- Montana (100%)  
 --- Nebraska (48%)  
 --- Nevada (100%)  
 --- New Hampshire (100%--with partial every-name index)  
 --- New Jersey (99%)  
 --- New Mexico (67%)  
 --- New York (98%)  
 --- North Carolina (78%)

--- North Dakota (100%)  
 --- Ohio (99%)  
 --- Oklahoma (87%)  
 --- Oregon (100%)  
 --- Panama Canal (100%)  
 --- Pennsylvania (89%)  
 --- Puerto Rico (97%)  
 --- Rhode Island (100%)  
 --- South Carolina (94%)  
 --- South Dakota (94%)  
 --- Tennessee (94%)  
 --- Texas (84%)  
 --- Utah (100%--with every-name index)  
 --- Vermont (100%)  
 --- Virginia (100%)  
 --- Washington (100%)  
 --- West Virginia (88%)  
 --- Wisconsin (97%)  
 --- Wyoming (100%)

Every name indexes are currently available for Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, New Hampshire, and Utah. Additional indexes are being created for all states in this census year and will be posted as they become available.

## Why The Bother ?....Wills And Probate

**GEORGE G. MORGAN**

### "Another Look at the Will"

Some of the most interesting looks at an individual and his or her family can be found by looking at probate records. They often will tell you something about the relationships that existed between the testator and the people on whom the estate was settled. Probate packets often contain interesting insights into the person's life. The correspondence between the administrator and debtors, credits, and family members can be enlightening. However, even the inventory of the estate can tell you about the per-

son's profession, lifestyle, and what he or she valued. In "Along Those Lines . . ." this week, let's examine why

you want to obtain copies of all the contents of an estate or probate packet and examine them for yourself.

The absence of a specific child's name may indicate that he or she is deceased. It may indicate that the child has moved elsewhere and has not been heard from for a considerable time. It might also indicate some estrangement.

#### A VIEW INTO THE PAST

The final wishes of an individual can often be found in his or her last testament. And while some wills were made years in advance of the person's demise, many were made within a

short period prior to death. At this time

of reflection, the person may have revealed his or her true feelings about family members through overt statements or through bequests or lack thereof. One of my relatives at age 82 wrote and signed a will dividing her estate between her surviving sisters. Rather, she divided her estate between three of her four surviving sisters. She cited the fourth sister in the will stating that "I leave my youngest sister, [name omitted], the sum of two cents, which is precisely the value of all the unwanted advice she forced on me over the years in trying to run my life." Whoa! That was quite a shock. Sometimes in a will, a husband may have provided for his wife or children through a trust. It is not unusual in older wills to see a bequest such

(Continued on page 7)



# By Any Other Name

(Continued from page 1)

dle names during his lifetime. My forebear John Michael Trautvetter is listed in various documents as:

John Trautvetter

Michael Trautvetter

Jahn Trautvetter (the German form of his first name)

Mike Trautvetter

J. M. Trautvetter

These are the five most common variants and sometimes it seemed like which name he used was dependent upon which day of the week he was being asked! Of course your ancestor might have given his full name, and the official creating the record could have put down whatever he deemed appropriate. Your ancestor might not have been able to read the document to see if the name was correct and the record keeper might not have cared if the name was correct anyway.

## Just A Childhood Name?

In some religious denominations and in some ethnic areas, children would use certain names and then take adult names when they became of age. Some German Catholics did this and they were not alone in this practice. It is always worthwhile to learn about naming practices and procedures for the ethnic group your ancestor was a part of and for the religion she practiced. However some families did not practice what was common practice. There's always the one exception to the rule--make certain you document why you believe your family was the exception. Again, avoid listing "my gut" as the source.

## Katherine=Adolphina=Feenie?

An ancestor of mine made a bequest in her 1904 will to a Katherine Trautvetter. As I read the will I realized I had never heard of any Katherine Trautvetter. Apparently the executor of the will had not either. His initial report indicated he did not know who Katherine was and felt she could not be located. His final report indicated Katherine was actually the middle name of the ancestor's granddaughter, Adolphina Trautvetter. In all my research, I had never encountered the middle name of this relative. Before the will and probate settlement was located the individual in question had only been referred to as Feenie or Adolphina.

## Always Used A Nickname?

My great-grandmother's birth certificate lists her name as Frances Rampley.

Every other document during her entire life lists her name as Fannie. Every document she signed, from her marriage license to her husband's probate papers lists her name as Fannie.

## Similar Names?

Of course there's always the family that chose names for children that were extremely similar if not exactly the same. Eighteenth century Ohio natives Archibald and Lucinda Kile named daughters Lucinda and Lucina. One relative asked if they were the same person. Court and other records are pretty clear that these two children are distinct. Some of my families from Ostfriesland, Germany, named children Anna and Anka---two names also very similar and two names that translate into English as the same name creating additional confusion.

In some time periods, families may have re-used the name of a child who died at a young age. One ancestral family has four daughters with the exact same name. The first three all died shortly after birth.

## Translated to English?

Those of us with ancestors who were not originally English speaking have additional problems with names, especially when researching the generation that jumped the pond and their children. Some translations are fairly straightforward and some translations from some languages to English are fairly standard. The following sites may be helpful in locating more information:

## French Names and English equivalents

<http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~afgs/givename.html>

## Cyndi's List -- Section on Names

[www.cyndislist.com/names.htm](http://www.cyndislist.com/names.htm)

Those with name translation problems may wish to post their query to the appropriate genealogical mailing list on RootsWeb or the message boards at Ancestry. The appropriate country page of

Cyndi's list may also have links to additional name information.

Searches for the nickname at a search engine such as Google may also produce additional suggestions.

## No Nickname?

I don't have one and perhaps your ancestor did not either. I do realize that Mike is occasionally used as a nickname for Michael. While it is a fine name, I choose not to use it.

## Have Some Proof

If you think your ancestor used a nickname, try and back that statement up as much as possible. Keep in mind that there might have been a John Tinsley and a Jonathan Tinsley who were contemporaries. Perhaps they were first cousins instead of being the same man.

*Michael John Neill, is the Course I Coordinator at the Genealogical Institute of Mid America (GIMA) held annually in Springfield, Illinois, and is also on the faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois.*

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING QUESTIONS NOW

My father-in-law and mother-in-law were both from the Newark/ Belleville area of New Jersey. One would think their marriage certificate would be there as well. However, it was war-time (WWII) and he was stationed on the West Coast and she was in New Jersey. He got leave but it was not enough for a transcontinental round-trip.

They each got on a train and met in Omaha, Nebraska where they were married. I am glad that I have that information now to document for future generations, as they would not have been able to glean that information from local records.

Janet Morgan



# Why Label Your Photographs?

**Our** ancestors had no way of knowing how popular photography would become. Early portrait studios provided affordable photographs of individuals and families. Previously, the only way to obtain a portrait was to hire a painter, a cost that far exceeded most people's financial means. As a result, most people never anticipated that the names of the persons in the photographs would be forgotten. The portrait was a thing of permanence, and it was generally assumed that it would be cherished and passed from generation to generation, complete with stories of the subject's identity and his or her life, just as painted portraits had been. As cameras became readily affordable and available to the masses, photography became a ubiquitous part of life. Lifestyles changed and people became more mobile. They traveled with their cameras, took photographs, and reveled in sharing their experiences with one another through pictures. Picture postcards became

the rage, and some photographers set up shop at busy train depots to take personalized souvenir photographs and print them on postcard stock to sell to travelers.

As time passed, some of our organized ancestors and relatives collected all the family photographs, organized them, and placed them in photograph albums. If we are lucky, someone either labeled the back of the photograph or inscribed some identifying text beside the photo in the album. Unfortunately, many photographs remained loose in drawers and boxes, stored in less than ideal conditions, and unlabeled. As a result, many of us have a collection of unidentified 'orphan' photographs. Megan Smolenyak has written an excellent article in the January/February 2002 issue of *Ancestry Magazine*, which discusses "Finding Homes for Your Orphan Photos" and suggests twenty Web sites to help place them with their families.

## Why We Should Label Photographs

We all know how frustrating it is to look at

old photographs and not know the identities of the people and places in them. I have one photograph of my maternal grandparents and their twelve adult children, which was taken in about 1905. It's easy to identify the parents, and the six daughters are all easily identified from other photographs taken over the succeeding years. The six sons' identities, however, were a huge challenge, requiring a tremendous amount of research because they were not as frequently photographed as their sisters. Some factors that helped identify me them were: the relative age of each of the males; which ones wore wedding bands in the picture and had been proved to already be married at the time; which ones



had facial hair worn in the same fashion from that photograph to any later photographs; the cut of the clothing, which seems more mature on the older men and more "dandy-ish" on the younger ones. Through many, many hours of research and study, I am certain of the identities of four of the six sons, but am slightly unsure which is which of the other two (although I have a strong hypothesis).

It is important to invest whatever time you can to identify and label the photographs of your family members. Use the research tools you have available. There are books on dating and identifying photographs such as Karen Frisch's *Unlocking the Secrets in Old Photographs*, which help you determine the time period of a picture's origin based on the paper or card stock, the finish, the size and shape of the mounting board and its embossing and/or edging, and a variety of other criteria.

Books and Web sites concerning the clothing or costumes worn by the subjects in

photographs can be helpful in dating the time period and even in isolating the identity of the people. All of these tools can work to your advantage. If you think dating the old photographs is difficult, just imagine what our descendants will have to endure. Clothing fashions, hair styles, and items shown in old pictures can help us date and identify them. However, these days people look much the same as they did twenty or thirty years ago: jeans, T-shirts, slacks, athletic shoes, and other common attire cannot be used to differentiate time periods. (There are some exceptions, of course, such as that lime green polyester double-knit leisure suit and those platform shoes still in your closet! Not only will that date you in the picture but it says a lot about your taste in clothes.)

**Labeling and Storing Photographs**  
With this in mind, it becomes crystal clear why labeling photographs, and doing it properly, is important. Storing photographs correctly to protect and preserve them also is essential. There are excellent archival products available, including acid- and lignin-free albums and storage boxes, as well as archival safe labeling pens and pencils whose inks and leads will not damage the photograph or fade over time.

Please refer to the archival products vendors' Web sites listed in the ATL column of 22 February 2002 to locate and order these products.

You don't want to leave the kind of mess of unorganized, unlabeled photographs to your descendants that some of our ancestors left for us. As responsible genealogists, we also assume the roles of archivist and preservationist. We have taken on a responsibility to identify and preserve the history and artifacts of our families' past for the future generations, and labeling those photographs is an important, integral part of that job. There's still time this winter to get a great start on the project.

Happy Labeling!

George

George G. Morgan is a proud member of the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors, Inc.

Source: Ancestry Daily News" (<http://www.ancestry.com/dailynews>)



## Ahnentafel Charts

cousins). Every father on your chart will have an even number and every mother will have an odd number that is her husband's plus one.

Traditional pedigree charts usually print four generations to a page so that 16 generations usually take around four pages to display. The beauty of an ahnentafel is that these same 16 generations would fit on one page, depending on the type size chosen, and the same numbering system used in a standard pedigree chart again allows you to quickly discern your kinship with anyone on the ahnentafel.

### Your Ahnentafel

The ahnentafel takes the numbering system described above and uses it to create a continuous list of ancestors instead of a chart. The format would be as follows:

1. your name
2. your father
3. your mother
4. your father's father
5. your father's mother
6. your mother's father
7. your mother's mother
8. your father's father's father
9. your father's father's mother
10. your father's mother's father
11. your father's mother's mother
12. your mother's father's father
13. your mother's father's mother
14. your mother's mother's father
15. your mother's mother's mother
- 16-31. your great-great-grandparents

32-63. your great-great-grandparents

An ahnentafel is particularly useful when you are corresponding with another genealogist in your family because indicating unknown ancestors with a blank space or line will allow them to see immediately where your genealogical research ends and, from the names and dates given, where you might have common ancestry.

### Preparing an Ahnentafel

Most of the popular genealogy software programs have the ability to print out an ahnentafel. The most popular format for presenting genealogy data is the pedigree chart, but the simple beauty of an ahnentafel will no doubt appeal to many genealogists wanting a quick,

*"Ahnentafels are a simple, non-graphical way of presenting one's family tree. Used well, they allow genealogists to perform some fancy mathematical tricks."*

simple view of their ancestry. Increasingly, software programs are offering hourglass charts, bow-tie charts and other picturesque and creative arrangements more notable for their novelty than for any intrinsic value. Set against these, the simple format of an ahnentafel and its superior way of organizing information in a numerically ascending lineal format that allows you to immediately

identify your relationship to anyone on the chart is difficult to beat. Most software programs identify each person entered with a number or can be configured to do so.

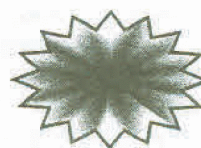
Knowing the numbers allows the researcher to use math to properly identify any individual in relation to themselves simply by

knowing that even numbers are males and odd numbers are females, except for the first person who is always 1 whether male or female. Individual 33 is the wife of 32, or to put it in English your great-great-grandparents, or to put it in ahnentafel language your father's father's father's father's father and your father's father's father's father's mother. Half 32 and get 16 who is your great-great-grandfather. Add one and get 17 who is your great-great-grandmother; half 16 to 8 and you have your great-grandfather, and add one to get 9 who is your great-grandmother.

It may help to have a doubling chart on hand when you get into the 15<sup>th</sup> and higher generations. A common shorthand trick is to refer to one's 15<sup>th</sup>-great-grandfather as "G15", but this could be misleading since you have over 16,000 grandfathers in the 15<sup>th</sup> generation, so let's simply refer to him by his unique ahnentafel number of 32768. It would require a thick binder to present this many fifteenth generation ancestors in conventional pedigree charts.

While you may add other information to your ancestral ahnentafel listings other than number and name, in the interest of maintaining simplicity any added data should not take a listing beyond one line of data. It may take a while to get used to this numeric way of organizing ancestors, but it is a remarkably efficient system.

*This article originally appeared in our Ancestry Magazine January/February 2002 issue.. Source: Ancestry Daily News" (<http://www.ancestry.com/dailynews>)*



## \*\*MORE TIPS AND NOTES\*\*

Knowing the history of the area you are researching is an important part of family history work. It not only helps you to know more about where and when to look for records, but it also helps you put your ancestors into a historical context.

### PAY ATTENTION TO BOARDERS

In census records, many households will have individuals enumerated as "boarders." Don't dismiss these people as strangers. Often they are family members and the surname may give a clue about a married woman's maiden name or a little searching of that name may reveal another branch of the family. In the 1930 census, in the household of my in-laws, a

George Pritchard is listed as a "boarder." In reality, he was the brother of my husband's grandmother, who also lived in the home. And of course, his surname was the maiden name of the grandmother. Sometimes, young men will be listed as boarders and turn out to be brothers of the wife. I have also seen circumstances where parents of the wife will be referred to as boarders. Check it out--

you might find a chink in that brick wall!

Kathy Dixon  
Newbury, Ohio

**Editors receive comical requests and comments from readers, especially on genealogical subjects. For example:**

"Last week I uploaded my grandfather and this week I plan to upload my grandmother, but I've forgotten my account's password."

"So you can see what I'm talking about, I want to forward you my marriage certificate and three children, one of which is a mistake, as you can see."



## Wills and Probate

as, "To my beloved wife, Elizabeth, I leave her the house for her use for her lifetime, after which it is to be sold and proceeds divided between my children." One of the most amusing bequests I've seen was, "I leave my wife, Addie, the bed, her clothes, the ax and the mule." What a generous husband! Farther back, you will find that laws sometimes dictated that the eldest son inherited all of the estate. During colonial times and in some places in Europe, this law of primogeniture was in effect. Sometimes the eldest son is not listed in the will at all because this law dictated that all real property automatically came to him.

In other cases, the eldest son may be named and may be given a double share of the otherwise equally divided estate.

You will often see a father leave his daughter's share of his estate to his daughter's husband. Why? Often it was because a woman was not allowed by law to own or inherit real property or because it was felt that she could not manage the affairs of the bequest. Sometimes, because a father may have settled a dowry on his daughter when she married, the father's bequest may be a smaller than one than to other, unmarried sisters. It is also possible that a will may leave an unmarried daughter a larger amount than her sisters, in order to make them equal in their overall share of the father's estate. A father who did not possess a large estate may have made arrangements for the placement of a son as an apprentice or indentured servant. This was a common means of guaranteeing the care and education of a son when there would not have been enough from the estate to support him. If you find such a statement in a will, investigate court records for the formalization of the arrangement. The guardian may well have become legally responsible by law for the apprentice or servant, and reports to the court may have been entered into the court minutes that provide a status report.

The absence of a specific child's name

may indicate that he or she is deceased. It may indicate that the child has moved elsewhere and has not been heard from for a considerable time. It might also indicate some estrangement, especially if you can determine that the child was, in fact, still alive at the time of the death. Otherwise, it is more likely that the testator would leave an equal part to that child and the court would probably have charged the executor with locating the child. As you can see, it is important therefore to look at the overall size and content of an estate, and the probate packet can help you determine this.

### WHY YOU REALLY WANT TO EXAMINE DOCUMENTS YOURSELF

There are many ways to obtain information about a will or probate packet. Since most of us cannot afford to travel to all the places where our ancestors lived, we may need to do some 'mail order' business, writing for copies of courthouse records. One of the problems with will and probate documentation published in

books, magazines, periodicals, and on the Internet is that someone else has looked at the documents. Since these are not their ancestors, they may not have the family perspective and insight that you might have. If they have transcribed the document verbatim, it might be correctly done, but you can't be sure unless you review it yourself. Even worse, materials that have been extracted (only selected pieces quoted verbatim) or abstracted (the document described and not quoted) will often contain omissions of details, which might be of significant importance to your research. As an example, one will listed nine children's names, some of which were double-barrel names, such as Billy Ray and Nita Beth. The insertion of

comma in the transcription, extract or abstract of these two children's names could easily turn these two children's names into four children--and wouldn't you play havoc trying to straighten that out?

Watch wills carefully for names of children. Don't make any assumptions. One of my friends researched her great-great-grandfather's family and was convinced that there were seven children in the family. That was until she studied the actual will of the great-great-grandfather. In the will, the names Elizabeth and Mary had no comma between them. This led her to suspect that there was one daughter named Elizabeth Mary, rather than two daughters. Further investigation of marriage records in the county refuted that hypothesis as each daughter was married, one a year after her father's death and the other two years later.

These are some of the primary reasons why you will want to examine the document, or a true photocopy or digitized copy of it yourself. There certainly are other reasons, and we will examine those in future columns, but begin to think now about how much information you might be able to obtain by reading the entire contents of a will or probate packet for yourself. You must see it to be entirely certain that you have the correct information to interpret for yourself.

Happy hunting!

George

Ancestry Daily News September 6, 2002

Source: Ancestry Daily News" (<http://www.ancestry.com/dailynews>)

## October is Family History Month

For the second consecutive year, the Senate has approved legislation introduced by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) to designate October 2002 as "Family History Month."

"Family history sites continue to be some of the most popular on the Internet," Hatch said. "More than 80 million Americans are actively searching for more information about their ancestors; next to gardening, it's our nation's second most popular hobby."

The concept of designating October as 'Family History Month' began several years

ago. It originated with the Monmouth County Genealogical Society, whose aspiration was that during this month, societies would do something special to draw attention to and promote family history. Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia all passed 'proclamations' in the last few years declaring October as Family History Month. At

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# Writing History from Photographs

## "Along Those Lines"

George G. Morgan – 5/17/2002

### Writing History from Photographs

I've been spending time recently looking through our family photographs. These range from the more recent ones to the oldest ones I have, which date from the early 1870s. I consider myself fortunate to have this rich visual legacy of my family and, although there are chronological gaps and missing images of some family members, these provide a vivid representation of the family's appearance over time. Over the years, I have written a number of detailed biographical sketches of certain ancestors. My great-grandfathers were so honored when I wrote mini-histories of them for the Floyd County, Georgia, book a couple of years ago. Recently, however, I have begun considering a broader work about each of these two branches of the family and have been reviewing the family pictures looking for inspiration.

It is possible to write a compelling biography or family history using photographs.

Clothing can be a tremendous help in identifying people in the photographs. It takes a little study but you can learn about clothing fashion for men, women, and children

I've done this before and want to share a few thoughts about the technique in "Along Those Lines..." this week.

### A Good Place To Start

We've been told by genealogists many, many times to start with ourselves and work backwards. I think our approach to reviewing photographs and biographical material tends to be in chronological sequence. After all, that's how we live our lives. What I have done with the photographs I have of the people about whom I plan to write is compile them in chronological sequence. I place them in archival safe photographic accordion file

folders by family.

The most important job is to properly identify the subjects in the photos and the locations. This is emphatically not the easiest part of the process. If you're lucky, someone in the family has already done much of this work and la-

beled the photos. If not, you will need to make this a high priority. You may want to consider making complete set of photocopies and sending them off to relatives and old family friends to help with the identification process. On the photocopies, you can always make notations of those who have been identified and/or circle people with whom you need help.

The study of the type of photograph, the card stock on which it is mounted, the card stock's color, embossing, and edge treatment all help you home in on a time period.

Clothing can be a tremendous help in identifying people in the photographs. It takes a little study but you can learn about clothing fashion for men, women, and children and use this knowledge to isolate the subjects to a specific time frame. For instance, on one style of women's dress I found in photograph, I noted the balloon shoulders and could therefore say that the photograph was taken after a specific date. In another, the striped stockings and dress worn by a baby boy helped isolate the time period for that photograph.

Another approach to the identification process is to review the photos you have and to A) use family resemblance to help group people together, and/or B) use a process of elimination to hone in on who a person is NOT and then speculate on who the person IS. Sometimes for me it has been a combination of the two. In one group of photos taken by my grandparents and great-aunts and -uncles in the early 1900s, I employed an interesting and rewarding process. The subjects included my grandmother and grandfather before they were married in 1908. Four of my grandmother's five sisters were included, as well as another man I needed to isolate who was who. With the four sisters, it took some careful examination of the photos with a magnifying glass to verify the identities of three of them. Their identities were

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## Tips and Hints

When visiting a grave, don't assume the people whose name(s) appear on the stones are the only ones buried in that plot. On a recent venture to the cemetery with my mom's oldest sister, she informed me that buried with my grandfather was also his sister, although only his name appears on the stone. I decided to get an interment list from the cemetery. Not only was my grandfather's sister listed, but also two others. It was the same with my grandfather's mother's grave, which, inscribed his two other sisters. The interment list showed a fourth name.

Diane Tortorella

### Don't Forget Nicknames When Searching for Ancestors

Try thinking of possible nicknames or middle names when you can't find an ancestor. Early in my research I went looking for a couple referred to by my grandparents as Uncle Bill and Aunt Molly, who were supposed to be buried in the local cemetery. There were seven brothers with the last name and none of them matched up, until I figured out that the tombstone for John W. (John William) and Mary C. (Mary Caroline) was indeed the Bill and Molly I had been searching for. The death dates from their obituaries confirmed their identities.



## History and Photographs

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confirmed by using other, later picture. The fourth woman was a problem. It was not until I sent copies to a cousin who had different photos taken at the same time that I was able to make the necessary connection. My cousin copied her photos for me. Then, using the plaid, full-length skirt to verify it was the same person, along with my magnifying glass, I was able to connect the sister to an identified professionally-taken photograph made a few years later. Success!

Next, I work my way through the collection, not once but twice. First I work through the file in chronological sequence, and then I work backward. I make sure that I have the photos in the right order. This means trying to group them into what might have been the right order both by year and then by season of the year.

Next I try to determine just where the photograph was taken. Photographers' imprints on card mountings can be helpful. If you find multiple picture taken some time apart by the same photography studio that could indicate the subject lived close by. If you find a single photograph like this, it could be a secondary source of verification of residence. Look, too, at casual photographs for clues to location: landmarks, street signs, business names, events—all of these can contribute to identification of place, and sometimes the date.

### Writing The Story

The old adage, "One picture is worth a thousand words," really is true. For a writer, a photographic image of an ancestor in a certain locale at a specific point in time can translate into a rich narrative. For example, I wrote:

*"On 28 May 1900, Green Berry Holder filed an application with the United Daughters of the Confederacy to be considered for the award of a Confederate Cross of Honor. At that time, he was living in Lindale, Georgia. It was not until 1912 that the honor was bestowed. "On the appointed day, Green Berry arrived at the Civic Auditorium in downtown Rome, Georgia, with his wife, Penelope, for the awards ceremony. At sixty-seven, he still cut quite a figure. He was five feet ten inches tall and slender, sporting a full grey mous-*

*tache and beard down to the middle of his chest—so full and brushed so that his mouth was not visible. He was dressed in a frockcoat and vest, a black round-top hat with a silk band, his cravat completely hidden by his beard. His gold watch chain stretched across his torso and the timepiece rested in a vest pocket."*

A further description of the ceremony, the speakers and the presenter from a newspaper account of the event, as well as a description of the venue as shown in a photograph in the newspaper would contribute to the text concerning Green Berry. Additional descriptive material about Mrs. Holder also would be appropriate to incorporate her into the event. And while no mention was made of other family members' attendance, you can be sure that some or all of the local family were there. Perhaps additional material about other Confederate veterans on whom the UDC bestowed the Confederate Cross of Honor would be appropriate, especially if the rest of the biography described interaction with some of these old friends and colleagues.

The use of 'props' such as buildings, automobiles, pets, furniture, tools, and other things you see in the pictures, can add atmosphere. They bring the stories to life and help humanize the subject.

### Incorporating Other Facts

The research you have compiled over the years should provide you with a rich set of details. For instance, I could

include the information from the marriage certificate, including the names of the clergy and witnesses. Information on where the person lived and with whom can be derived from census records, along with the occupation and the value of the property. I could even provide a description of the death, funeral, and interment from the obituary. A visit to the cemetery and photographs of gravestones, dates, and epitaphs add to the story.

### Pulitzer Prize?

My motivation is not to win a literary award for my work, although I do want to produce a quality piece of work. My goal, and probably yours too, is to document the collected facts into some semblance of factual (not fictional) biography to preserve the story of the ancestors. I'll never win a Pulitzer Prize. My reward will be compiling quality family historical information. Not only will the photographs contribute to the text, they can complement it when I publish the history.

Research, methodology, planning, and dedication to documenting the facts (complete with citation of your sources): these are the components of writing a quality history. But organize and date those old photographs, identify the people and the places that are portrayed, and let the photographs speak to you. You'll find that the stories may write themselves because your ancestors will come back to life in front of your eyes.

Happy Writing!

George

George G. Morgan

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## October Family History Month

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the last NGS board meeting, the NGS board officially endorsed the concept and will use the NGS Newsmagazine to promote the idea.

With official recognition of Family History Month, we can get a media spotlight shining on genealogy. This extra attention brings in more researchers using the libraries, archives, and courthouses seeking the records of their ancestors. This added use helps these facilities justify increased budgets to add to existing collections, aid in records retention, expansion of facilities, extended hours, digitization of records, new projects, etc. As Dr. John Daly, Director of the Illinois State Archives says in his article, "Genealogy Power,"

**"Family historians and genealogists have replaced academic re-**

**searchers as the principal users of public archives in the United States. The combined memberships of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians today are twenty-eight thousand. A study published in American Demographics in December 1995 cited that 113 million Americans have some interest in genealogy, and that 19 million have a strong working interest in the field . . . If the administrators of public archives in the United States had to rely upon the use of archives by academic researchers alone to justify the existence of archives, they would find it extremely difficult to do so."**

The values of family and community are an integral part of American life, and this has been reinforced throughout our history. However, each of our ancestors brought their own family's values and ethics from wherever they originated. As a result, we are the amalgam--the melting pot--of our ancestors and the values passed down through the generations. Celebrating family is what genealogy and family history research is all about.

It is researching the origins, ethnicity, culture, traditions and customs, stories, individuality, and group dynamics of our families. **Making It Happen**

So how do we make it happen? A great place to start is with your local society. Attend the next meeting and ask what they have planned for this auspicious occasion.

- Conduct a one-day "Introduction to Genealogy" workshop in your area.
- Contact editors of area publications (community and genealogical) to request a feature article on family history.
- Request that local libraries display family history material during October.
- Sponsor a writing contest for children, "Family History Begins with Me: Writing My Own Life Story."
- Ask our museums, historical, ethnic, business, and religious organizations to highlight the role families have held in their respective history.
- Provide volunteer speakers to local service clubs and organizations for October meetings about family history.
- Convince local and state officials to deem October as Family History Month.