



"Progress comes from the intelligent use of experience."
 --- Elbert Hubbard
 "The journey is the reward."
 --- Taoist Proverb

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

Problem Solving

— Michael John Neill

As a math professor, I am always asked what mathematics has to do with genealogy. Plenty. Besides my personal favorite of land platting, the analytical and logical skills one gains from mathematics come in extremely handy when solving genealogical problems. This week we look at one mathematician's framework for handling problems and see how it can relate to family history problems as well.

George Polya was a Hungarian born mathematician who advocated the use of a general problem solving strategy. While his work was focused on mathematical dilemmas, family historians can benefit from applying this same strategy as well. When you have no strategy, the brick walls rarely come tumbling down.

Polya's strategy had four basic steps:

- * Understanding the Problem
- * Devising a Plan
- * Carrying out the Plan
- * Looking Back

This week we will look at these steps one by one.

Understanding the Problem

Understanding the problem is not as simple as it sounds, but it is an excellent place to start. I have always believed this stage to be the most important in the entire problem-solving process. Generally the problem should be specifically stated and purposely focused, such as:

- * What was Noentje Ufkes'

maiden name?

* When were James Rampley and Elizabeth Chaney married?

* Where is Samuel Neill enumerated in the 1880 census?

* How did Thomas Galloway acquire his property in Baltimore County, Maryland?

Well-defined problems should focus on a person, a place, and an event.

Then there are problems such as:

* I want to know all I can about Noentje.

* I want to completely re-search James and Elizabeth this afternoon.

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DAR DATABASE ONLINE

Toward the beginning of last century the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) worked with members to transcribe previously unpublished records of genealogical value to assist "state genealogists, potential members and the public." Almost a century and 17,000 typescripts of records later, these books, known as the Genealogical Records

Committee Reports, represent a large and unique segment of the collection of the DAR Library in Washington, D.C., where the entire national collection is located.

A grassroots project that began a few years ago has just come online, DAR members from around the

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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.



IRISH TOWNLAND MAPS

This next notion only applies for those of us with Irish roots, but since that's a healthy number, I think it's fair game. Highly detailed and gently colored townland maps, copies of the First Edition six-inch scale Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland, surveyed between 1829 and 1843, are available at the website aptly titled Irish Townland Maps (<http://www.pasthomes.com>).

Michael Neill's topic "Organizing by Place" included a good suggestion as far as mapping the family's movements. I had finished doing this just before reading the tip. My family had moved around Brooklyn, N.Y., and I took the addresses from notes on where they lived. Using MapQuest.com, I entered each address and got a localized map. The map gave me a new perspective on how close the neighborhoods were to each other. They had moved, but not very far. I now have a better understanding of my ancestor's neighborhoods--not just the idea of "somewhere in Brooklyn." Marty

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 4th and Ute. The meetings are held in the conference room located in the Whitman School Building.

August 2005

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September 2005

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October 2005

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Problem Solving

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These problems are not specific. The statements are too vague and either unrealistic or need to be broken down into smaller, more manageable pieces. Learning "everything" about one family or couple may be possible over the long term; rarely is it possible in an afternoon. One or two records will not reveal a relative's "whole story." Information gleaned from records must be accurately interwoven with about the history, culture, and lifestyle of the area and era in which the person lived. This takes time. Most successful researchers begin with a specific goal.

Understanding the problem is more than simply stating the research goal precisely. There are many things that should be learned about if the researcher is not already familiar with them. These items include:

- * The records (both public and private) that were created during the time period under study.
- * The culture in which the person or persons lived.
- * The socioeconomic status of the individuals under study.
- * Groups that the problem person was associated with (Ethnic, religious, etc.).
- * The methodology appropriate for the time period, region, and individuals under study.
- * Words from the native language necessary to perform research in foreign language records.

One place to start learning about the records applicable to any problem is to read the Family History Library's research guide (www.familysearch.org) to the areas under study. Those researching problems in the United States can also refer to the appropriate section of Red Book (published by Ancestry) for information on local and state records. Both the Red Book and the Family History Library research guides contain references to additional reference materials, including foreign language word lists where appropriate.

Local and regional histories are also suggested reading material for additional background information. Even "non-genealogy"

books may provide a background not gained elsewhere. Historical studies, dissertations, and papers published in academic journals may provide entirely new insight into your ancestors and their problems, positively impacting your research. As an example, *Prairie Patrimony* (Sonya Salamon, University of North Carolina Press, 1995) discusses agricultural inheritance patterns in the upper Midwest. It confirmed things I had already surmised from personal experience and in researching many families from one of the ethnic groups discussed in the book. Salamon also helped to explain things I did not quite understand and confirmed trends I had noticed. The more you know, the better prepared you will be to solve your problem. Material written by a non-genealogist occasionally brings a fresh perspective.

If your problem involves the interpretation of a document, make certain you understand the language and the terminology being used during the time period. Sometimes completely typing a document or even reading it out loud will cause you to notice a detail or an interpretation that had been overlooked. It may be necessary to have someone else look at the document with a fresh, unbiased perspective.

Learning about the methodology appropriate for the area is crucial. One way to do this is to read journal articles for the area under study. If a subscription is out of the question, determine if any nearby libraries subscribe to genealogical journals applicable to your area of interest. Many will contain case studies where other family problems have been solved. The National Genealogical Society Quarterly and the American Genealogist are two national magazines that contain excellent well-written case studies. There are a variety of state publications as well, usually published by a state genealogical society. There are also a variety of publications focusing on various ethnic groups, which usually present their own unique problems.

Devising a Plan

Planning usually involves determining what records are most likely to provide the desired information. In other situations, it will be necessary to analyze a series of documents to see if a generally consistent conclusion is indicated. This is why learning about the records is extremely important, especially when researching in a "new" state. What was true about records in Illinois in 1880 is not necessarily true about records in Virginia in 1780. Of course, the plan should always be to locate as many records as possible given that one individual record may be incorrect or inconclusive.

The plan may be simple or complex, depending upon the situation, but it should be fairly specific:

- * Order a marriage index from the Family History Library.
- * Write a letter to the church secretary.
- * Search for the family in the census.
- * Hire a researcher.

Writing down your plan is also necessary so that research efforts can be tracked. Polya suggested math students look at similar problems. Genealogical educators would suggest looking at case studies written about similar families in the same area and time period. What helped one person solve their problem may help you solve yours.

Carrying Out the Plan

This is the easiest part of the plan. Do it. And track it. You do not want to do the same thing again (unless you realize your previous attempt was flawed, utilized an incomplete database, etc.)

Looking Back

Occasionally the plan will succeed. The record will be located. The question will be answered. Of course, getting one answer to a genealogy question usually means that there are more unanswered questions. And so we go back to step one.

And when our question is not answered, we also return to step one. Perhaps there

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Ramblings of a Genealogist's

I just love the Census. The varied material and data that you can glean and pull from these set of "facts" can add so much and answer so many questions that we have regarding the life and times of our ancestors. The Census must also be scrutinized very carefully and can sometimes be like a treasure

Solving Problems

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was something we overlooked, a record we did not understand, an assumption we should not have made, a term we misinterpreted, a name we overlooked, a spelling we did not consider.

Next week we will take a look at some genealogy problems viewed through this set of steps. There are other ways to organize and solve genealogy problems to be certain. Failing to organize your research can easily add to your confusion and may even create brick walls where none existed.

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. Michael is currently a member of the board of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) www.fgs.org. He conducts seminars and lectures nationally on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including Ancestry Magazine and Genealogical Computing. You can e-mail him at mjnrootdig@myfamily.com or visit his website at www.rootdig.com, but he regrets that he is unable to assist with personal research.

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map with clues scattered throughout that must be deciphered with skill reflective of any good treasure hunter.

One of my grandmothers remarried, I knew who she married and I knew when. I knew that they moved from Kentucky to Indiana, and I found her and her new husband in the Census, but I could not find the son by his surname (Tarvin) in that Census. Jumping up ten years found him in the same Indiana county living four residences down from his future wife. Why when I did a search could I not find him in the 1860 Census? Because the census taker changed his last name from Tarvin to Sleeth. The only time he probably ever went by Sleeth in his entire life. Same family now trying to find earlier reference to the stepfather, Oh look, at the age of eleven he and his brother Frank were marked as female rather than male. Now that is a sex change the easy way. His parents with the stroke of a pen went from parents of two sons and three daughters to the proud parents of five daughters. And of course for the sake of accuracy it was transcribed just exactly that way.

Other name changes, how about this one? I was doing the typical find the death date by doing searches in the Census? You know the, is he in the 1870 Census, yes. Is he in the 1880, yes. Is he in the 1890, no. Then he must of died between 1880 and 1890, rightno he underwent a name change. For some reason the Census taker listed the family he was living with (his eldest son) the normal way, last name, first name, until he came to the grandfather, then the father of the head of household was listed first name, last name, so now my ancestor instead of being in the Census as William Sheldon is listed as Sheldon William. Ain't the Census fun..

Page Two

Each of us has there own reason for becoming a genealogist. Some to have a connection with our ancestors. Many because they want establish that link with

royalty because they know that they descend from Kings and Queens and the royal court. Boy, are they in for a surprise.

I, however, have the most purest of reasons. I was dragged kicking and screaming into genealogy by my wife who flat told me to do it myself.

Now, I try to find a main cause of all of this madness. And there is not just one. I had always been interested in history, so there is that aspect of how did these people live during those historical times. My daughter just got back from a trip to Pennsylvania, and I told her that she had to go to Philadelphia. Imagine walking into Independence Hall knowing that the steps you are taking are the same steps that Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, John Adams and the rest of the delegates took in 1776. That the spot in that building that you are standing in is the same spot that Thomas Jefferson and George Washington stood to discuss the Declaration Of Independence and what could happen if they signed it. Walking down the streets of Philly, realizing that Benjamin Franklin walked the same cobblestones on his way to Independence Hall. Chilling thoughts aren't they. So standing in a town or on a farm field knowing that my ancestors were here previously and worked this ground with plow and oxen. Wow, what a connection. Entering a church that my gr-gr-great grandfather worshiped in, could have sat in that pew and prayed for his family's health, for the rain to come and save his crops, or asked that his neighbor's broken arm would heal right. These feelings, these connections, realizing that the names on a piece of paper called a census were living breathing individuals not unlike myself.

Knowing why we are here and where and who we came from are all good reasons to do what we do, and why we do it with such intensity. I understand that no one else in my family is that interested in what is done for a family genealogy, but someday one of them will ask and it will be there for them because of what I do now.

Rick Sheldon

All things being equal . . .

— Paula Stuart Warren, CGRS

Have you ever heard the phrase “life isn’t fair?” I can hear my mother telling me that she never said life would be fair. The lack of fairness applies to some genealogical records, too. I like to think about that other phrase, “all things being equal.” Records we consult in our genealogical research are not created equally. Neither are the record repositories. But with some effort, you can learn about alternative records and how to interpret those you do find. Being prepared before you delve into specific records or visit a library will help overcome that unfair feeling.

Open Shelves for Browsing

Oh, how I love libraries with open shelves for browsing. Libraries that come to mind are the Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington, D.C., the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Of course, there are others with open shelves. But there are still many others where most items must be requested via the staff. Definitely not created equal. In some cases it is due to budget or space reasons. For those with closed stacks, check to see if there is an online catalog that you can study before your arrival. For a closed stack library that you visit often, keep a few library call-slips handy and fill them out before your arrival. While waiting for the books or boxes of material to be delivered to you, look around the room to see what general reference books do appear on open shelves. Many of these places have current issues of genealogical and historical periodicals on self-service racks.

Public Libraries of All Kinds

There are many large and small public libraries that cater to genealogists or at least have a specific department that does. Maybe I should move to Dallas so I can use the large and well-known Genealogy Section. I would swing by the Denver Public Library on my way.

Or maybe I would stop at the Mid-Continent Public Library in Independence, Missouri. And if I really went out of my way to Dallas, I would head east to the Allen County Public Library. How about a detour to the Boston or New York public libraries? If you live in one of these cities or ones with similar good genealogy sections in the public library system, you are fortunate. Don’t rule out the library where you live. You may be surprised at the historical materials that are helpful to genealogists. For libraries that don’t have an extensive genealogical section, check to see what you can order via InterLibrary Loan.

State Repositories of All Kinds

Some state historical societies and libraries have tons of books and records for their own state. Others have a collection that covers a much wider area. One of my favorites is the Wisconsin Historical Society. It has an extensive collection of history and genealogical publications for all of North America. Why, you ask? It also functions as the history library for the University of Wisconsin. My own home state historical society, the Minnesota Historical Society has a wealth of published material related to New England. The society’s founders were New Englanders who donated their personal libraries when the society began in 1849 and continued to contribute for many years. To find a terrific state-level collection of historical publications in California, visit the state library (with locations in Sacramento and San Francisco). The collection includes historical materials from other states. Having publications related to other states is beneficial for research projects that often span several states and counties. Other state level historical societies and libraries have little for other states.

Some states house local and state government records in different places around the state. They are known by different names including IRADs

(Illinois Regional Archives Depositories), ARCs (Area Research Centers, Wisconsin), and in Ohio ONAHR (the Ohio Network of American History Research Centers). Generally these house records related to a group of counties that are near to the location. Some of these are on state university campuses and may also house the university archives. Even these are not created equal. I like the Illinois ones the best—mostly because there is an online listing of the records each holds via the Illinois State Archives website (www.sos.state.il.us). Don’t file this info too far away if your ancestors weren’t in these states; some day you may discover an ancestor or cousin resided there.

The Records Themselves

What other unfair things are there in genealogy? Many of my ancestors married in Minnesota. The marriage records give me the name of the couple, the date of the license and marriage, the person who officiated at the wedding, and the names of the witnesses. Contrast that to marriage records post-1877 in Illinois that tell me the number of marriages for each person, names of parents, birthplaces, and more. I have a 1903 Vermont marriage record that gives occupation, number of marriage, place of birth, and parents’ names. These are good reasons to search for all members of the family—in case your direct ancestors were married in a state that lacks personal details in the various marriage records that were created. Maybe Uncle Joe’s Illinois marriage license application will contain the elusive maiden name for your great-grandmother.

Size of Files

Have you ever requested a file at a courthouse, archive, or historical society and opened the box to find it filled with files all one-inch thick? Your excitement builds. You check for your ancestor’s file number and find it is the one that slipped down a bit between the thick files. Yours is the thinnest one in the box. Doggone it! Whose ancestral records are in those thick files? If life

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Equal Things

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were fair, it would only be the ancestors of genealogists who have those thick files. But don't walk away. Remember that other adage -- "Good things come in small packages." Your thin file may still give you some clues for further research. It is important to check for all available records, no matter how thick or thin that file may be.

State Census Records

I wish I had South Dakota ancestry. It has a state census as late as 1945. That is World War II era and fifteen years later than the 1930 U.S. Federal Census, which is the most recent one opened to public viewing. That 1945 census has the basic info also found on the 1930 census but has a few more helpful items: military service and which war with state, company, regiment, and division listed; maiden name of wife; year married; and church affiliation. Florida has a 1945 census, but it contains much less detail than that for South Dakota. Not equal, but if your ancestors weren't in these states, maybe some of the distant cousins lived there.

Access

In some states it is exceedingly tough to obtain even an older death record. I won't mention those, but I will mention some that at least have online indexes and one with online images! The Arizona death index for 1878-1953 online and images via the Arizona Department of Health Services (<http://genealogy.az.gov/>). For Minnesota you won't find the death certificate images online, but at the Minnesota Historical Society website (www.mnhs.org) and at Ancestry.com indexes can be checked. A death index covering 1898-1944 for Maryland is found online as well (<http://mdvitalrec.net/cfm/index.cfm>). It pays to check back every so often to see what has been indexed for your ancestral states.

Won't They Be Surprised

Have you ever met a genealogist who is fairly "new" at this research business and who is so thrilled because they just found a website such as Ancestry.com or FamilySearch.org that gives them one of their family lines back to the Mayflower?

Or maybe they are on their first visit to the Family History Library and immediately find a will that clearly lays out all the children's names, including the married names of the daughters. You really don't want to burst their bubble, but you know they won't continue to find such gems. Records and families are not created equal, but you can be an important part of the future research for these folks when they come upon a family line that is more difficult. Encourage them to not give up, to learn more, and to do more work to discover more family history details that await them.

Help Yourself Around the Inequities

Read the guidebooks and listen to experienced genealogists so that you will be prepared to find and understand differences. The difference might be the cost of obtaining a record, in access restrictions, in record content, in repository hours, in copy cost, or something else. I don't approach a courthouse, library, or website expecting to find the same wonderful items or indexes as at the last one. I will be prepared, though, to be grateful for whatever family details the records hold. At least finding a record means it was not destroyed and that is positive for a family historian.

Paula Stuart-Warren, CGRS, is a professional genealogist, consultant, writer, and lecturer. She has lectured all across the U.S. and coordinates the Intermediate Course, American Records & Research at the annual Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy. She is co-author of *Your Guide to the Family History Library* and an author for genealogical periodicals including *Ancestry Magazine*. She is a resident of St. Paul, Minnesota and spends many weeks each year at the Family History Library and the U.S. National Archives. Her roots include ancestors from seven different countries and researching them has given her broad experience and an occasional headache or two.

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August Picnic 2005

The Annual picnic will be held on August 11, 2005 at Paul and Martea Johnson's home, [REDACTED]. Arrive about 5:30 pm and we will start eating about 6 pm. This is a pot luck dinner so be sure you bring service for yourself and a covered dish. Notice will be sent out closer to August 11th.

Tips And Tricks

FIRST NAME SEARCHES

Don't underestimate the value of doing a first-name-only search on Ancestry.com for a family member, even if it is a common name like Elizabeth.

I was unable to find my great-great-grandmother, Elizabeth Stiltz, in the 1880 New Jersey census for Burlington County, even after doing a Soundex search. That is, until I put in her first name, the name of the county, and the town in which she likely lived in the 1880 census. Up came a long list of people named Elizabeth in the town with their surnames in alphabetical order. I clicked on the page of hits with surnames beginning with "S" and came up with the right Elizabeth Stiltz. She was incorrectly indexed as Shltz. If I don't know the town where a person likely lived, I use the birth year for the person, allowing for a couple of years leeway on either side of the year as permitted in the search process--along with the person's first name, the name of the state, and the name of the county. Using this method of listing the birth year without a town produces an alphabetical listing of the towns in the county containing individuals with that particular first name which may, admittedly, involve a more intensive time search, but one which has been well worth it in my experience.

This method has helped me break through quite a number of brick walls involving my census research.

Carl Roache