Colleen Battle, Genealogist
Brigadoon Consulting, Cresson, TX

What skills does a genealogist need to be successful?

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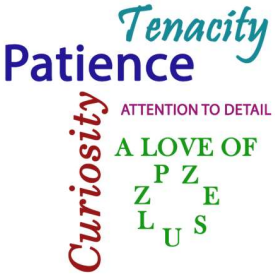
_____

Genealogy Success Skill Sets

Depending on your specialty within genealogy, all the common skills you'd expect are needed for success. Some can be honed; others must already be intrinsically there.

- Organizational
- Analytical
- Willingness to submit to the disciplinary standards
- Clear communication

What others can you name?



What are your skills and natural abilities?

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The Age of Relativity & Instant Gratification

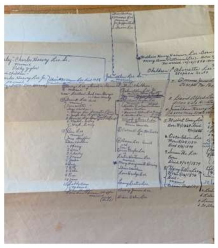
Very few of us would have gotten a start in genealogy with the requirements of our predecessors:

- *Living in the local library*
- *Writing letters and waiting weeks for responses*
- *Traveling to research centers*
- *Deeply cultivated relationships with family and friends*

Almost all of us want information on where and who we came from

Easy access to data helps and hurts:

- Data aggregator bots are a kind of popularity contest
- Gamification is full of "red herrings"
- Subject to error based on human contribution
- Even experienced users can be wrong
- Aggregated errors can take considerable effort to correct



How do you recognize whether a contributor is an expert or a novice?

_____

_____

What steps should I have taken to avoid this mistake?

Early Mistakes from Hubris

My great great grandfather, William Henry Harrison Lee:

B 11 OCT 1837 Espytown, PA
D 24 APR 1928 Dunlap, KS

Assumptions that lead to error:

- Only one record in the cemetery with his name
- I'd once found a family gravestone with a wrong date engraved
- I didn't yet know enough about other descendants of William Harrison Lee besides my great grandfather
- I have good communication skills!

What kinds of resources should you access to understand a lack of available data?

Case Study: Nancy Ann Fristoe (1807-1877)

RESEARCH QUESTION: ***Was John Fristoe of Stafford County, VA (1770-1826) the father of Nancy Ann Fristoe?***

Parentage was based on family notes alone, often inconsistent with available formal documentation

- Descendant researchers of Nancy's siblings had no knowledge of her existence
- Did not fit into birth line of supposed parents based on documented siblings
- Challenges of early 19th century recordkeeping

Case Study: Nancy Ann Fristoe (1807-1877)

Disputing Nancy's parentage with another branch of the family by close examination of their documentation

A source document for the brother in question, William Fristoe, shows some interesting details.

- Notice handwriting similarities, document marks, and compare with other available records
- Recognize that human behaviors have not changed significantly over time

Case Study: Nancy Ann Fristoe

Recording "facts" from family notes may need to be assembled outside of an online database prior to entry or use tools to allow them lower visibility

Family Facts	Family Source	Research Facts	Research Source
b. 29 May 1807 Fayette Co, VA d. 29 May 1877 Frankfort, Ross Co, OH	Handwritten scrapbook	b. 29 May 1807 d. 19 May 1877	Calculated based on tombstone image on FindAGrave.com
Brother: William F. Fristoe	Family Bible pg 1 Family Bible pg 2 Family Bible pg 3	Death date and age Birth: 27 Jul 1807 Birth: 27 Jul 1807	

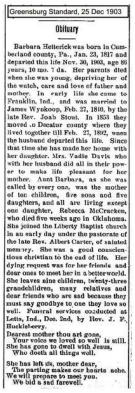
Alternative search methods

Things you've probably already done (or should have):

- Alternate name spellings in the index
- Alternate name spellings on newspaper websites
- Family searches in the census records in the same geographical area
- Associates
- Neighbors

But!

- Don't forget about married sisters, cousins, etc
- Make sure your fan search is EXHAUSTIVE



Greensburg Standard, 25 Dec 1903

Obituary

Barbara Hetterick was born in Cumberland county, Pa., Jan. 23, 1817 and departed this life Nov. 30, 1903, age 86 years, 10 mo. 7 da. Her parents died when she was young, depriving her of the watch, care and love of father and mother. In early life she came to Franklin, Ind., and was married to James Wynkoop, Feb. 27, 1836, by the late Rev. Jeab Stout. In 1853 they moved to Decatur county where they lived together till Feb. 27, 1892, when the husband departed this life. Since that time she has made her home with her daughter, Mrs. Vadie Davis who with her husband did all in their power to make life pleasant for her mother. Aunt Barbara, as she was called by every one, was the mother of ten children, five sons and five daughters, and all are living except one daughter, Rebecca McCracken, who died five weeks ago in Oklahoma. She joined the Liberty Baptist church in an early day under the pastorate of the late Rev. Albert Carter, of sainted memory. She was a good conscientious christian to the end of life. Her dying request was for her friends and dear ones to meet her in a better world. She leaves nine children, twenty-three grandchildren, many relatives and dear friends who are sad because they must say goodbye to one they love so well. Funeral services conducted at Letts, Ind., Dec. 2nd, by Rev. J. F. Huckleberry.

Dearest mother thou art gone,
Your voice we loved so well is still.
She has gone to dwell with Jesus,
Who doeth all things well.

She has left us, mother dear,
The parting makes our hearts sore.
We will prepare to meet you.
We bid a sad farewell.

FAN Comparison Sample 1

1840 U.S. Census – JAMES WYNKOOP / BARBARA HETRICK FAMILY
Franklin County, Indiana page 276, line 21

Name	Age	Sex	Name Guess based on 1850 census
James Wynkoop	20-29	M	James Wynkoop
	15-19	F	?
	20-29	F	Barbara Hetrick Wynkoop
	40-49	F	Mary Wynkoop (mother)

1850 U.S. Census – JAMES WYNKOOP / BARBARA HETRICK FAMILY
Jackson Township, Fayette County, Indiana 9 Sep 1850, page 281b, lines 34-42

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Birthplace	Birth year (approx.)	Notes
James Wynkoop	32	M	Farmer	Pa	1818	
Barbara Wynkoop	33	F		Pa	1817	
Sarah J	9	F		Ind	1841	
W P	7	M		Ind	1843	b. 8 Nov 1842
Mary	5	F		Ind	1845	
Rebecca	4	F		Ind	1846	
M E	3	F		Ind	1847	
Isaac	0	M		Ind	1850	
John Hetrick	13	M		Pa	1837	

1850 U.S. Census – DAVID HETRICK FAMILY
Bath Township, Franklin County, Indiana 15 Oct 1850, page 195a, lines 31-39

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Birthplace	Birth year (approx.)	Notes
David Hedrick	39	M	Farmer	Pa	1811	
Margaret	39	F		Ohio	1811	M 6 Sep 1843
William	14	M		Pa	1836	
John	13	M		Pa	1837	
James	11	M		Ohio	1839	
Eliza	9	F		Ind	1841	
Lydia	8	F		Ind	1842	
David	4	M		Ind	1846	Nelson David
Lafayette	2	M		Ind	1848	

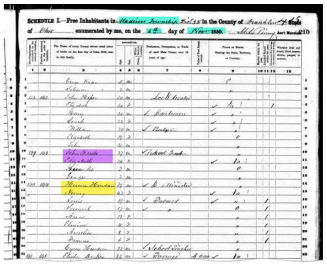
1860 U.S. Census – JAMES WYNKOOP / BARBARA HETRICK FAMILY
Westport Township, Decatur County, Indiana 4 Jul 1860, page 87, lines 12-19

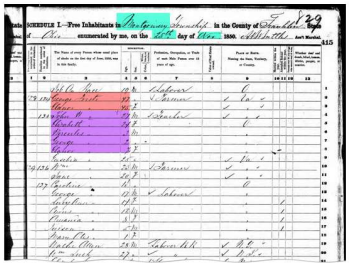
Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Birthplace	Birth year (approx.)	Notes
James Wynkoop	42	M	Farmer	Pa	1818	3800 real estate
Barbara Wynkoop	43	F		Pa	1817	
Sarah	19	F		Ind	1841	
William	18	M		Ind	1842	
Mary	16	F		Ind	1844	
Rebecca	14	F		Ind	1846	

1860 U.S. Census – DAVID HETRICK FAMILY
Bath Township, Franklin County, Indiana 25 Jul 1860, page 106 (277), lines 18-28

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Birthplace	Birth year (approx.)	Notes
David Hedrick	50	M	Farmer	Pa	1810	10,000 real estate
Elizabeth	49	F		Ohio	1811	Married 1858?
William H	26	M		Pa	1834	
John	23	M		Pa	1837	
Eliza Jane	19	F		Ind	1841	Married Abraham Miller 1868
Lidda A	17	F		Ind	1843	
		M		Ind		Married Florence

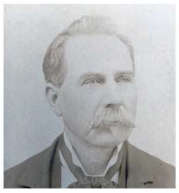
FAN Comparison Example 2





Case Study: Laura Mae Parentage

"It's a capital mistake to theorize before one has data"
– Sherlock Holmes[1]



1. Doyle, Arthur Conan. 2011, A Study in Scarlet. Harlow, England: Penguin Books

Case Study: Laura Mae Parentage

Human behavior impacting family oral histories:

- Family personalities include those who want to find a "famous" relative or special connection
- Some did NOT want history of "conceived out of wedlock known
- Secret knowledge only shared with a few
- Inconclusive DNA results

Case Study: Laura Mae Parentage

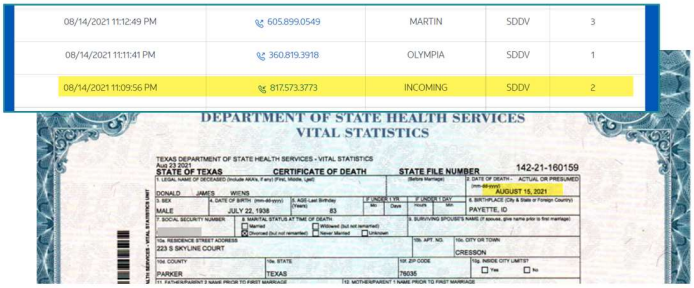
With caution, embrace multiple theories

- DNA tests will mature
- Family notes are important parts of their history
- Be okay with ambiguity until proven otherwise
- Inconclusive DNA results

William Saxton (1755-1814) Jackson Sexton (1829-1889) William Thomas Sexton (1844-1924)

Case Study: Family Stories

There may be a difference between recorded history and actual history



08/14/2021 11:12:49 PM	605.899.0549	MARTIN	SDDV	3
08/14/2021 11:11:41 PM	360.819.3918	OLYMPIA	SDDV	1
08/14/2021 11:09:56 PM	817.573.3773	INCOMING	SDDV	2

DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES
VITAL STATISTICS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES - VITAL STATISTICS
Aug 23 2021
STATE OF TEXAS CERTIFICATE OF DEATH STATE FILE NUMBER 142-21-160159

1. LEGAL NAME OF DECEDENT (Include AKA's, if any) (First, Middle, Last) DONALD JAMES WIENS
2. DATE OF DEATH (mm-dd-yyyy) AUGUST 15, 2021
3. SEX MALE
4. DATE OF BIRTH (mm-dd-yyyy) JULY 22, 1938
5. AGE-Last Birthday (Years) 83
6. BIRTHPLACE (City & State or Foreign Country) PAYETTE, ID
7. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER
8. MARITAL STATUS AT TIME OF DEATH: Married; Divorced (but not remarried); Widowed (but not remarried); Never Married; Unknown
9. SURVIVING SPOUSE'S NAME (If spouse, give name prior to first marriage)
10a. RESIDENCE STREET ADDRESS 223 S SKYLINE COURT
10b. APT. NO.
10c. CITY OR TOWN CRESSON
10d. COUNTY PARKER
10e. STATE TEXAS
10f. ZIP CODE 76035
10g. INSIDE CITY LIMITS? Yes No
11. FATHER/PARENT 2 NAME PRIOR TO FIRST MARRIAGE
12. MOTHER/PARENT 1 NAME PRIOR TO FIRST MARRIAGE