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Indirect Evidence Proves Sarah Headley as Mother of Ohio-Born Barney Dewitt

by Jan Joyce, DBA, CG, CGL, AG

Ohio births were not yet recorded civilly when Barney Dewitt was born around 1833. And although marriages were, they did not capture the names of the bride's and groom's parents when Barney married in 1851. Barney died in 1900, when deaths were recorded but often neglected to include the names of the deceased's parents. No record named Barney's mother. Ultimately, Barney's relationships with his siblings and his father prove the identity of his mother.

Seventeen year-old Barnard (Barney) Dewitt resided in the 1850 Holmes County, Ohio household of a David and Sarah Dewitt. At forty-two years old, Sarah was of an appropriate age to be Barney's mother. Was she? And if so, what was Sarah's maiden name?

The Dewitt families settled early in Ohio's statehood.¹ Born in Maryland, once David Dewitt moved to Holmes County, Ohio, he never left.² David and other Dewitts bought land in what was originally Coshocton County that became Holmes County in 1824.³ Like many others who moved to the Midwest in this time period, David bought land and farmed it for the rest of his life.⁴

Also similar to other Midwest farming migrants, David had a large family. By 1850, at least seven inferred children lived with him. Barney was one of them. It appeared that a woman named Sarah may be Barney's mother. However, in that household and elsewhere, Sarah was never directly named as such.⁵ At least four different birth locations were attributed to Sarah, indicating there could be more than one woman with her name who was a candidate to be Barney's mother, yet there was no question who Barney's father was.⁶

David Dewitt's Children Included Barney

David Dewitt had at least seven children. For decades, those children were represented in David's households as well as in his 1875 will:

John
Elizabeth
Barney
Mary
Robert
Nancy
Isaac⁷

Barney's 1833 Ohio birth did not provide his mother's identity.⁸ He appeared as an inferred son in David's 1850 household and they were of appropriate ages to be son and father.⁹ When Barney married in 1851, his parents were not named.¹⁰ By 1860, Barney and his young family lived next to David.¹¹ When David wrote his will in 1875, he named Barney as his son.¹² Certainly, David Dewitt was Barney's father. And although Barney's unusual death in 1900 garnered public attention, it also did not associate him with his mother.¹³

David Dewitt's Wife Was Always Named Sarah

On 21 February 1827 in Holmes County, Ohio, David Dewitt and Sarah Headley married.¹⁴ A woman named Sarah also sold land with David in 1832 and resided with him as an inferred wife in 1850, 1860, and 1870.¹⁵ When David Dewitt wrote his will in 1875, he named Sarah as his wife.¹⁶ In September of 1877, David and Sarah both died. Still, Sarah's maiden name was not revealed other than the 1827 marriage.¹⁷

There was probably only one woman who was David's wife, but Sarah was a common name. Sarah Headley may have died before

Barney was born, and David may have married a different Sarah. Or, David and Sarah may have divorced, though that is unlikely.¹⁸ The Sarah who was associated with David had birthplaces that were reported in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, creating the possibility of multiple Sarahs.¹⁹ However, David Dewitt did not marry again between his 1827 marriage to Sarah Headley and his 1877 death.²⁰ And, a woman of Sarah's name and age did not appear to die in or near Holmes County before 1877.²¹ Most likely, Sarah was born in Pennsylvania.²²

Sarah Headley Was the Mother of Barney's Siblings

The deaths of two of Barney's siblings associated their mother's name as Sarah Headley. Robert Dewitt, who was born in 1840, died in 1926. His parents were named as David Dewitt and Sarah Headley.²³ Nancy Dewitt Liggett was born in 1843 and died in 1917. Her parents were also David Dewitt and Sarah Headley.²⁴ Both Robert and Nancy were born after Barney's 1833 birth.²⁵ Thus Sarah, with the surname Headley, was named as David's wife and the mother of two of his children before and after Barney's birth.

Conclusion

When David Dewitt wrote his will in 1875, he mentioned five children. In it, David named them as Barney, Mary, Robert, Nancy, and Isaac. David's wife, Sarah, was also noted. Throughout David's life, when a wife was mentioned, her name was Sarah. David did not marry again, nor did another Sarah Dewitt of the right name, age, and place die during this time.

David and Sarah Headley married in 1827. Barney was born about six years later in 1833. His siblings Robert and Nancy were born after him – in 1840 and 1843. Both Robert's and Nancy's death certificates name Sarah Headley as their mother. Barney was born

after Sarah Headley and David Dewitt married and before Robert and Nancy were born. Thus, David Dewitt was only married to one woman. And that woman, Sarah Headley, was the mother of Barney Dewitt.

Endnotes

Relationships indicated herein are based on documentary evidence and as such are legal or social. They are not intended to be presented, or concluded, as genetic. The Headley surname has a variety of spellings, including Headley, Headly, Hedley, Hedlee, Hadley, and Hadlee. The narrative will represent them all as Headley, and citations will show the name how it was represented in each source.

1. Ohio was established as a state in 1803. See: National Archives, *200th Anniversary of Ohio Statehood*, <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/ohio-statehood#> : accessed 12 August 2023). Holmes County was formed in 1824 in part from Coshocton. Richland Township, where David Dewitt resided, was a part of Coshocton that became Holmes. See: *Ohio History Connection* (<https://resources.ohiohistory.org/ohj/search/display.php?page=26&ipp=20&archterm=Array&vol=36&pages=340-477>: accessed 12 August 2023), "Evolution of Ohio County Boundaries," *Ohio History Journal*. As an example of Dewitts arriving early in Ohio's statehood: "Patent Image," Ohio, no 297, ~~Henry~~ Barney Dewitt, Zanesville Land Office, 1816; images, *U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management* (<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=0028-97&docClass=CV&sid=0vbcknuo.bdv#patentDetailsTabIndex=1>: accessed 12 August 2023). This Barney Dewitt is one older than the Barney Dewitt born in 1833.

2. As an example of David Dewitt's Maryland birth, see: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918532:8054>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. As examples of David's continued presence in Holmes County, Ohio, see: 1830 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 278, line 3, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/324908:8058>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M19, roll 133. Also, 1840 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 258, line 20, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/>

1723334:8057: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M704, roll 404. Ancestry has incorrectly placed this Richland Township image with Ripley Township. “Richland” is noted on the left-side margin of the census page. Also, 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918528:8054>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. Also, 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 26, family 26, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/43610562:7667>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 989. Also, 1870 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 168B (stamped), p 20 (penned), dwelling 181, family 181, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/40817938:7163>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 1224. He also wrote his will, died, and was buried in Holmes County. For his will, see: “David L Dewitt will,” loose papers, unpaginated, David L Dewitt, written 26 July 1875; “Ohio, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1786-1998,” *Ancestry* <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13818485:8801>: accessed 12 August 2023), Holmes, Wills, 1825-1877, no 467, images 3236-8 of 3260. For David’s death in Holmes, see: “Holmes County, Ohio, Birth & Death Record, Vol 1, 1867-1877,” p 45, no 1603, David L. Dewitt, 1877; images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RK1-989R> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 363 of 685, FHL Film 004978704. For David’s burial in Holmes, see: *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70761235/david-lynn-dewitt>: accessed 12 August 2023), memorial 70761235, David Lynn Dewitt (1801-1877), Christian Church Cemetery, Glenmont, Holmes County, Ohio; created by Chris Baughn on 02 June 2011.

3. As examples of David and other Dewitts buying land early in Coshocton County which became Holmes County, see: “Patent Image,” Ohio, no 297, Henry Barney Dewitt, Zanesville Land Office, 1816; images, *U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management* (<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=0028-297&docClass=CV&sid=0vbcknuo.bdv#patentDetailsTabIndex=1> : accessed 12 August 2023). This Barney Dewitt is different than the research subject Barney Dewitt born in 1833. “Patent Image,” Ohio, no 790, William Dewitt, Zanesville Land Office, 1825; images, *U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land*

Management (<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=0065-05&docClass=CV&sid=0vbcknuo.bdv#patentDetailsTabIndex=1> : accessed 12 August 2023). “Patent Image,” Ohio, no 473, William Spurgeon, assignee of Henry Dewitt, Zanesville Land Office, 1829; images, *U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management* (<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=0070-473&docClass=CV&sid=0vbcknuo.bdv#patentDetailsTabIndex=1> : accessed 12 August 2023).

4. As examples of David farming over many decades, see: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, non-population schedule, Richland, p 749 (penned), David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/5795117:1276>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T1159, roll 5. Also, 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, non-population schedule, Richland, p 1 (penned), David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/5721581:1276>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T1159, roll 21. Also, 1870 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, non-population schedule, Richland, p 7 (penned), David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/5777079:1276>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T1159, roll 38.

5. Negative findings for Sarah named as Barney’s mother in: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918528:8054>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. Also, see: 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, non-population schedule, Richland, p 1 (penned), David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/5721581:1276>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T1159, roll 21. Also, negative findings for any reference to the Dewitt family in: Holmes County History Book Committee, *Holmes County Ohio to 1985*, (Salem: Walsworth Publishing, 1985). And, negative findings for any reference to the Dewitt family in: Holmes County Historical Society, *Holmes County Historical Sketches*, (Sugar Creek: Carlisle Printing, 2002).

6. As an example of Sarah’s birthplace reported in Maryland, see: “Ohio Death Certificate,” no 65956, Nancy Liggett, 01 October 1917; “Certificates of death, 1908-1953; index, 1908-1911” images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPJ1-S1HY> : accessed 12 October 2022), image 2246 of 3305, FHL film 004021652. For Sarah’s birthplace reported in Ohio, see: 1880 U.S. census, Seneca,

Ohio, population schedule, Bettsville, p 28 (penned), dwelling 260, family 263, Nancy Leggitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/25075020:6742> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 1065. For Nancy Dewitt marrying Emery Edward Liggett, see: “Ohio, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1774-1993,” p 209, no 1914, Emery E Liggett and Nancy Dewitt, 13 September 1863; “Ohio, County Marriages, 1789-2016,” *Ancestry* <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/901803223:61378> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 106 of 501. For Sarah’s birthplace reported in Pennsylvania, see: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918532:8054> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. For Sarah’s birthplace reported in Virginia, see: 1880 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Nashville, p 5 (penned), dwelling 52, family 54, Barnard Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/45149109:6742> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 1034.

7. As examples of the David’s children over the decades, see: 1830 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 278, line 3, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/324908:8058> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M19, roll 133. The presence of inferred children is indicated with marks. Also, 1840 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 258, line 20, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1723334:8057> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M704, roll 404. *Ancestry* has incorrectly placed this Richland Township image with Ripley Township. “Richland” is noted on the left-side margin of the census page. The presence of inferred children is indicated with marks. Also, seven Dewitts were inferred children in David’s 1850 household – John, Elizabeth, Barney, Mary, Robert, Nancy and Isaac. See: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918532:8054> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. Also, in David’s 1860 household, five inferred children resided with him - John, Mary, Robert, Nancy, and Isaac. See: 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 26,

family 26, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/43610562:7667> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 989. In 1860, David’s son Barney lived next to him, see: 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 27, family 27, Barnard Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/43610571:7667> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 989. By 1860, David’s daughter Elizabeth almost certainly had died; her children – Marion Jolly and Mary Spurgeon – lived with David Dewitt. For Elizabeth Dewitt’s marriage to Samuel Jolly, see: “Marriage Record, No. 3, 1850-1859, Holmes,” v 3, p 59, no 80, Samuel Jolly and Elizabeth Dewitt, 13 June 1852; “Ohio, County Marriages, 1789-2016,” *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-PF97-5> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 58 of 158, FHL film 004701450. For Elizabeth (Dewitt) Jolly’s marriage to Oliver Spurgeon, see: “Marriage Record, No. 3, 1850-1859, Holmes,” v 3, p 187, no 63, Oliver Spurgeon and Elizabeth Jolly, 27 May 1857; “Ohio, County Marriages, 1789-2016,” *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-PFXN> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 128 of 158, FHL film 004701450. For Mary Spurgeon’s mother recorded as Elizabeth Dewitt, see “Ohio Death Certificate,” no 41472, Mary M Dewitt, 12 August 1909; “Certificates of death, 1908-1953; index, 1908-1911” images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GP2P-SLF9> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 1924 of 3063, FHL film 004020911. No civil record of Elizabeth’s death would have been created since Ohio did not begin recording births and deaths at the county level until 1867. See: Ohio History Connection, *Ohio History* (<https://ohiohistory.libguides.com/c.php?g=707334&p=5313560> : accessed 12 August 2023), “Vital Records.” David’s 1875 will mentioned five of the children: Barney, Mary, Robert, Nancy, and Isaac. Elizabeth and John had almost certainly died before then. See David’s will here: “David L Dewitt will,” loose papers, unpaginated, David L Dewitt, written 26 July 1875; “Ohio, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1786-1998,” *Ancestry* <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13818485:8801> : accessed 12 August 2023), Holmes, Wills, 1825-1877, no 467, images 3236-8 of 3260.

8. Barney’s birth predated civil registration in Ohio. See Ohio History Connection, *Ohio History* (<https://ohiohistory.libguides.com/c.php?g=707334&p=5313560> : accessed 06 July 2023), “Vital Records.” Negative findings for birth or baptism church records. See: “Schools, Directories & Church Histories,”

Ancestry, (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/37/>: accessed 12 August 2023).

9. 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918532:8054>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696.

10. For Barney's marriage, see: "Marriage Record, No. 3, 1850-1859, Holmes," v 3, p 47, no 136, Barnard Dewitt and Susannah Shank, 25 November 1851; "Ohio, County Marriages, 1789-2016," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-PF9Z-1>: accessed 12 August 2023), image 52 of 158, FHL film 004701450. Early Ohio marriage records, such as this one, do not include names of parents. Negative findings for a church marriage; see "Schools, Directories & Church Histories," *Ancestry*, (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/37/>: accessed 12 August 2023). Negative findings for a newspaper announcement of Barney Dewitt's marriage; see *Holmes County Farmer*, (<http://holmescounty.advantage-preservation.com>: accessed 12 August 2023) for any Barney Dewitt and Susannah Shank marriage in 1851.

11. For Barney living next to David, see: 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 27, family 27, Barnard Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/43610571:7667>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 989.

12. "David L Dewitt will," loose papers, unpaginated, David L Dewitt, written 26 July 1875; "Ohio, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1786-1998," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13818485:8801>: accessed 12 August 2023), Holmes, Wills, 1825-1877, no 467, images 3236-8 of 3260.

13. No civil record of Barney Dewitt's death was found. Even if Barney's approximate 1900 death was recorded, it is unlikely his parents' names would have been included as that section was usually skipped unless the deceased was an infant. See negative findings in: "Birth and death records, v 3 1893-1908, Birth records, v 4 1909=1956," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GRYW-9CCB>: accessed 05 August 2022), FHL film 004016798. Barney's death may not have been recorded because of its unusual circumstances. Barney went missing after disembarking from a ride with a friend to walk the rest of the way home. Barney's body was found approximately six months later with the cause of death unknown. See: "Nashville," *The Holmes County Farmer*, p 5, col 2, for Barney Dewitt, 24 January 1901; *Holmes County Advantage Preservation*,

(http://holmescounty.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=barney%20dewitt&i=f&d=01011843-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=holmes_county_farmer_usa_ohio_millersburg_19010124_english_5&df=11&dt=20: viewed 12 August 2023). The notice reads: Barney Dewitt left here last fall and his children have not heard from him for months. They fear something has happened to him. Also, see: "BARNEY DEWITT," *The Holmes County Farmer*, p 1, col 4, for Barney Dewitt, 24 January 1901; *Holmes County Advantage Preservation*, (http://holmescounty.advantage-preservation.com/viewer/?k=barney%20dewitt&i=f&d=01011843-12311924&m=between&ord=k1&fn=holmes_county_farmer_usa_ohio_millersburg_19010530_english_1&df=11&dt=20: viewed 12 August 2023). Also, see: "HORRIBLE DISCOVERY," *The Loudonville Democrat*, p 1, col 6, for Barney Dewitt, 30 May 1901. These two newspaper articles describe that Barney Dewitt's body was found in May of 1901 after having been missing since either September or November of 1900. Neither article mentioned Barney's parents.

14. "Marriage Record, No. 1, Holmes County," p 28, David Dewitt and Sarah Headly, 21 February 18, 1827; "Ohio, County Marriages, 1789-2016," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-PX39-WN>: accessed 12 August 2023), image 43 of 658, FHL film 004701450.

15. Two deeds of sale name Sarah as David Dewitt's wife, see: "Holmes County Ohio Deed Records," v 2, pp 306-7, David L. Dewitt to David H. Critchfield, 1832; "Deed records, 1825-1916; index to deed records, ca. 1808-1941," images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS4R-TW1M>: accessed 12 August 2023), image 556 of 761, FHL Film 007901089. Also, "Holmes County Ohio Deed Records," v 2, pp 308-9, David L. Dewitt to David H. Critchfield, 1832; "Deed records, 1825-1916; index to deed records, ca. 1808-1941," images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS4R-TWVH?i=556&cat=229583>: accessed 12 August 2023), image 557 of 761, FHL Film 007901089. For Sarah as David's inferred wife in 1850, see: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918532:8054>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. For Sarah as David's inferred wife in 1860, see: 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 26, family 26, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/43610562:7667>: accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 989. For

Sarah as David's inferred wife in 1870, see: 1870 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 168B (stamped), p 20 (penned), dwelling 181, family 181, David L Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/40817938:7163> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 1224.

16. "David L Dewitt will," loose papers, unpaginated, David L Dewitt, written 26 July 1875; "Ohio, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1786-1998," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13818485:8801>: accessed 12 August 2023), Holmes, Wills, 1825-1877, no 467, images 3236-8 of 3260.

17. "Holmes County, Ohio, Birth & Death Record, Vol 1, 1867-1877," p 45, no 1602, Sarah Dewitt, 1877; images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RK1-989R>: accessed 12 August 2023), image 363 of 685, FHL Film 004978704. "Holmes County, Ohio, Birth & Death Record, Vol 1, 1867-1877," p 45, no 1603, David L. Dewitt, 1877; images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RK1-989R>: accessed 12 August 2023), image 363 of 685, FHL Film 004978704. Long-time spouses often die within a very short period of each other, see: Leonard Holmes, PhD, *VeryWellMind* ([https://www.verywellmind.com/surviving-widowhood-4011236#](https://www.verywellmind.com/surviving-widowhood-4011236#:): accessed 12 August 2023), "What is the Widowhood Effect?" For David and Sarah's marriage, see: "Marriage Record, No. 1, Holmes County," p 28, David Dewitt and Sarah Headly, 21 February 18, 1827; "Ohio, County Marriages, 1789 - 2016," *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-PX39-WN> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 43 of 658, FHL film 004701450.

18. Divorce rates in the U.S. are estimated to be low single digits in the mid-1800s and even lower earlier in the century. See: "100 Years of Marriage and Divorce Statistics United States, 1867-1967," U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Health Service, Health Resources Administration, National Center for Health Statistics (Rockville, MD: December 1973); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/12831/> : accessed 12 August 2023).

19. As an example of Sarah's birthplace reported in Maryland, see: "Ohio Death Certificate," no 65956, Nancy Liggett, 01 October 1917; "Certificates of death, 1908-1953; index, 1908-1911" images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPJ1-S1HY> : accessed 12 October 2022), image 2246 of 3305, FHL film 004021652. For Sarah's birthplace reported in Ohio, see: 1880 U.S. census, Seneca, Ohio, population schedule, Bettsville, p 28 (penned), dwelling 260, family 263, Nancy Leggitt; digital

image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/25075020:6742> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 1065. For Nancy Dewitt marrying Emery Edward Liggett, see: "Ohio, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1774-1993," p 209, no 1914, Emery E Liggett and Nancy Dewitt, 13 September 1863; "Ohio, County Marriages, 1789 - 2016," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/901803223:61378> : accessed 12 August 2023), image 106 of 501. For Sarah's birthplace reported in Pennsylvania, see: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, David Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918532:8054> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. For Sarah's birthplace reported in Virginia, see: 1880 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Nashville, p 5 (penned), dwelling 52, family 54, Barnard Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/45149109:6742> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 1034.

20. Negative findings for David Dewitt marrying between 1827 and 1877: "Marriage records, 1821-2016," Holmes County, Ohio; *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/229343> : accessed 12 August 2023).

21. Negative findings for another Sarah Dewitt who died before 1877 in the Holmes County area, see: "Birth records, 1867-1966; death records, 1867-1908," Holmes County, Ohio; *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/309809> : accessed 12 August 2023). Also, negative findings in burials: *Find a Grave* (<https://findagrave.com> : accessed 12 August 2023)

22. Despite the varying reports of where Sarah was born, the earlier records reported her birth in Pennsylvania. The informant for these census records was probably David or Sarah, thus making them more accurate. The reports of Sarah born outside of Pennsylvania were further removed from the event and the informants less likely to have heard from Sarah, or remembered, where she was born. For the records reporting her birth as Pennsylvania, see: 1850 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 261 (stamped), p 24 (penned), dwelling 191, family 194, Sarah Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/13918529:8054> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M432, roll 696. Also, 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 26, family 26, Sarah Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/>

43610563:7667 : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 989. Also, 1870 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 168B (stamped), p 20 (penned), dwelling 181, family 181, Sarah Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/38014654:7163> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 1224.

23. "Ohio Death Certificate," no 13905, Robert Dewitt, 22 March 1926; "Certificates of death, 1908-1953; index, 1908-1911" images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9PK3-9SX8> : accessed 12 October 2022), image 1774 of 3561, FHL film 004021617.

24. "Ohio Death Certificate," no 65956, Nancy Liggett, 01 October 1917; "Certificates of death, 1908-1953; index, 1908-1911" images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GPJ1-S1HY> : accessed 12 October 2022), image 2246 of 3305, FHL film 004021652.

25. As an example of Barney's 1833 birth year, see: 1860 U.S. census, Holmes, Ohio, population schedule, Richland, p 260 (stamped), p 4 (penned), dwelling 27, family 27, Barnard Dewitt; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/43610571:7667> : accessed 12 August 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 98.

About the Author

Jan Joyce is a board-certified genealogist whose journey began in 1998 while managing the marketing initiatives at *Genealogy.com*. Her personal research delves into ancestral roots across Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, tracing lineages back to England, Germany, Ireland, and Norway. She holds the CG and CGL certifications from the Board for Certification of Genealogists ("BCG") and the AG accreditation from ICAPGen.

Specializing in research methodology, Jan divides her time between personal research, writing, and education. She developed the comprehensive "Assemblage" course for the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy, which guides students through preparing, writing, and revising case studies and includes Artificial Intelligence. Her innovative "Document Work Workshop" helps aspiring genealogists prepare for BCG certification.

In addition, Jan pioneered the new institute course, "Merging & Separating Identities: Strategies and Tactics to Solve" to advance the field's research strategies and tactics. She also volunteers in the industry, including managing the ProGen Study Groups program.