

## **Ancestors and Unreliable Stories: Steve Fuger**

The phalanx of older-generational females in her new family in Australia held a secret that she was never able to winkle out of them. Her mother-in-law and all the aunts, tall, squarely built, statuesque women, had welcomed the young war-bride unreservedly, but on this they were resolute.

The secret concerned her husband's paternal grandmother. She noticed that whenever the question of the 'other grandmother' was ventured there would be a lull in the conversation, which then resumed, gently gaining momentum, on another tack.

Her father-in-law was delicately built, with dark hair and a faint olive complexion, quite unlike the European farming stock of the maternal line, and so she concluded that he must have been, at the very least, of Mediterranean lineage. It amused her that this infiltration of Latin blood was a subject best avoided.

Half a lifetime later, crossing the United States, she contrived a visit to the Mormon research library in Salt Lake City, where, pre-internet, she discovered that the 'other grandmother' was the granddaughter of, not one, but two transportees. This made greater sense of the taxed sensibilities of the kindly ladies, raised as they were with traditional upright mores.

Fast forward to the internet age and the baton of addictive sleuthing of the lives of forebears, where hours disappear down dead-ends, is passed to her daughter, until that point is reached where all there is to know about one's ancestors must have been accomplished. It was fun, connecting all the dots, and now it's done. Or is it?

As you're closing your files, how often do you click, just once more, on a document you've read many times before, but somehow never noticed that on the flipside someone has plonked a great big question mark; in this case, whether the father of the convict couple's only child was indeed his father? And the curiosity reignites, especially as the contributor of that caveat is unavailable with the evidence. Further, it transpires that other distant family members are also aware of this development, and they too feel swayed to find out more, but warned that there were those who were fervently against in-depth delving.

None of this is intrinsically vital in the greater scheme of things. But the degree to which it divides extended family members does intrigue. What is it about a potential change in this ancestor's paternity that excites some branches and exercises others?