



Volume 19, Issue 1

Feb, Mar, Apr 2009

Volunteer

Give Back for all the help you have received

By Charles Woolsey

I don't know how many of you have considered volunteering to help others on Genealogical projects. I don't necessarily mean doing the genealogical work for someone else. I mean helping by volunteering at a facility that has genealogical records for others to research by. The first place that comes to mind is a local Family History Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. You do not have to be a member of the church to work at the history center and you can usually choose the shift you want. I personally work at one on Tuesdays from four to seven PM. It allows you to help others get started on their genealogy and for you to learn more about what is available at and through the history center. At the State archives, local historical societies, state parks, federal parks, the California train museum. I understand that you will tell me you are interested in genealogy not helping to maintain a park. Well what you will find out is that many facilities like Sutter's Fort has a host of historical info available at the Fort and the archivist, Steve Beck was most happy to accept a historical old picture of a historical Sacramento personality. To

be exhibited at the fort. Also the docents who work there for the family history days get the opportunity to research the person they portray. The Old cemetery on Broadway welcomes people and has a host of info housed at the cemetery. I explored what they had on May Woolsey (whose trunk is at Discovery Museum), which was extensive. I provided them with some genealogy on her and they were glad to accept. They welcome genealogy and stories about persons buried in the cemetery. What you will find is at most city, County, State and Federal Parks that they collect information mostly that pertains to their facilities and most of them can always use volunteers. This gives you a unique opportunity to learn about the area and the people. I have watched Huell Howser put on programs about various facilities in California that are obscure and heard little about. One thing he has brought out about many of them is that they usually want to know more about their museums and facilities. Isn't it neat when you can add something for them because your ancestor was there or had something to do with that community. Look around there are lots of chances to give back.

Inside this issue:

<u>Volunteer</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Genealogical Databases</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Censuses</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Finding Local Resources</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Finding Ancestors in the Civilian Cons. Corps</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Doors in Brick Walls</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Using WWII Enlistment Records</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Building Your Interview Skills</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>The Year was 1800</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>A Little Advise</u>	<u>9</u>

AN INVITATION

The Mission Oaks Genealogy Club is a nonprofit organization. It was founded in 1984 to provide education and training for its members and the general public on the techniques, methods, resources and facilities used in the pursuit of genealogical research; to promote the collection and preservation of genealogical historical materials; and to cultivate public awareness of the educational and historical value of genealogical research.

We invite your attendance and membership. Where else can inspiration, knowledge, fellowship and entertainment be found twelve times a year, plus a quarterly newsletter, for only \$12.00? These five big "Ws" have been enlisted to provide you with our vital statistics:

Why do we meet? For learning, sharing, fun and fellowship.

What do we do? ... Hold a variety of monthly meetings to keep our interest and whet our appetites for "fruit" to be garnered from our very own tree of genealogical delights.

When do we meet? ... Every third Thursday of the month from 1:00 to 3:00 P. M.

Where do we meet? ... Mission Oaks Community Center, 4701 Gibbons Drive, Carmichael, California.

Who may attend? ...Anyone, visitors and new members are always welcome.

We freely admit we have been bitten by the gene-bug and are looking for new people to infect to come in contact with us may be the end of life as we know it. There is no known cure once infection has occurred

HOW TO JOIN

You may join the Mission Oaks Genealogy Club by attending a meeting and paying your dues in person or by sending your Name, address, telephone number and a Check for \$12.00 payable to: Mission Oaks Genealogy Club

MISSION OAKS GENEALOGY CLUB NEWSLETTER

This is the official publication of the Mission Oaks Genealogy Club. The club cannot assume responsibility for errors of fact made by contributors. Corrections will be made when appropriate evidence is provided. This Newsletter is published quarterly. (January, April, July, October). Except for material that is copyrighted. Permission to quote from it is granted as long as appropriate credit is given to Newsletter and to the author, if the author is identified. Contact may be made by telephoning (916) 721-7471 or by using the mailing address: Mission Oaks Genealogy Club. PO Box 216. Carmichael, CA 95609-0216

2007-2009 OFFICERS

President: Robert E. Noyes

1st Vice President (Programs):
Vacant

2nd Vice President (Membership):
Willie Woolsey

Recording Secretary: Ruth Kindel-Johnson

Corresponding Secretary: Patsy Joslin

Publicity Officer: Jeanne Ashley

Treasurer: Norma Beil

Parliamentarian: Rupert Jones
COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Historian: Joan Conzatti / Sheila Ann Crist

Telephone Committee: Betty Axup

Photographer: Richard Klein

Sound System: Rupert Jones/Jim Munro

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Program Committee

Rick Hanson, Betty Axup,

Joan Conzatti, Robert Noyes

Genealogy Information Team:

Carl Metcalf

Telephone: Betty Axup, Mary Nystrom, Charlotte

Peters, Carol Swanson & Maiva Roscrow

BUDDIES

2nd Vice President: Agatha Appleton

1st Vice President Committee: Richard Hanson, Betty Axup,

Joan Conzatti

Recording Secretary:

Corresponding Secretary:

Publicity:

Treasurer:

Historian: Sheila Ann Crist

Sound System: Jim Munro

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Charles H. Woolsey

Editorial Staff: Willie Woolsey

INTERNET

Webmaster: Carl Metcalf

Assistant Webmaster:

WEB PAGE ADDRESS

<<http://missionoakesgenealogyclub.org>

CLUB MEETING DATES AND PROGRAMS

—SUBJECT TO CHANGE—

Thursday Apr 16

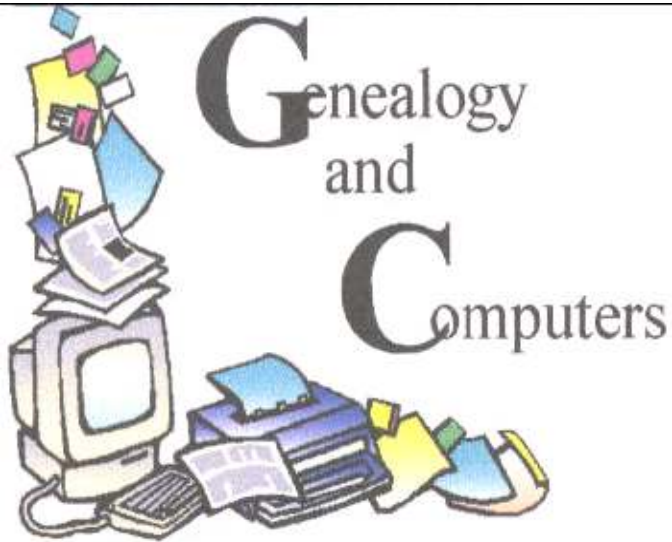
Preserving your family history

Pat Johnson

Thursday Apr 23

Tour of Family History Center

4 PM



Genealogy and Computers

MOLUB PC Meetings

The Mission Oaks Legacy Users Group (MOLUG) can be another way for you to become more familiar with using a PC computer as an adjunct to your genealogy efforts. Legacy is a computer program that can help you record your genealogical information and manage the results of your genealogical research.

The group meets the first Thursday of each month, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, in the club room of Mission Oaks Senior Center, 4701 Gibbons Drive, Carmichael, California. They have step-by-step planned presentations on the use of this commendable software, Come join us. For more information, call Elizabeth Kohler at 916-482-8531

Editorial Information

Editor:

Charles H. Woolsey

5982 Woodbriar Way

Citrus Heights, CA 95621

Phone: 916-721-7471

Email: Chwoolsey@aol.com

CLUB MEETING DATES AND PROGRAMS

—SUBJECT TO CHANGE —

Thursday May 21

Naturalization Rules & Records

Barbara Leak

Thursday, Jun 18

To be determined

DUES ARE DUE

BookFinder.com

Charles Woolsey

BookFinder.com is a one-stop e-commerce search engine that searches over 150 million books for sale— new, used, rare, out-of-print, and textbooks. It saves you time and money by searching every major catalog online, and letting you know which booksellers are offering the best prices and selection. When you find a book you like, you can buy it directly from the original seller; they never charge a markup.

This is by far the best site I have found for finding books for purchase at a good price.

Censuses

By Juliana Smith for Ancestry.com

While the U. S. Censuses for 1850-1930 are among the most popular resources for family historians, the pre-1850 enumerations are among the most overlooked. While they may not provide the same detail as later enumerations, they can still help place your ancestors in a particular location during the census year. The tough part is determining which family is yours.

I was recently searching for my Kelly family in New York in pre-1850 censuses and to help figure out where I need to look, I employed the use of a few charts.

First I created a chart that projected how old each person in the family would be for a particular census year. I used a spreadsheet, but this could easily be done on a sheet of paper by had with a grid.

Across the top I listed each family members name and the estimated year they were born. Along the side of the grid were all of the census years. Beginning on the line for the first census year that they were alive for, I listed how old I thought they would be in that year. Then I just added ten years to each of these and filled out all the years in which they were alive. Now I had a handy chart to work with for my second step.

Next I printed out a blank census form for 1840 from Ancestry and put the initial of each family member in the appropriate age bracket based on the census chart I had created. Using my grid chart made it easy to go across the form and figure out which of the family members fell into each age category. Then I just had to tally them up.

A Few Things to Consider

* There may be children listed in the census that died young and that I'm not aware of so if there are extra young children, I shouldn't dismiss a record. There may also be more than just the one family living in the home. Additional adults may be other relatives or the spouse of one of the older children, for these reasons, I didn't rule out families who had "extras."

(continued on page 8)

Finding Ancestors in the Civilian Conservation Corps

By Diane

Q. My relative worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Where can I find more information about this time there?

The CCC — which happens to be celebrating its 75th anniversary, was established March 21, 1933, as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation. By the time the CCC disbanded in 1942, when Congress ceased its funding, more than 2.5 million workers had participated.

It was a multi-agency effort, with the Army running CCC camps and various federal agencies sponsoring them.

Over 4,500 camps were established in all states. African-Americans were segregated in “colored” camps. Each enrollee earned at least \$30 per month, and had to send \$25 of it home to family.

It’ll help your search if you know your ancestor’s camp and the dates he worked, so ask your family members and pore over your research for clues.

The Colorado state archives has a statewide CCC enrolment index, which gives enrollee’s name, county, birth date and camp.

Employment records of CCC workers are in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. You can fill out a research request following these instructions. Provide as much information as possible and send either a written OK from the person in the record or proof of the persons death.

Most administrative and other records—project reports, correspondence, the CCC’s Happy Days weekly newspaper, publicity materials, meeting minutes, photographs, accident and death reports — are part of Record Group 35 at NARA’s College Park, MD, facility.

Records of the separate Indian Division of the CCC are with Bureau of Indian Affairs records in NARA’s Seattle and Denver regional facilities.

The CCC records aren’t indexed and few are microfilmed, so you’d need to travel to NARA or hire a researcher there to use them. The finding aid, Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps by Douglas Helms, should help.

Some of the camps had newspapers, you can learn their titles using the Center for Research Libraries online search.

- * The National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni site has historical information and listing of states and camps.
- * NARA’s online article tells you about the formation and operation of the CCC.
- * The Past is Prologue blogger writes about the CCC’s anniversary and suggests resources.

Using World War II Army Enlistment Records

Posted by Diane on Family Tree magazine site

Q. How do I use the WWII Army Enlistment information on Footnote? I found my grandfather within seconds

There was no document image, but the source information gave box, card and reel numbers. How do I use those numbers to find the document?

A. The WWII Army enlistment records that are free on Footnote (as part of its WWII Hero Pages collection) and other genealogy database sites come from the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA Access to Archival Databases (AAD) System.

Search the enlistments on AAD here. It has records of Approximately 9 million men and women who enlisted to the US Army, including the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, between 1938 and 1946.

The Army used punch cards to record the information. It microfilmed the cards after World War II, then destroyed them.

Normally, we'd advise genealogists to go right from an index or transcription to the microfilmed or paper record. But in this case, if you look at the film (which is what Footnote's source citation numbers refer to), you'd just see cards with a series of holes in them.

NARA acquired the microfilm in 1959, and later digitized it and ran it through a "reader" to code the meaning of the punches. About 13 percent of the cards couldn't be read due to poor microfilm quality, and an estimated 35 percent of the remaining records contain a scanning error (though NARA says few of these errors are in the name field).

I compared my own grandfather's enlistment record on Footnote and in AAD, and both sites had the same information, though Footnote's version is a bit easier to search and is presented in a more user-friendly format.

So what use is the information when there's no original record to look at? The serial number, enlistment information and branch of service will help if you want to request military service records.

WWII service records are at the National Archives' national Personnel Records Center. Due to privacy restrictions, you may need permission from your grandfather or his next of kin, or proof your grandfather is deceased. See this NPRC Web page for more details (scroll to the OMPF — Official Military Personnel Files — section). Note a large number of service records were destroyed in a 1973 fire at the NPRC.

You also can mine the enlistment record for clues to other research avenues and details to put in your grandfather's life chronology. For example, the enlistment record can help you confirm a birth year and place, marital status, and place of residence at the time of enlistment.

It gives the person's education level and shows how the government categorized your grandfather's employment (my grandfather was grouped with "Messengers, errand boys, and office boys and girls").

If some piece of information seems out of place remember those scanning errors and look for confirmation in other records.

THE YEAR WAS 1800

The year was 1800 and it was the year of the second census of the United States. It began on the first Monday in August and took nine months to complete. The population of the U. S. was 5.3 million. There were thirty-three cities or towns with populations of more than 2,500 and only 6.1 percent of the population lived in those areas. The remaining 93.9 percent of the population lived in rural areas.

On the British Isles, legislation passed uniting Great Britain and Ireland creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Following the 1798 uprising aimed at Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform, uniting Ireland with Great Britain was seen as a way to keep Ireland from completely separating and possibly providing a to-close-for-comfort haven for its enemies. The move was unpopular in Ireland and did nothing to ease tensions.

Following successes against the Austrians in Italy, Belgium, and the Rhineland, the young General Napoleon Bonaparte ended up stranded in Egypt at the hands of the British after Admiral Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet anchored off the coast of Egypt. He secretly fled Egypt in August of 1799, abandoning his 30,000 troops. Seeking to secure his position as leader of France, he led an army across the Alps and through the Great St. Bernard Pass. Despite great losses on both sides, Napoleon's army was victorious and the Austrians signed a treaty with France the following year.

The U. S. and Britain had been engaged in the Quasi-War since 1798. After the French Navy had seized U. S. ships engaged in commerce with the British, the U. S. had retaliated by attacking French privateers. The dispute was ended with the Treaty of Mortefontaine, signed in Paris, 30 September 1800.

A step in the war against smallpox was also taken in 1800. Following Edward Jenner's development of the first smallpox vaccine in 1796, sent news and samples to the classroom in Trinity, Newfoundland, where John Clinch administered the first small pox vaccination in North America.

In the U. S., the Capitol was moved from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. John Adams became the first president to live in the White House in November of 1800, which was then called the Executive Mansion. His stay would be short-lived though as Thomas Jefferson defeated him in the presidential election that year and would be inaugurated in 1801.

With the move of the Capitol, also came the establishment of the Library of Congress in 1800. It is now the world's largest library, home to a collection of 119 million items.

For more information

Google

Library of Congress

Genealogy Databases

Which sites are worth the Money?

By Diane of Family Tree Magazine

Following is a list of the more popular sites, although it is far from a complete list. There are actually hundred of sites in one form or another.

***Ancestry.com:** This site has the advantage when it comes to amount of content. Major databases include US census images and indexes, passenger and border-crossing lists for US ports, WWI and WWII draft registration cards, passport applications, newspapers, and family and local histories.

To see what might be useful, go to the catalog and run a keyword search on a place your ancestors lived or a type of record. Note that database names vary — birth index might be called "Smith County Vital Records, " "Birth Certificates, Smith County" or something else. The US deluxe membership costs \$155.40 per year, \$50.85 for three months or \$19.95 per month

***Genealogy.com:** The Generations Network has neglected this site, instead devoting resources to Ancestry.com (which has Genealogy.com records). Subscriptions range from \$69.99 to \$199.99, but you'll probably get more value elsewhere.

***Footnote:** This site focuses on US records, with many records from the National Archives. Civil War content is strong, including Southern Claims Commission records, the 1860 census, and ongoing scanning of Civil War soldiers' service records and widow pension records. You'll also find Revolutionary War records, naturalizations, small-town newspapers, WWII photos and more. Subscriptions run \$69.95 pre year or \$11.95 per month, Or, for most collections, you can purchase a record for \$1.95.

***World Vital Records:** This site excels at partnering with other sites (many of them free) to aggregate content in one place. That includes Ellis Island passenger lists and immigration indexes from the Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild and the National Archives, small-town newspapers, yearbooks, family histories, and UK censuses. Click the green View all Databases button, at top left of the homepage, then select a country or record type. Subscription rates are \$39.96 per year or \$5.95 for a month. The World subscription is \$119.40 per year or \$14.95 per month.

(continued on page 8)

Finding Local Resources

Using

WorldGenWeb, USGenWeb & CanadaGenWeb

By Rick Hanson

Identifying specific locations for your ancestors (parish, county, town, etc.) opens a vast new range of possible sources of information. Much of this information can provide the biographical detail that makes for interesting reading in your publications. These local sources include churches, government offices, libraries, museums, historical societies, genealogical societies, web sites with local content, private collections and local experts. So how do you find them?

There are books that list local resources. But books quickly become out-of-date and typically list only certain types of resources. Cyndi's List (<http://www.cyndislist.com/>) provides a huge categorized list of web sites. One of the categorizations is geographical location. But Cyndi's List includes only web sites and the coverage completeness varies greatly. Plugging in your location into Google may produce a lot of hits. But the result will be only web sites and most will not pertain to genealogy. Following the related links from a regional of local web is another possibility. But that is hardly a complete list. What you need is someone familiar with that location, someone who knows what is there, someone who spends the time necessary to create a comprehensive list.

In March 1996, a group of volunteers in Kentucky created a number of location-specific web sites. Each such web site listed the genealogical resources available in a county. This effort quickly became national in scope and is currently known as the USGenWeb Project (<http://www.usgenweb.org/>). Then in October 1996, Dale Schneider created an international equivalent known as WorldGenWeb Project (<http://www.worldgenweb.org/>). Also in 1996, Denis Beauregarda created similar organization in Canada _ CanadaGenWeb Project (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~canwgw/>). All three are independent all-volunteer organizations.

What They Offer

All are similar in concept. You start at the top level and follow links down to the local web site. For example, in USGenWeb you start at the United States (country) level. Then you jump to the state and from there to the county. In WorldGenWeb you start at the world level and jump to one of eleven world regions. From the region you select a specific country. From there, navigation to the local level varies according to the geographical breakdown specific to that country.

Once you arrive at the local web site, you can expect to find lists of local resources. In addition, the web site may also include a local history, local record collections, message boards, useful book descriptions, and offers from volunteers to look up information. Be aware that the site

Content and format is determined by the volunteer who runs it. So these web sites vary greatly in content, usage model and appearance.

Regarding language, all these sites are written in English. But once you get to the local-level site, some if not most of listed local-resource web sites will be written in that nation's native language. When you enter a non-English web site, look for a language selection option. Some sites have multiple language-specific versions.

Don't be too quick to get to the local level. There are valuable record collections and references posted at the intermediate-level web sites. For example, USGenWeb (national level) includes links to its special projects — various record collections, African-American genealogies, events calendar, genealogy for kids, researcher lineage queries, digitized maps, pensions database, census images, church records, marriage records and obituaries. Record collections can also be found at the state level.

Finally, none of these websites charge a subscription fee or require to register (exception: registration is required to post queries on message boards).

Become involved

The usefulness of WorldGenWeb and the others is directly dependent on the participation of volunteers. So if you ever wanted to create and run your own web site, consider volunteering to run one of the available local web sites. That's what I decided to do when I visited USGenWeb and found that their web site for one of my primary research areas (Sierra County, California) was available. That web site is hosted on the CAGenWeb's server and they provided me with an identifier, password and FTP address. Alternatively, I could have moved it to a server of my choice. Over a period of two months, I recreated the web site (<http://cagenweb.com/sierra/>) making major changes to its content, appearance and organization. Now I simply add new content as time permits. If you also want to do this, you will need an FTP tool and web site authoring software. I used Macintosh software Yummy FTP and Adobe GoLive respectively.

Another way to help is to donate source records. If you have a set of source records that is of general interest for a particular location, consider providing an electronic copy to the corresponding web site. You can include a copyright notice indicting your ownership of the complete collection. For example I transcribed and created a name index for my set of 1903 Sierra County family letter containing a lot of gossip about neighbors. That collection is currently posted on the USGenWeb site for Sierra County.

Don't overlook Local Resources

So don't neglect local sources of information. That local information is usually not in Ancestry.com and cannot be found by Google. That local information adds content depth to your genealogy and can be used to confirm that you get from macro sources such as a census. Let WorldGenWeb, USGenweb and CanadaGenWeb be your gateway to your ancestors' neighborhoods.

(continued from page 3)

Censuses

* Older children may have moved out. To designate, which children might not be still at home in a particular census year, I circled the tallies for children that would have been twenty or older. I did the same for children who would have been in their upper teens. Since some families lived together even after the children were married, I didn't want to rule them out, but still want to remind myself that one or more of them may have moved out. It was also a reminder that additional adults of the opposite gender could be spouses.

* For a person whose birth bridged two categories (e.g., a fifteen-year-old might have fallen in the "ten & under fifteen" category, or in the "fifteen and under twenty" category, depending on when his birthday fell and when the census was taken.), I drew a line across the two categories to remind me that I could be flexible with that one.

Using this template, it was much easier to compare my family to the census records as I browsed through all of the James Kellys in New York. Despite the exceptions to the template, by looking at the individuals who would have most likely have been in the house — typically parents and young children — I was able to rule out most of the James Kellys in New York. Now I will turn to other records, like directories and possibly religious records, to see if I can discern if one of the remaining Kellys is my family.

(continued from page 6)

Genealogy Databases

* **GenealogyBank:** This site has a huge collection of searchable historical newspapers, books and documents. Go here to see the titles. If you take advantage of the introductory offer, the price is \$69.95 per year or \$19.95 for a month.

* **NewEnglandAncestors:** The New England Historic Genealogical Society site has information on early New England immigrants, town records, vital records, court records and more. Search for collections that may cover your ancestor. A \$75-per-year membership gets you access to databases.

* **FindMyPast.com:** Major collections at this UK site include British censuses, military records and outbound passenger lists (many immigrants traveled through British ports, even if they didn't live in Britain). Subscriptions range from around \$21.50 for 30 days to \$129 for a year. You also can pay as you go by purchasing credits (60 for \$10 or 280 for \$36; they're good for a limited time) and exchanging them for record views.

(continued next column)

(continued from last column)

Genealogy Databases

* **FamilyRelatives.com:** This UK site has Irish records, British military records, British parish records, Pigot's trade directories and more. Subscriptions cost about \$50 per year; pay-as-you-go credits cost roughly \$8.60 for 90 units. (use them within 90 days).

The Doors in Your Brick Walls

By Juliana Smith

Alexander Graham Bell once said, "When one door closes, another opens: but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." When we run into those brick walls we often stumble upon in family history, sometimes we're so busy starting at that one closed door that we overlook a bunch of open doors. Let's take a look.

Unmarried Siblings

Married siblings with children represent the potential to connect with cousins, but sometimes the focus on our direct ancestor and siblings causes us to overlook that spinster aunt or bachelor uncle. The fact is, we should be researching every sibling thoroughly because while the records of one child may not include much more detail — details that can help us past that brick wall.

Died Young

Sometimes there were siblings that we don't even know about. High infant and child mortality rates were a fact of life for our ancestors. The siblings of our ancestors who were born and died between censuses may hold the key to that closed door. Look for them in family cemetery plots and in vital records indexes. For mothers who were alive in 1900 and 1910, the U. S. federal census asked for the number of children born, and the 1910 census also asks how many were still alive that year. Mortality schedules will also list the children who died within a census year. Once you identify a child who died young, look for birth, and death records, as well as any church or other records that may have been created during their short lives.

Half Siblings

Half siblings still share one parent with your ancestors and their records and could contain information on that parent that your direct ancestor's record does not. Cousins will share the same grandparents as your ancestor and you may even find a grandparent living with them for a time. The family Bible or other important heirlooms may have passed down through that line and that information may be waiting for you in the hands of a distant cousin.

(continued on page 9)

(continued from page 8)

Doors in Your Brick Walls

Current Generations

Even if you think you know all you need to about current generations, researching them thoroughly builds a strong foundation for your research. Contemporary records have more detail and could have clues to ancestral origins that older records do not. Don't skip over Grandma Betty's records simply because she told you all you need to know. You never know what she forgot to mention or decided to hold back.

Step Families and In-Laws

Families from the old country often settled near others from their old neighborhood. These families often intermarried, so if you're having trouble crossing the pond with your family, do a little digging into the origins of stepmothers and the in-laws of your ancestor and his other siblings. You may find connections that reach back into the old country. The same thing applies to witnesses, sponsors, and business associates. Often you'll find that not only do they share the same hometown, they also share an ancestor or two.

With so many records now indexed and available online, it's easier to open up these often overlooked doors than it was in the past. Have you had an unexpected door open in your research? Share your success story, it may help someone else.

Build Your Skills: Interviewing Family

By Juliana Smith

Interviews with family members can reveal information not found anywhere else, but the amount of information you obtain depends on both the subject and your approach.

Here are some tips for getting the most from your interview:

Prepare questions ahead of time. If you go in with only "Tell me everything you know about our family history," you're likely to be met with a blank stare.. Ask more pointed questions like, "what kinds of things remind you of your mother?" or "What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in?" were there other relatives living nearby when you were young?" what did your father do for a living?" Questions generate fond memories and personal stories are more likely to be productive and will make your subject feel at ease.

Ask permission if you plan on audio—or video-taping the interview. If your subject feels uncomfortable with either, be prepared with a pen and paper to take notes. Then transcribe those notes as quickly as possible after the interview. Send a copy of the transcription to the interviewee to make sure you have all the facts correct and ask them to add any additional memories in writing.

Let the interview subject talk. Start with a question and see where it leads. Sometimes one question will prompt memories on another topic that you hadn't thought to include

. In your list. It also makes the interview more enjoyable for the interviewee.

Bring things to the interview that will stimulate memories, such as a collection of photographs and records you've found in your searches. Ask what your interview subject knows about them. He or she may have memories of the day their father was naturalized, or you may find out at last who those people are in that previously unidentified photograph — and where and when it was taken.

If you run out of time, ask if you can phone them later with questions. Or send them home with some written questions that they can answer and mail back.

Be sensitive. If you come to a subject that seems to be causing discomfort for your relative, change to a new topic, otherwise your interview may come to any early end.

A little additional Advice on family interviews

By Charles Woolsey

One thing you will probably find when you start interviewing older family members is, they usually have pictures and mementoes. I have found most of the time they like to share, but do not want the items removed from their homes. So it is a good idea to have a laptop computer and a scanner. I have found that a scanner that I can carry in a case with the laptop is of sufficient size. Also they are cheap so buy yourself a digital camera.

By having a scanner you can show them that you will not injure their valued pictures, or take a chance of them being lost by someone copying them at a commercial establishment. Also with the scanner you can copy the back side of the picture if it has names or signatures. If they have to tell you who is in the pictures be sure that you have pencil, pen and paper so you can copy the info and scan it into the scan file so you will be able to identify it later.

Also you will find that sometimes they have old diaries of theirs or their mother or grandmother and will let you copy them. Being able to scan the pictures into a file on your computer is the fastest way to get copies of them. I have found a scanner with my laptop is a very valuable tool in my research. Another item you may want to bring along is a tape recorder or video camera, they allow you to have more options. Also after you conduct interviews many times you may find you want to video old homes they identify with the family. Old farms with barns and sheds make your parents or grandparents lives seem more real. You can see where they lived and worked. Also you will find in viewing these items in some quiet time will bring up things that you did not think to ask at the time and may be captured in a later interview. It is a good idea to get used to making a general list of questions you are going to ask before you ever get to the interview, it doesn't matter if you follow them exactly, but they give you a place to start and many times that is the hardest part.

DUES ARE DUE

DUES ARE DUE

DUES ARE DUE

AVAILABLE

Back issues of
Newsletter

\$1 each plus postage

Phone (916)721-7471



Mission Oaks Genealogy Club
P.O. Box 216
Carmichael, California 95609-0216