

“Changing Your Mindset to Break Down Your Genealogical Wall”

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A Genealogical Puzzle

- How do I find the right pieces (People)?
- In the right location?
- With the right documentation?
- To tell the true story of my ancestors?

Review Your Genealogical Research

- Facts and Information – Have you used all of the facts & information you have found?
- Clues – also called “Hints” - what are you ignoring?
- Knowledge – Do you really understand why and how the document was created? What were the laws of the time?
- Focus – You must keep one item in mind at a time!!
- Use Your software – review each piece of evidence you already have
- Create a timeline noting, date, document, location, transcription and questions that come to mind regarding the information (or lack of information) you are finding.
- Review all your paper and online documents
- Create a document source listing

Summarize what you know

- Option 1 – Verbally discuss your research with someone (ideally a genealogist) that has not researched your line
 - Where are the holes?
 - What questions do they ask about the person that you have not thought about?
 - What records do they recommend you use?
- Option 2 – Write as you go!!
 - Detail the findings of each document in written format
 - Watch on Legacy FamilyTree Webinars: Elissa Scalise Powell’s “Writing as You Go is the Way to Go!”
 - Analyze each document and finding

Defining Your Research Problem

- Reasonably Exhaustive Research¹
 - Yield at least two sources of *independent information* items agreeing directly or indirectly on a *research question's* answer.
 - **Cover sources competent genealogists would examine to answer the same research question.**
 - Provide at least some *primary information* and *direct, indirect or negative evidence* from at least one original record.
 - **Replace where possible, relevant authored narratives, derivative records, and information that is secondary or undetermined, and**
 - Yield, where possible, data from sources that indexes and databases identify as potentially relevant.
- Effective Research Questions²
 - “Questions underlying research plans concern aspects of identity, relationship, events and situations. The question is sufficiently broad to be answerable with evidence from relevant places and times. They are sufficiently focused to yield answers that may be tested and shown to meet or not to meet the Genealogical Proof Standard. Genealogical-research questions include (a) a clearly described unique person, group or event as the question’s focus; and (b) specification of unknown or forgotten information that the research is to discover (for example, an identity, relationship, event, or biographical detail).”⁴
 - A research question must be answerable. Don’t look for vital records for a time period when they don’t exist.
 - Sample types of questions
 - When and where did an event happen in an individual’s life?
 - To whom was an individual related to by marriage or genetically?
 - What biographical details can be found about an ancestor?
 - Sample: Who are the parents of Henry Fox, born about 1814, married to Lydia Ann Milbourne in 1840, and who died on 25 July 1854 and is buried in Columbiana County, OH?

Make and Execute the Plan

- Determine what resources you must find/use to solve your research questions
- Figure out what records could exist
 - Research Checklist
 - [International Institute of Genealogical Studies](#)
- Perform Locality Research
- Develop listing of next steps (and continue to revise it as you find more documents).
- Be realistic – burned counties, availability online.

¹ Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, Second Edition (Nashville, TN, 2019), page 85.

² Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, Second Edition (Nashville, TN, 2019), p. 11-12.

Review and Refocus

- Think Names
 - Spelling Variations
 - Spelling Mistakes
 - Naming patterns
- Make the Phone Call
 - Historical Societies
 - Libraries
 - Archives
- Also Consider
 - Friends, Associates and Neighbors
 - All Record Sources
 - Manuscript resources
 - PERSI
 - Think Professions
 - DNA

Final Thoughts

- Genealogical research is a process
 - Research question
 - Gather Evidence
 - Test Hypothesis
 - Establish Conclusions
 - Prove (Write)
 - Start New cycle
- Stay focused on the Research Question
- Remember – You are Solving a puzzle
 - The right person, in the right location with the right documentation = success