



The ACGS Time

The Anoka County Genealogical Society Newsletter

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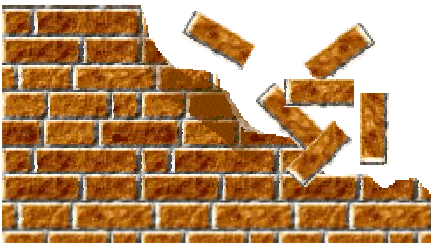
*Anoka County Genealogical
Society (at History Center)
2135 - 3rd Ave., No.
Anoka, MN 55303
(763) 421-0600*

*Hours: .
Tuesday - 10:am-8:00 pm
Wed-Fri - 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Every Saturday-10:00 am-4:00 pm*

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Breaking Through The Brickwalls



President's Message

By: Cathi Weber

Breaking Through a Brickwall

What is a brickwall? It is where you get to a point in your research and can't go any further because you can't find the missing piece of the puzzle. By paying attention to little details you may one day find the missing link that ties it all together.

I have been stuck at a brick wall for about 20 years looking for my grandfather. I know where he was after 1930 until he died in 1958. I have notes in my baby book listing his parents and when he was born. His death certificate lists when and where he was born and occupation. I have a note that his brother's names were Frank and Bill. He was 24 years older than my grandmother. My father remembers him talking about Cedar Rapids Iowa.

So...where was he before 1930? Could he have had another family before he met my grandmother?

I have more copies of "possible" census records than you can imagine, but I kept being led back to a family in Cedar Rapids that matched everything except CB, born July 30, 1882 was not there. There was however another child - BC - who's birthday was July 30 1873 - same date different year

I have found them in all of the Census records for Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Los Angeles, California from 1880- 1930.
BC Married in 1896 in Cedar Rapids and moved to California by 1900
1900 and 1910 - Census with wife and 5 children
1913 Son, Donald born in California
1914 Mother, Mary E, died in Iowa - Her Obituary lists BC living in California

While on a recent research trip to Cedar Rapids I found:
1916 - BC's signature is on final estate papers of his mother in Linn Co, Iowa

I had a copy of a letter that my grandfather CB wrote in 1956 and I compared the handwriting. It is remarkably similar - the letters, slant, spacing... (continued on page 6)

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The Anoka County Genealogical Society
Newsletter is published six times a year.

Up Coming Events

ACGS will not meet in August

1. **August 17-19th – Nowthen Threshing Show**
2. **September 17th 6:00 pm – Annual Meeting at Billy's in City of Anoka.**
3. **October 1st 7:00 pm – Meeting at History Center. Topic: School Records.**
4. **October 15th 7:00 pm – ACGS Board Meeting.**
5. **October 27th – Genealogy Conference, Northdale Middle School.**
6. **November 5th – No meeting.**

****ACGS will have a display at the Northtown Library in October and Rum River Library in November. Stop by and check them out.****



“It’s Your History”

QCTV Cable Show about Anoka County
History includes a segment on
Genealogy.

Coon Rapids: - Sunday 5 am & 3 pm,
Thursday 3 pm, channel 15 -
Comcast

Anoka, Andover, Ramsey, Champlin:
Monday 3:30 pm, 10:30 pm,
Tuesday, 3:30 pm, 10:30 pm,
Wednesday 11:30 am, 6:30 pm,
channel 15 – QCTV

Blaine, Centerville, Circle Pines, Ham
Lake, Lexington, Lino Lakes, Spring
Lake Park: Wednesday 6:30 pm,
Thursday 2:30 am & 10:30 am,
channel 14 - North Metro

School records are vital in doing research.

While filing our paper for admission to the Daughters of the American Revolution, I discovered that I didn't have a birth certificate for my grandfather. He was born in Illinois in 1905. The state of Illinois did not require birth certificates until 1910.

With advice from the registrar, I wrote to the Traverse County Historical Society. They were able to find the school records from the county school that my grandfather attended. It listed his parents and all of his siblings that were in school during 1916.

I was successful in being admitted to the DAR because of these records.

Barb Thurston, Vice President ACGS

Thank You from Lucille Elrite



(Lucille on left in Richmond, VA)

I wish to thank all the board members of the Anoka County Genealogical Society.

Being nominated for the “Award of Merit” I received on May 18th was such a surprise for doing something I enjoy as a hobby. Thanks to the people who congratulated me on this event. My son Glen and daughter Diane drove me to Richmond, VA to get the award.

A six day trip with a stop in Michigan to see my six year old grandson. A most enjoyable trip.



(Employees of Qwest held a bake sale and the money raised was given to Lucille to help with traveling expenses for the trip to Richmond, Virginia)

Your Quick Tips

Watch Those Surname Prefixes

As a worker in the LDS extraction program, now called Family Search Indexing, I can corroborate John McCall's "Quick Tip" of May 21. When recording surnames with prefixes they are always separated from the rest of the name and apostrophes are left out (i.e., McCall becomes Mc Call and O'Hara becomes O Hara). Note also that given names were often abbreviated and they are recorded as they were originally entered into the census or other record. Therefore, "Wm" is recorded that way and not expanded to William, and "Elizth" is not expanded to Elizabeth.

Marilynn Boosinger
Willits, California

Watch the Vowels

Watch the vowels, especially if your ancestor came from a foreign land. I have a relative named Ubbo in my family. When I searched Ancestry, I could not find him. I did, however, know when he was born, when he immigrated to the states (from Germany), and when he died. One day I decided to widen my search, and I found him with the first name Obbo.

It would seem that many entries in the U.S. census are very dependant on how the name was heard by the census taker, especially in older censuses.



Spice Up Your Family History with Detail

by *Juliana Smith*

One of the best ways to stir interest in your family history is to write your family story, but as Nathaniel Hawthorne once said, "Easy reading is damned hard writing."

Isn't that the truth? Seeking out well-hidden records, deciphering hideous handwriting and faded ink, and making sure each fact is documented, often pales in comparison to the challenges of putting the facts into a narrative format. But if we want to really tell the family story, we have to do just that. This week, I thought we could look at some ways to make that process a bit less daunting by pulling interesting tidbits from the records we have found.

Start With an Outline

The hardest part of writing this column is getting started, so I typically begin with an outline. In the case of your family history the focus would likely be a person or family group and your outline can start out very basic. Timelines are a great place to start. I've created timelines for most of my family lines and not only are they helpful in beginning narratives, but they are also eye- openers when it comes to spotting inconsistencies as well as new avenues to research. For those of you who aren't familiar with timelines, there is [a step-by-step tutorial in the Ancestry Library](#).

Look at Records With "New Eyes"

Once you get your basic events included in the timeline, it's time to build on it. It's tough to entertain an audience with "John Smith was born in 1850. In 1870 he married Jane Doe. In 1872 their first child was born . . . Z-z-z-z-z-z."

Sorry, I dozed off there for a second, but you get the picture. So how do we liven up this family story? We want to look for little tidbits that will make it more interesting. Reading historical accounts of the

times in newspapers, local histories, or historical books is always a plus.

Beyond the history books and newspapers you may find a lot of interesting items in the records you've already collected. You just need to look at them through "new eyes." In other words, don't look at just the names and dates--look beyond that to what those names and dates mean. How old was a couple when they got married? When they had their first child? Their last child? Did a parent die while the children were still young? How old were the children when they first show up in a city directory or census with an occupation listed?

Post-1850 censuses are wonderful tools for adding detail.

Look at all those "other columns" and think about what they meant to the family. For example, censuses taken between 1880 and 1910 in the U.S. include questions regarding employment status, asking for the number of weeks or months unemployed. The 1930 census includes a question about whether they were actually working at the time of the census.

In 1880, my great-great-grandfather, Thomas Howley, was a gas-pipe maker and the census lists him as having been out of work for three months that year. My great-grandmother, age seventeen, and her younger sister, age fifteen, are enumerated with the occupation of "coffee packer," presumably helping the family through some lean times.

Other things to look at:

- **Schooling, literacy, and language skills.** What impact would these have had on the family? Which generation was the first to receive a formal education? Or even to learn to read and write?
- **Community.** Was the community predominantly from one ethnic group? Were your ancestors' neighbors' laborers, artisans, or professionals? In what range did personal property

and real estate average in the neighborhood? Did most rent or own their homes? Were most farmers? Look to local histories for more information on your ancestors' community.

- **Finances.** What was that \$100 of personal property worth in today's terms? Check out [EH.net](#) to learn more about the historical value of your ancestors' estate values. Also, does their estate value in the census increase over time or decrease?
- **Housing.** Did they rent or own their homes? In New York, if they rented, there's a good chance they may have taken part in the customary "moving day" on the first of May. An 1869 newspaper clipping from the *New York Herald* reports that,

"By law all tenancies the term of which is not fixed by a written lease expire on the first day of May. It is on this day, or to begin with it, that the scale of rents is fixed for the year ending with the next 1st of May. Every year for the last twenty, we may say, landlords have insisted upon an increased rental for their houses from the tenants, and give them the option to remain and pay the increased rent or move on the first of May. . . ."

- **Health.** Was anyone in the house disabled or bedridden? In addition to the tidbits found in censuses, also look at death certificates. What causes of death are listed? Were there prolonged illnesses and how would this have affected the family? Was the main breadwinner ill for an extended period?
- **Births.** The 1900 and 1910 censuses ask "mother of how many children" and "how many living?" Look at birth dates in relationship to other events. Was a mother pregnant during tough times (e.g., during a family death or illness, a spouse's unemployment spell, a severe storm or difficult winter/summer)?

The Commute. City directories will often list both business and home

addresses. Plot these on a map and see how far your ancestor had to commute to work each day. Were there any hazards along the way? I have several ancestors in Brooklyn who were in the milk business and I found the following excerpt from Henry R. Stiles' *A History of the City of Brooklyn* regarding their profession: *"On the west, or river side of the road [later became Furman street], we notice next beyond Jonathan Thompson's stores, at about the foot of the present Orange street, a dock (Map B, 29) known as the Milkmen's dock. Here, every morning, 'rain or shine,' came the vendors of 'lacteal fluid,' stabled their horses in a row of sheds erected for the purpose, under the shelter of the Heights; and, clubbing together in the hire of boats, were rowed with their milk-cans over to New York, encountering, not infrequently, during the severe winter months, much suffering and even serious danger from fierce winds, and floating ice. Their cans were suspended from yokes across their shoulders, and thus accoutered they peddled off their milk in the city and returned in the afternoon, wind and weather permitting, to the Brooklyn side where they 'hitched up' their teams and started for their homes."*

Look at the Big Picture

The above tidbits are just the tip of the iceberg. As you examine your family records, you will likely find even more. As you uncover these interesting new items, add them to your timeline. Read historical newspapers and find out what was happening on a larger scale.

As my great-great-grandparents, William Dennis and Catherine Huggins, were getting married on 11

April 1865, the headlines of the *New York Times* told of "The Rejoicing," and "New York City

Preparing to Welcome Peace" after the long and bloody Civil War. The *Times* article further reveals that, "The rain fell heavily during the day." I can imagine William and Catherine running into St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church in Brooklyn surrounded by happy family and friends. As you add more notes to your outline, you'll find overlapping items that will make your story all the more compelling.

The Writing Part

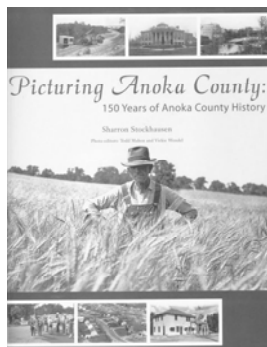
Once you have filled in an extensive outline, arrange the items in a way that makes your story flow. When this is done, I think you'll find the words come much easier than you thought. Your passion and interest in the subjects will shine through and I think you'll find that you know more about these people than you realized.



Picturing Anoka County on sale now

150 Years of Anoka History

Contact the History Center for details – 763-421-0600



President's Message continued...

From the research I did putting BC's family together – census, birth, marriage, death, obituary, military - I was able to find some of BC's grandchildren and their addresses. I finally got the guts to write letters to them and have heard back from 2 so far that tell me that BC took the train back to Iowa when his mother died and never returned to his family in California

When he did not return to his family in California, there was speculation that there may have been a train robbery or he was met with foul play, and his wife is listed as a 'widow' on the 1920 census.

His granddaughter sent me a photo of her grandfather taken about 1903. I have a photo of my grandfather in 1954. The features are remarkably similar. We have exchanged other family photos and everyone I show them to says that they could all be related

Now we are in the process of comparing more information to see if together we can account for the years from 1916 to 1930 and prove that these to men are actually the same person. Not only am I breaking my brick wall but theirs also.

Genealogy involves a lot of detective work. You never know which tiny piece of random information will be the "missing link" to get you over your brick wall.

It has taken me 20 years to reach this point and I am not giving up! If we can prove these new findings I will have discovered 10 'new cousins'.

Congratulations ACHS

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 2007 winner of the AASLH Leadership in History Award of Merit for it's exhibit "Vietnam the Veteran's Experience."

Todd Mahon, ACHS Executive Director and Vickie Wendel, Program Manager will be attending the National Convention in Atlanta, GA., September 5-8th to receive the award.