

YESTERDAY'S FOOTPRINTS
Alberta Genealogical Society
Lethbridge and District Branch
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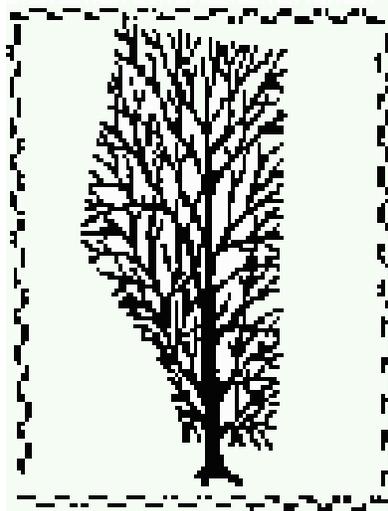


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Editor's Corner



If you want to submit articles, genealogy humor, interesting web sites or have any queries you want us to print feel free to contact us. You can drop off your submissions to our library or phone (403) 328-9564 or send an e-mail to lethags@theboss.net Susan Haga, Newsletter Editor.

Lethbridge A.G.S. Branch Hours

Library Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday 1:30-4:30 p.m. Meetings are 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. September through May. Visitors Welcome! Our library will be closed July and August and December but can be open on request. See our web site at:

<http://lethbridgeags.theboss.net/Exec.htm>

Address: 1:28; 909 – 3rd Avenue North.

Phone: (403) 328-9564

Membership Dues

Regular individual or family (Includes 1 Branch)--\$50.00, seniors (65+) individual or family (Includes 1 Branch)--\$45.00

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Nestor Martinez, Susan Haga, E. McMurchy, Pat Barry, Phyllis Burnett & Win Evans

Presidents Ramblings

Hope everyone had a pleasant time over the holiday season and managed to get some family research done as well.

This will be my last bit of rambling, as I am hopeful that at our Branch AGM on Thurs 16 Feb 2017, we will elect a new executive. Please plan on attending as we have a few items that need to be discussed.

After the AGM we will have an open discussion session. So if you have a brick wall or any other genealogy problem, maybe someone can help you.

Speaking of AGMs, the AGS Annual General Meeting will take place the afternoon of 22 Apr 2017, during the AGS Conference in Edmonton. It is my hope that more Lethbridge members will attend the conference and the AGM.

The committee planning the 40th Anniversary Supper on May 13th, have been working hard and further info will be forthcoming in your email and on the branch website.

Also working very hard is the committee working on the one day workshop on 3 Jun. Again further info will be forthcoming.

We have purchased a new scanner and some subscriptions to online databases. The scanner will copy book pages, pictures, etc up to about 17x17(I believe).

That's it for now – Please plan on attending the AGM on the 16th of Feb , the conference in Apr and especially the 40th Anniversary Supper in May and the workshop in Jun. --Thank You – President, Doug McLeod

Monthly Meetings

For our monthly meeting held January 19th we attended Trish Purkis' presentation at the Galt Archives on the Signs of the Times. Her presentation focused on a look at the early advertisements on Lethbridge buildings—their purpose and styles. This discussion focused on the history of local businesses and buildings they once occupied. There were about 13 of our members in attendance. On Feb 16th it is our AGM and we are hoping to elect a new executive! In March George Kush from Fort McLeod will be giving a presentation on the RCMP Cemeteries in the Fort McLeod area. On April 6th our group will be meeting at the Galt to attend a presentation by Michael Gourlie from the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

Lethbridge Family History Center Hours

Fall/Winter Hours: Monday 9:00-5:00 p.m., Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays: 9:00-9:00 p.m. (closed Fridays) and Saturdays 9:00-1:00 p.m. A Family History room is available at the Family History Center to visit with your entire family.

Involve Children/Youth in Family History

Family history can provide an opportunity for children and youth to make a meaningful contribution to something bigger than themselves. Also a knowledge about their family history gives children of all ages a sense of their place in the world. Some ideas to help to involve children and youth in family history:

First encourage children to talk to their living relatives, especially the older ones. Hearing stories about what life was like in the past helps young people connect to the past. This connection brings generations together and establishes strong family bonds. Children and teenagers can interview relatives and record the interviews on a video-or audiotape. For e.g. take your children with you as you visit with a relative and teach them how to talk comfortably with older people. Explain what is appropriate and what is not.

Tell Stories

Tell stories about your life and the lives of your ancestors. Young people need more than facts and dates. They need the facts and dates packaged in interesting, meaningful, and memorable ways. The best way to create an interest in family history is by telling young people stories about real people. Fill your stories with interesting information, humorous details, and unusual facts that will capture a young imagination. Sharing family stories doesn't have to be a big event; make it a common occurrence around the dinner table, or at bedtime.

Share Heirlooms and Photographs

Holding something that once belonged to an ancestor can be a powerful experience. Pictures and heirlooms make the past come alive. Children especially enjoy photographs that show how clothing and hairstyles have changed over the years. Keep photographs and family heirlooms around your home so children are constantly reminded of their heritage. Tell stories and histories about the item and its owner.

Attend Family Reunions

Family reunions are a good way for different generations and branches of a family to come together. A family reunion gives young people an opportunity to know relatives they might not otherwise meet. It gives them a chance to create experiences and memories that can last a lifetime. Help children and youth understand how they are related to each person they meet. For example, you might say, "This is your great-aunt Phyllis. She is your grandma's older sister."

Go On Family History Field Trips

Children of all ages enjoy field trips. A family history field trip could be across the country or just

down the street. Visit places your ancestors lived or worked. Visit graveyards. Go to museums or living history exhibits, such as a historically re-created village or a historical farm that shows how your ancestors lived. Celebrate your family's ethnic heritage at a cultural festival. Use an Internet search engine to help you find festivals and living history exhibits in your area. Above all, make these trips fun for the children.

Play Family History Games

Games are a good way to make family history fun. Family history board games are available for purchase, but you can also make up games that are specific to your family. It's easy to create a trivia or matching game or adapt a common game such as Bingo family history. Your children could even help make up the game.

Involve Entertainment

Music and movies from the past are another way to reach young people. Share music from different eras, and teach children some of the dances their grandparents used to dance. Children enjoy learning the old songs that their great-grandparents used to sing. Watch movies that were popular during the lifetime of an ancestor or that portray a certain period in history. Children are often amazed to see some of the old silent movies that were popular in the past.

Celebrate With Food

Food is an important part of holidays and family gatherings, and it was the same for our ancestors. Make your grandmother's apple pie recipe or your father's famous meatloaf for your children. Food from different countries where your ancestors lived can provide an interesting variation on your normal diet. International recipes are available on the Internet and in many cookbooks. You can prepare pastries from France or kimchi from Korea for a special family history meal. Check out www.cyndislist.com/recipes.htm for a list of Web sites that can help you.

Create Personal Histories

Help children and teenagers create their own personal histories. They could keep a journal, create a scrapbook, or write stories from their lives. Give them a camera or help them take pictures of events and save those photographs in an album. For a list of Web sites that may help you, go to www.cyndislist.com/photos.htm or www.cyndislist.com/scrapbooks.htm.

Tie Family History into School Work.

Make the connection between what children learn in school and their family history. For example, if a child is studying a historical event,

tell what an ancestor did who witnessed or participated in that event. Look on the Internet for information about what it was like during that time period and how wars and other events affected daily life. If a teenage studies a book for school, tell about ancestors who lived at the same time as the author or who may have experienced some of the events described in the book. Help students learn about geography by looking on a map to see where ancestors lived. If children need to choose a state, province or country for a report, suggest that they choose a place where your ancestors lived. If you have photographs of the area your family came from, you can use those photographs to augment your child's studies.

Age-Specific Suggestions

Thousands of photographs, stories and accounts documenting American historical events, as well as other international events are available on the Internet. Articles, stories, photographs, maps, statistics and other interesting items provide excellent resources to help document events of almost every nation and culture of the world. To find these fascinating resources, do a search on www.google.com or www.yahoo.com and see what is available.

Young Children

Children are never too young to begin learning about their family. Don't underestimate a child's ability to appreciate stories about ancestors, but consider each child's age and skills when you plan family history projects. Young children can: Illustrate their own bedtime stories about their ancestors. Create coloring books about specific ancestors or family stories.

Fill out their own pedigree chart with your help or draw a family tree. These activities help them visualize how generations are connected and where they fit in the big picture. For a blank family pedigree chart or family record sheet you can use, <http://genealogy.about.com>. To download blank pedigree charts and family group sheets check out www.familysearch.org. Click on Search and then Research Helps. Choose Sort by Document Type, then Form, then Pedigree Chart Form.

Create a pictorial pedigree chart by placing a small photograph of each ancestor by his or her name. From these photographs, children learn what each ancestor looked like, and children can compare similarities between themselves and their ancestors.

Teenagers

One key to involving teenagers in family history is to give them something meaningful to do. Although youth may not know how to do genealogical research, they often know how to use

computers. Don't hesitate to ask for their help with a computer-related or Internet problem. To help with family history, teenagers can:

Search on the Internet for family history information. Enter information into a genealogical database such as Ancestral Quest, RootsMagic or Legacy or a similar record management database.

Conclusion

What may interest one child may not interest another. Try different activities, according to a young person's interests and personality. Involving children and youth in their family history can change their lives. (Information taken from https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Involve_Children_and_Youth_in_FamilyHistory.)

Family History Youth Project

When I first became President of AGS my main goal was to increase membership particularly by adding two new membership levels youth and young adult.. A student membership is now open to children between grades 1 to 12. Benefits include: publication in PDF, use of AGS library resources, opportunity to join other AGS Branches, etc. Students must be accompanied by an adult at libraries and at meetings. Young adult memberships are open to ages 18 to 23. Benefits include: publication in PDF, use of AGS library resources, the opportunity to join other AGS Branches, and voting privileges at meetings.

About a year ago as part of my family history responsibilities in my church we held an event inspired by Marion Rex (our AGS Treasurer) entitled Journey to Canada Immigration Poster Project. This activity involved youth and their parents to find the first ancestor who immigrated to Canada and to conduct a lot of research to find out where they came from what their life was like in the old country and trace their route to Canada was and displaying the information on a very large poster. This included displaying the route they may have taken, family histories and pictures of their family going back to the old country and including the present. This project was started a few months ahead with parents working with their youth and children before we were to hold this special event on a Friday evening in June where these posters would be displayed. That evening began with an international dinner potluck with each family bringing a dish from their ancestral country. I'm happy to say that 21 families decided to take the challenge and to research with their children and youth to learn about their first ancestor who came to Canada.

All the posters were displayed on the wall around the cultural hall before dinner and everyone took time to view all the posters and then silently vote on their favorite posters. There were five

prizes given for the best poster. Some of the posters were completely done by the youth and I made sure I had some age appropriate gifts on hand to give out. Following this event for a few months afterwards two posters were displayed one in each foyer of our church for everyone to look at for those who were not able to attend this function. The enthusiasm of church members continued with others joining in who had not been able to participate in that evening. This not only helped parents and children to get closer and learn about their ancestry but also other members of our congregation got to know each other even more and particularly about their ancestry and what brought their families to Canada.

This was an excellent way to help get the youth involved in doing family history and allowed the parents to learn along with their children the joys that family history research can bring. (By Susan Haga, Editor)

50 Free Genealogy Sites

1. FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/>): largest collection of free genealogical records in the world.
2. WikiTree (<http://www.wikitree.com/>): enormous collaborative family tree.
3. Fulton History (<http://fultonhistory.com/>): historical newspapers from the US and Canada.
4. Find a Grave (<http://www.findagrave.com/>): locate your ancestors in cemeteries across the globe.
5. Google News Archive (<https://news.google.com/newspapers/>): millions of archived newspaper pages.
6. US National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/>): official US National Archives site, many free genealogy databases and resources.
7. Automated Genealogy (<http://www.automatedgenealogy.com/>): indexes of the Canadian Census and Soldiers of the First World War.
8. FreeBMD (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk/cgi/search.pl>): civil registration index of births, marriages and deaths for England and Wales.
9. USGenWeb Project (<http://usgenweb.org/>): massive free genealogy resource directory by US state and country.
10. WorldGenWeb Project (<http://usgenweb.org/>): genealogy resources by country and region, not to miss.
11. Cyndi's List (<http://www.cyndislist.com/>): highly respected directory of free genealogy resources and databases online.
12. Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Pages/home.aspx>): official archives of Canada Census records.
13. Ellis Island (<http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/>): immigration records, free indexes and original records, free to download copies.
14. FreeReg (<http://www.freereg.org.uk/search/index.shtml>): baptism, marriage, and burial records from parish registers of the UK.
15. Crestleaf (<http://crestleaf.com/>): various genealogy records.
16. Rootsweb (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/>): world's largest genealogy community, huge amount of free information.
17. Castle Garden (<http://www.castlegarden.org/searcher.php>): immigration records, pre-Ellis Island.
18. Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>): giant database of archived US newspapers from the Library of Congress.
19. Dead Fred (<http://deadfred.com/>): genealogy photo archive.
20. African Heritage Project (<http://www.africanheritage.com/>): records on former slaves, freed persons and their descendants.
21. Family Tree Now (<http://www.familytreenow.com/>): various genealogy records.
22. Daughters of the American Revolution (<http://www.dar.org/national-society/genealogy/>): military service records and more.
23. JewishGen (<http://www.jewishgen.org/>): Jewish ancestry research.
24. FreeCEN (<http://www.freecen.org.uk/cgi/search.pl>): transcribed census records from the UK.
25. Access Genealogy (<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/>): vast family history directories and more Native American resources.
26. British Library, India Office (<http://indiafamily.bl.uk/UI/>): records on British/European people in India pre 1950.
27. Guild of One-Name Studies (<http://one-name.org/>): extensive surname research site.
28. Geneabloggers (<http://www.geneabloggers.com/>): massive directory of genealogy related blogs with a huge amount of free info.

29. NativeWeb Genealogy (<http://www.geneabloggers.com/>): massive directory of genealogy related blogs with a huge amount of free info.
30. Viximus (<http://www.viximus.com/Bio?Kenneth-Burn.htm>): member submitted biographical information.
31. WieWasWie (<https://www.wiewaswie.nl/>): for researching ancestors from the Netherlands (in Dutch).
32. UK National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recor ds/looking-for-person/>): official National Archives of the UK.
33. The National Archives of Ireland <http://www.genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/> official National Archives of Ireland.
34. GENUKI (<http://www.genuki.org.uk/>): reference library of genealogical resources for the UK and Ireland.
35. German Genealogy Server: (<http://compgen.de/>) German ancestry research (many sections in German)
36. Preserve the Pensions (<http://www.preservethepensions.org/>): War of 1812 pension records access
37. Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (<http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>): Civil War records from the National Park Service.
38. LitvakSIG (<http://www.litvaksig.org/>): Lithuanian-Jewish genealogy databases and resources.
39. Italian Genealogical Group (<http://italiangen.org/>): Italian American genealogy resources and databases.
40. Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>): a large amount of information useful to genealogists, need to do some digging.
41. Billion Graves (<http://billiongraves.com/>): headstone records.
42. Open Library (<https://openlibrary.org/>): good place to find family history books, search for surnames or locations.
43. GenDisasters (<http://www3.gendisasters.com/>): for researching any disasters and other events that your ancestors may have been involved in.
44. RomanyGenes (<http://romanygenes.com/>): Romanichal ancestry research.
45. Patriot and Grave Index (<http://patriot.sar.org/fmi/iwp/cgi?-db=Grave%20Registry&-loadframes>): revolutionary war graves registry and patriot index from the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.
46. Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection (<http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/>): vast number of archived US newspapers.
47. Seventh-day Adventist Obituary Database (<http://www.andrews.edu/library/ASDAL/sdapiobits.html>): hundreds of thousands of obituary entries.
48. Slaktdata (<http://www.arkivdigital.net/swedish-genealogy#arkivdigital-and-slaktdata>): genealogy records for Sweden (in Swedish)
49. Hispanic Genealogy (<http://www.hispanicgenealogy.com/>): a wonderful list of resources for researching Hispanic ancestry.
50. Free Genealogy Search Engine (<http://familyhistorydaily.com/free-genealogy-search-engine/>): search hundreds of free genealogy resources at one time on Family History Daily. There are many more free genealogy web sites online sorry but we can't possibly include all of them. For more information check out <http://familyhistorydaily.com>

Tracing Your Health History--It's In Your Genes

One of the most important uses of history is to help predict the future and avoid the mistakes of the past. When it comes to medical matters, many people say they would just as soon not know what the future holds. This might have made sense in the past when a person could not do much about his medical future. However, we now have lots of options, and based on what you know of your family's medical history, you may be able to influence your future health.

For example, of my six grandparents and parents, five died of a stroke or heart attack. My own cholesterol continued to climb in spite of careful dieting. When I learned that three close relatives also had high readings I realized this was a hereditary problem. Fortunately, we now have medication to help even the poor odds that a bad gene might have given us.

If there is a family history of unusual afflictions—even seemingly benign ones—or many people dying from similar causes, you would do well to begin investigating. You may find there is simply a predisposition to one disease and there are precautions that can be taken. Or, you might find a genetic disorder that you, your children or grandchildren should seriously investigate before having children.

Predisposition

Some families may be predisposed towards a particular disease. It means they are not born with

it, but a large number of people develop it over their lifetime. This information can be helpful to you as you can avoid situations that might bring on an early onset of the disease. You can also be vigilant in watching for potential symptoms and getting early treatment. For example, if you know you are predisposed towards diabetes, you can be careful of your diet and make sure you are tested periodically.

Hereditary Genetic Disorders—Kings, Queens and You

There are many diseases themselves—not just the predisposition—that can be passed on to a child. In addition, because of race, sex or other factors, you may be more likely to have this gene. Many, if not most, of these diseases, such as Tay-Sachs, Cystic Fibrosis, Sickle Cell Anemia and Huntington's Disease, are terrible, debilitating conditions that no parent would knowingly want to pass on to a child. While most manifest themselves at birth or soon thereafter, Huntington Disease does not develop until midlife when a person has already passed the gene on to a child. Woody Guthrie was a victim of the disease as was his mother and two of his daughters.

Hemophilia is one of the most well-known genetic disorders. It is believed to have been caused by a gene mutation in Queen Victoria. Her large family intermarried with many of the royal houses of Europe and members of several royal houses had it, the most famous being the son of Czar Alexander of Russia. Czarina Alexandra was so desperate to find a cure that she consulted the monk Rasputin, a crude and unpopular figure in Russia. The general disapproval over this association contributed to the unpopularity of the royal family which eventually led to the revolution.

Porphyria is another royal disease with historical implications. One of the symptoms of this disease is bouts of madness and it is believed that King George III of England suffered from this genetic disorder which may have gone back to Mary, Queen of Scots.

Gathering Information

Genetic testing has made great advances and in many cases a test can determine if a person is carrying a gene for a particular disease. In other cases there is no test, so how do you determine if those who have gone before you had a problem? As with all genealogy, you must use many resources.

- Death certificates are usually an excellent source, although there can be problems with them. For example, death certificates recently issued by New Jersey had the cause of death information blacked out. Older certificates might use outdated terms, but these can be translated.

- Interviews with relatives may elicit the information or give some clues. They may not have known what Uncle Jack had exactly, but they probably can tell you if he had terrible headaches or stomach pains, if he had a lingering illness or died suddenly.
- Obituaries used to tell the cause of death more often than they do now. However, at the end of the obituary it may say to send donations to the Cancer Society, Heart Association, etc. which is a very good clue.
- A doctor might not have had a name for it back then, but a posthumous diagnosis could be possible now. Sometimes pictures or descriptions of the person give modern doctors information that let them identify a disease of a person who died hundreds of years ago. Abraham Lincoln may have suffered from Marfan Syndrome, an inherited disorder which probably was not identified when he was alive. (DNA tests, which should answer this question, are going to be performed on a clock stained with Lincoln's blood.) Ikhnaton (Adhenaton), a pharaoh of Egypt is usually portrayed with a long, horse-faced head and gangly arms, an indication he probably also had Marfans. Some believe that the figures in El Greco's paintings are always so tall and thin because he had a visual impairment that caused him to see people this way. All of these are guesses, but illustrate how modern doctors can diagnose a problem centuries later.

What To Do With The Information

If you are simply predisposed towards a disease, you are mostly limited to being vigilant. However, there are some rather radical decisions that families with a predisposition to some types of cancer have been forced to make. Breast cancer and ovarian cancer can be a very real possibility if several of a woman's female relatives have had the disease. Some healthy women have decided to have mastectomies or hysterectomies since the risk of getting these cancers was so great.

The odds for many hereditary defects can be accurately predicted through genetic counseling. People with family histories of these defects should receive testing and counseling before they have children so that they can make an intelligent decision on the risks involved.

Ethnic Factors

It is well known that some diseases favor certain ethnicities. Ashkenazi Jews (Jews of Eastern

European descent) stand a far higher statistical probability of having certain diseases including Gaucher disease, Bloom syndrome, Canavan disease and Tay-Sachs disease. This higher percentage probably comes from the history of these people being a small population who intermarried.

Sickle Cell Anemia occurs more frequently in African Americans. If both parents have the disease, all their children will have it. If one parent has it and the other is normal (not a carrier), all the children will be carriers. (A carrier does not suffer from the disease itself but “carries” the gene that could pass the disease on to descendants.) In addition, people of Mediterranean descent more often have thalassemia, and cystic fibrosis is more often found in persons of central European ancestry.

Some disorders are related to sex, the most famous being hemophilia. Women can only be carriers of the disease and only men are born with it.

Recessive Genes

How can it happen that two normal, healthy people can have a child with a hereditary disease? It happens the same way two brown-eyed parents can have a blue-eyed baby. Each person has two genes that control eye color but generally the eyes will only be one color. The gene for brown eyes is dominant over the gene for blue eyes. If a person has one brown-eye and one blue-eye gene, the brown will dominate over the blue and he will have brown eyes. However, the blue-eyed gene is still there and can be passed onto a child. If two brown-eyed parents each have a brown-eye and blue-eye gene and the child inherits from each is for blue eyes, then the child will have blue eyes.

The same thing can happen if the gene causing the disease is recessive. Both parents could have inherited a healthy gene and a recessive gene for the disease. Since the healthy gene is dominant, the parents are healthy.

Father has a normal gene (1n) and one for the disease (1d). Mother has one normal gene (2n) and one for the disease (2d)

There are four possible combinations for any child they have:

1n + 2n = a healthy person with two normal genes.

1n + 2d = a healthy person, since the normal gene is dominant, but a carrier of the disease since the child has one disease gene that can be passed on.

1d + 2n = a healthy person but a carrier

1d + 2d = with no healthy gene to dominate, the child will have the disease.

Predicting the Odds

There are many factors involved depending on which gene carries the defect, whether the gene is

recessive or dominant and whether one or both parents have the disease or if one or both are carriers. However, in many cases the odds are completely predictable. If both parents are carriers, as above, 25% of the children will have the disease, 75% will be healthy but 50% will be carriers. If the gene is recessive and one parent has the disease and the other healthy, the children will not have it but all will be carriers. (Since the parent with the disease had to receive two genes with the disease in order to have it, he only has the disease ones to pass on.) These odds apply to each pregnancy. Even if the parents have a normal child, they need to be aware that the child may be a carrier.

Genetic Counseling

Once you have gathered your family medical history, you should not go too far in trying to interpret it as you could jump to wrong conclusions. For example, if the women in your family who had breast cancer were all on your father’s side, doctors say this does not increase your risk of getting cancer.

If there is a serious genetic defect in your family and you have not started a family, counseling would be a good idea. First would be the decision of whether or not to have children at all. For some people a 75% chance of a normal baby sounds good while others would not want to take a chance on a 25% possibility of a child that could never have a normal life or might not survive to its first birthday. In the case of Huntington’s Disease, it would be very difficult to not know for many years whether or not you had passed on the disease. Even if you already have children, you may need to inform them of the family history and the fact that they may be carriers.

More and more is being done with genetics. Many of these genetic diseases will be curable in the future but you will be ahead of the game if you can identify through family history the areas that might be a problem for you.

Recording Your Information

Family Tree Maker has a place for you to record medical information and cause of death. You can also print this information on your charts so you can easily track the history of a disease once you have collected the information. It could save your life!

Future Developments

In the future, DNA will provide many of the answers that we have to scramble so hard now to find from documents and family histories. There are already organizations encouraging people to leave a sample of their DNA so future generations can find answers that are not available now. Wouldn’t it have been nice if our ancestors could

have left DNA samples that even today would provided us with answers to a lot of questions (Of course, it might also have proven that they weren't our ancestors!) (By Donna Przecha http://www.genealogy.com/articles/research79_dona.html)

Solving Tough Research Problems

Most genealogists sooner or later face challenging research puzzles. Your attitude about tough family history research problems has a big impact on your chances of success. Whether you think you can, or whether you think you cannot—you are right! Develop a relentless “track-‘em-down” attitude pursuing and analyzing all sources. Never give up on the problem, and never give up on searching for new ideas and ways of researching the problem. Hunt down the answers no matter what it takes.

Common Causes of Research Problems and Their Solutions

Unproductive attitude—develop a relentless “track ‘em down” attitude.

Poor Research Logs—Partially fill out logs before looking at each source. This includes each search’s goal (person and event you seek to document).

Inadequate Research Documentation—Document and organize as you go!

Stagnant Thinking on the Problem—Correlate what you have found. Use new forms to pull out new patterns and force your brain to try something different.

Failure to Put an Ancestor in Community Context—Trap the answer to the question in a web of associates and neighbors on both sides of the county boundary line.

Arbitrary Research Strategies—thoughtfully plan how, who, what, when, and where you will do the research to solve the problem. Be flexible if a new find takes you in a new direction.

Researcher Knowledge Deficit—Keep asking why the records show what they show (or do not show) and what that implies. Continue your genealogical education the rest of your life.

A. Preliminaries

- 1. Start with the most likely records.** Always use sources with the best odds of success first. If those do not solve the problem, turn to less likely ideas. Keep searching even the least promising possibilities.
- 2. Go from the known to the unknown.** Find recent events first, then work back to earlier events.
- 3. Focus on one question at a time.** Pick ONE event (for e.g. John Doe’s birth) and search until you find it. Stick with it.

Gather anything you find on the family and associates, but concentrate on the event you selected. Do not change focus until you either find it or exhaust all possibilities trying.

- 4. Look for alternate spellings and nicknames.** Some ancestors are listed by nicknames (Polly for Mary, Bob for Robert), by a middle name, or by initials. Also search for alternate spellings. Clerks misspell names all the time, and indexers have difficulty reading them. Think phonetically. Failure to find some quirky versions of the individual’s name is a red flag that you probably are not being imaginative enough during your searches.
- 5. Do not trust indexes** (that do not answer the main question). If he should be in the index but is not, search the record page-by-page until you find him. Even if you do find him in the index, thumb through the records for places they missed him in the index until you answer the research question.
- 6. Do not trust copies selected by someone else.** If possible, look at the original with your own eyes.
- 7. Make friends with the librarians and archivists.** Being nice to the staff at a library or archives often pays big dividends.

B. Fundamentals

- 8. Start with a well-documented family group record.** Compile a family group with a source footnote for every source that mentions the family. Show every event for every family member (not just birth, marriage and death events), including census, migration, military service, jury duty, acquisition or sale of land, and wills. This family group record becomes a road map of clues to suggest further places to research.
- 9. Research logs.** Keep good research logs for each family. List the objective of each of your searches; for example, list John Doe’s name and the type of event (birth, marriage, or death). List every record you plan to search before you search it. If you do not find what you seek, write “nil” on the log so you know you have already searched there and do not need to repeat that search. Too many “nils” show that you should search elsewhere. If you do find it, summarize what you have found (person and event). Also list letters you write, phone calls, and Internet searches and results on your research log.

10. Document and organize “as you go!”

When you search a document but it has no information about your ancestor, his kin, or his neighbors, write “nil” in the results field. If you do something, do the following before you look for any more documents:

- a. Photocopy the new source document.
- b. Identify the source (footnote information) on the front of the photocopy.
- c. Write your own document filing number on the back of each photocopy.
- d. Log the new document number and summarize the events/people you found on all appropriate logs.
- e. Transfer new family data from the source to appropriate family group records.
- f. Enter new source footnotes for every piece of data on a source, even if that even already has a note.
- g. Add a preliminary assessment of the data and its reliability to the end of each source footnote.
- h. Print the updated family group record.
- i. File the new family group and photocopy.

11. Search worldwide indexes for John Doe’s family name. Check other web sites for a list of worldwide database indexes such as Cyndislists, Ancestry.com or MyHeritage.com.

12. Look for John Doe’s death documents. Look for obituaries, church burials, church bell tolling lists, funeral sermon eulogies, funeral home records, funeral cards, tombstones, sexton’s records, insurance, pensions, Social Security, death certificates, family bibles, wills, estate papers, and land sales papers.

13. Local histories, biographies, and genealogies. Town and county histories often have biographical information about citizens. See the FamilySearch Catalog (<https://www.familysearch.org/#form=catalog>). Use Place Search from the drop down put in State, or County – then use key word in drop down put in History for counties, or State, County, Town-History for town histories. Repeat for the topic Biography and again for Genealogy.

C. More Advanced Research Strategies

These methods may not be needed for every problem, but often help solve tougher research questions.

Force Your Brain to Think About the Problem in New Ways

14. Draw a time line showing every documented event in John Doe’s life. Include schooling, wars, censuses, births, marriages, deaths of relatives, emigration everything! Then work to fill in the blanks.

15. Organize, review, and evaluate the evidence. Summarize the problem. Rearrange relevant sources in a different order. Review old sources for overlooked clues. Separate what you assume from what you know. Sort and weigh the evidence errors, accuracy of data, and consistency with other facts. Write a formal research report to clarify your thinking. Write why you searched where you did, what you found or did not find, and what that means; construct a well-documented family group record; and list what should be searched next, why, and how long that will take, and the likelihood of success.

16. Use forms to create new brain connections and raise questions. Create in-out lists to help track each piece of family land. Compare changes in census answers over the years. Ask questions beyond the detail that is obvious. Suggested forms: Holes to fill in a person’s life, Source citations that need completing, Facts that need better evidence, Facts that seem questionable, Ancestral associates and their roles.

Expand the Number of Sources Used

17. Be thorough. Be prepared to search all the records of your ancestor, all his kin and associates, during all periods of their lives, in all the jurisdictions where they lived, and all possible repositories. For example, use all types of census schedules including local copies where they exist. Analyze all the tax records, land and property records, mortgages, and each and every variety of estate probate papers. Study surrounding entries looking for neighbors and associates Find every document available. Think about and watch for associated papers created at the same time as the ones you have already found.

18. Substitute record types. Try and stay focused on one question, but change the record type you search to find the answer. See United States Record Selection Table (Familysearch wiki) to identify alternative

- record types you could use to find answers to your genealogical question. (This table can be used for research in Canada and in other countries as well.)
19. **Use Wiki articles as a checklist.** State provincial, and national articles describe record types useful for those places search every record type.
 20. **Switch jurisdictions.** If the answer you want isn't found in county records, then search at the town, state, province, and national levels for similar records. Write for or search catalogs for larger or smaller jurisdictions of the organization.
 21. **Area searches.** Look in neighboring counties or towns. Conduct an area search of surrounding towns and counties within 5, 10, or 25 miles of the place where they lived. Gradually expand distances searched.
 22. **Try an exhaustive preliminary survey.** <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list>). Thoroughly search for your family in every source in the Wiki articles for John Doe's state, province etc. Look up the family name in appropriate "Regional Indexes" on other web sites and family history books.
 23. **Search more libraries and archives.** Research the local county and state historical and genealogical societies, state library, law library, archives, government documents library, and National Archives.
 24. **Find John Doe's children.** Thoroughly research the children to find clues about the parents.
 25. **Research neighbors and relatives.** People move in groups. The neighbor often came from the same place as your ancestor. Plat your ancestor's land and run the deeds of each neighbor. Find out who the witnesses on documents are. Study a family in community context. Study people in the area with the same surname and with different surnames in the same house. Identify census neighbors at least 12 before or after. Near a county/state line, study families over the line. Comb the area for the same first names, origins.
- Use logic, deduction, inference, and inspiration.**
26. **Create a master research plan.** Identify a problem. Set a research goal. Figure out which records are likely to contain answers and which repositories to use. Track "em down". Write up and share the results.
 27. **Correlate and integrate records of neighbors.** Even "landless" ancestors may be traced by creatively using data about neighbors and correlating it with facts about the problem ancestor. Identify census and land office neighbors. Organize and sort what you know and look for similarities and dissimilarities. Keep asking what your correlated sources imply about subtle relationships or further records and clues.
 28. **Study migration patterns.** Rivers and mountains channeled migration trails into predictable patterns. When you know where a family settled, you can often infer where they came from. First settlers often named their new town after the place they left behind.
 29. **Try to disprove uncertain connections.** Use a process of elimination to find ancestors. If a person died too early, lived too long, or lived in the wrong place, he isn't yours. Drop people from the list by finding their death records (or by finding them in records after your person died). Always attempt to disprove what you think is the last remaining link, too. Test new information by comparing it with what you already know.
 30. **Listen to your feelings.** Use your intuition wisely as a guide to your research.
- D. Continuing Education and Follow Up**
- Some really tough problems are solved as a result of learning more or by good follow up.
31. **Get an education.** Read how-to genealogy books for your family for the areas that your ancestors came from. Study histories of town, county, province or state. Subscribe to Internet e-mail lists for the area where your ancestor settled, his ethnic group or religion. This will help you to learn how to solve tough problems and give you hope. Take classes, attend genealogy conferences about the area where your family settled, their ethnic group and religion, and about genealogical research methods. Travel to the places where your family lived to see cemeteries, archives, libraries, churches, genealogical and historical societies, and learn about their local way of life.
 32. **Get help.** Do genealogical good deeds, share your information and hopefully others will share with you. Place queries in their newsletters. Write to small-town

newspaper editors and place a query in their newspapers. Place queries at genealogical websites on the Internet and repeat from time to time until you get results that you are looking for. If the surname is unusual, telephone people with the same name. Nationwide telephone directories are available on the Internet. Leave a message in a zip-lock bag flag by a grave. (Taken from article found on <http://www.familysearch.org/wiki>)

Genealogy Blogging

What is a Blog?

- A blog is a short term for web log or a web journal. It is a way that genealogists communicate with each other, how they share information and in some cases how they do research. It can help you find others who are researching your family.
- A blog is a web site, where you write items on an ongoing basis. New items show up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. There are 4 basic types of blogs—Text, images, video, audio or any combination.
- Blogs can be general or specific. That is: about a country, a county, a town, a particular surname.
- A blog may contain research tips, genealogical news or stories and research of your own family. They can serve as a newsletter, research journal or to publish family letters, stories etc.
- Blogs can be public, linked to search engines or private, sent to family and friends.
- Blogs are interactive—readers can post comments to blog entries. Great discussions can take place. Several people could co-write the blog.

A Basic Blog Format contains:

- Short, informal entries (posts) usually arranged in reverse chronological order.
- A time and/or date for each post.
- Links to other blogs or web sites.
- An archive of all previously posted content, sometimes arranged into categories
- Many hosting sites for blogs are free with Help good sections.

--**Googles "Blogger"**: is at <http://www.blogger.com/> It is quick and easy to use. There are templates to help with the design of your blog. Learn how to create a blog at <http://help.blogger.com/>

--**WordPress**: <http://wordpress.com/> Has an option fee-based up-grade for more features. found at: <http://en.wordpress.com/features/> shows features that are free.

--**Live Journal**:

<http://www.livejournal.com/> You can use LiveJournal in many ways: a private journal, a blog, a discussion forum or a social network to keep family of friends in touch. You can turn your blog into a book www.blurb.com/create/book/blogbook

How To Find and Use Blogs

The Blog Doctor

<http://www.blogdoctor.me/2007/06/10-quick-tips-for-smarter-blogging.html>

Includes ten quick tips for smarter blogging.

Cyndi's List

<http://www.cyndislist.com/blogs.htm>

A Genealogy blog primer

<http://www.geneabloggers.com/genealogy-blog-primer/> Why should I have a genealogy blog? Types of genealogy blogs?

- Should I be worried about privacy?
- What are the copyright issues?
- How do I get started?
- There are thousands of Genealogy blogs many of which offer great information. Using a site called Genealogy Blog Finder has links to 1423+ blogs. There are links to many different topics which will open a page listing of blogs about that topic. You can also search by blog directory or by blog posts.

(Some information taken from Faye French's Genealogy Blogging handout—Lethbridge Family History Centre Conference-2014)