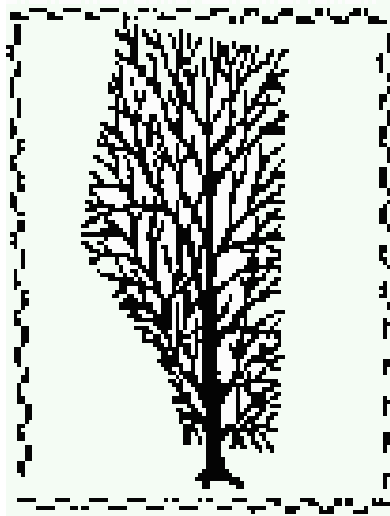


**YESTERDAY'S FOOTPRINTS**  
**Alberta Genealogical Society**  
**Lethbridge and District Branch**  
**Vol. 32, No. 3**  
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## Editor's Corner



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](mailto: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 – 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Doug McLeod
Vice President	Susan Haga
Treasurer	Pat Barry
Secretary	Alma Berridge
Past President	Nestor Martinez

#### BRANCH COMMITTEE

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Past President	Nestor Martinez
Advisory Group	Doug McLeod E. McMurchy, Pat Barry, Phyllis Burnett & Win Evans

## President's Message

Another year is coming to an close. I hope you were successful in your family search with lots of good discoveries and not too many brick walls.

The branch had a good year with our membership floating around 45. Our researcher (Eleanor) had another busy year. Our Monday Legacy group is still going strong and we have had some interesting speakers.

Our volunteer hours for 2015 should hit 3000. A thank you to all the volunteers and keep up the good work.

A reminder, that at our February AGM we will be electing a new President and Vice President. Anyone interested please contact our Past President, Nestor Martinez or myself.

In closing I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Doug McLeod, President

### Monthly Meetings

On Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Jim Hillyer gave a presentation on Dragon Voice Recognition. On Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. we held our Annual International Dinner at the Parkbridge Estates Community Center. There was a good attendance with many interesting ethnic dishes to choose from. After dinner our President, Doug McLeod handed out a number of certificates to our volunteers. Then Ken Livers gave us a presentation on his genealogy research. This month we were pleased once again to have Belinda Crowson from the Galt come and give us a presentation. She spoke on Prohibition in Lethbridge; a very informative and entertaining discussion ensued.

### Lethbridge Family History Center Hours

The Lethbridge Family History Center hours are: Mon 9-5 p.m., Tues-Thurs 9-9 p.m and Saturday 9-1 p.m.

### 6 'Secret' Google Search Tricks for Genealogy That'll Help You Find Your 6 Google Search Tricks For Your Ancestors <http://familyhistorydaily.com/>

Most of us use Google search to look for our ancestors on a regular basis. After all, once we're done searching [our favorite family history sites](#) directly, Google is our best bet for locating new records online.

But finding valuable data via Google search can be hard since there are so many sites, and so many pages of data. After typing in an ancestor's name and a few details we often find that we've turned up

hundreds or thousands of results, and most of them are irrelevant.

While this is true for all inquiries via search, it is especially true for family history searches because many sites have published long lists of names and dates, including family trees, transcribed book pages and records. This is great news for research, but turning up *relevant* pages is tricky. Even if you're careful to enter specific details into your searches you may not successfully limit results to the ones you want.

Luckily, Google is a pretty smart search engine and can help you reveal just what you're looking for — if you know the 'secrets.'

Below we have walked you through 6 of these hidden search tips that will help you locate your ancestors much more quickly. We are using an example ancestor — James Wilcox, married to Mahala and born in 1837 — to illustrate each trick.

**For those who may *not* have spent a great deal of time searching Google for family history, we've included 3 vital and somewhat common tricks, as well as the more advanced tricks, in our list.**

### 1. Apply Quotation Marks

Also known as a string search this is one of the best, and most obvious ways, to limit search results in Google. When you type in a name like James Wilcox, Google will search the entire title and text of pages for those terms. They do not need to be related to each other — so you may turn up a page with James and Wilcox, but not necessarily a page where these terms appear together.

Use "James Wilcox" or "Wilcox, James" to limit results (remember that many genealogy related sites place the last name first). Also apply quotations around terms like "obituary" to make them exact — otherwise Google will substitute other words like 'death' or 'died.' This can be helpful in some situations, but for others is can be a big hassle and turn up many unwanted results.

### 2. Use the Minus Sign

Oftentimes when we are searching for ancestors, especially those with common names, we may find that a certain person or location we're NOT looking for turns up again and again, clouding our results. For instance, a James Wilcox who lived in Somerset keeps coming up for us. He's definitely not our guy, so we'll exclude the term Somerset.

Place a minus sign before a term to exclude these unwanted results. (Example: "wilcox, james" 1837 mahala -somerset). The minus sign can be placed in front of many terms to further refine results ( -dunbar -somerset -1907) or term strings (-"Wilcox, James Robinson"). Just make sure that the minus sign is placed directly before the term with no space

in between. This works to exclude specific sites as well (-rootsweb).

### 3. Get Site Specific Results

Would you like to get search results only for a specific website, such as FamilySearch? Use 'site:SITEURL' before a term or terms to do this. Example: site:familysearch.org "wilcox, james" — note that we didn't place a space between 'site:' and the url and that we didn't include the 'http://www' part either.

### 4. Search Only Page Titles

When looking for a specific ancestor is can be very helpful to have the pages you turn up *only* be ones that focus on that individual alone. Or, when searching for a surname, to find articles centered around that specific last name. Making sure a search term appears in the title of the page is a good way to do this. This isn't always true of course, and you'll miss a lot of results this way, but when looking for discussions about a person, biographies or in-depth data it can be a very helpful trick.

To search *only* web page titles use 'allintitle:'. Example: allintitle: "Wilcox, James." You can also search only the text, and exclude the titles, by using 'allintext:'

### 5. Search a Date Range

This is one of the best and most underused Google search tips for genealogists. This super cool trick lets you search multiple dates at one time without having to enter them individually. This is hugely helpful if you are looking for birth, marriage or death records (or any date based source) but don't know the exact date of an event.

Just add DATE..DATE to your search box to accomplish this (two periods in between the dates like this 1900..1910). For instance, we know that James Wilcox was most likely born between 1835 and 1839 based on the information we have, so we could search for "Wilcox, mes" 1835..1839. This will bring up only pages that include one or all of the dates 1835, 1836, 1837, 1838 and 1839. It will not *exclude* pages that include other dates (which we usually would not want to do.) But if we did want to do that we could exclude any date by typing -DATE, such as -1840 after our other terms.

### 6. Search for Terms Near Each Other

One of the most frustrating things about searching for ancestors in Google is that, while the engine will search an entire page for your terms, your terms may not have any association to each other. As mentioned early on in this article, that can cause major problems for genealogists since many pages include long lists of dates and names. It is entirely possible, for example, to find the exact names, dates and other details you're looking for —

but not in relation to each other in any way. For instance, our searches for James Wilcox and 1837 turned up pages that include James Wilcox and the date 1837, but that date was often applied to other people on the page.

However, there is a way to ask Google to find terms near each other! Enter AROUND(1) between terms to do this. An example would be: “James Wilcox” AROUND(10) 1837. That means we want Google to look for pages where the exact name James Wilcox appears within 10 words of the date 1837. You can change the modifying number to anything you want (“James Wilcox” AROUND(3) 1837 or “James Wilcox AROUND(1) Mahala) a lower number means a closer association and thus, usually, fewer results. We can also apply this to multiple terms (Example: “Wilcox, James” AROUND(10) Mahala AROUND(5) 1837). You will be blown away by how much this helps you find more relevant results.

**We hope these ‘secret’ tips help you in your Google genealogy searches! Don’t forget to combine them to maximize your results. And, when you’re done trying these out, check out our [Google Image Search for Genealogy help article](#) for more tips.**

**Note:** Sometimes when you apply these operators, especially if you do so several times in a row, Google may check to make sure you’re a real person and not a computer by transferring you to a captcha verification page. Don’t worry, just type in the characters and proceed — and try not to get too excited that you’re geeky enough to be considered a computer by Google. (Submitted by Eleanor McMurchy)

## **Best Genealogy Websites for the UK**

### **BBC Family History Websites**

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory.org](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory.org)

The core of the BBC’s family history site relates to “Who Do You Think You Are” television series. There are video clips where Nick Barratt explains the basics and supporting material on occupations, military service and migration.

### **Federation of Family History Societies Data Service** [www.familyhistoryonline.net](http://www.familyhistoryonline.net)

Includes indexes compiled by local family history societies on a pay per view basis at reasonable prices. Data available includes the National Burial Index and many indexes to baptisms, marriages and censuses.

### **Online Names Directory** [list.jaunay.com](http://list.jaunay.com)

For every county in the UK there is a “surname interest list” where people can post the surnames of lines they are researching to invite contacts.

### **Archon Directory**

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon)

It provides information on 2,500 record repositories in the UK (including the Republic of Ireland) including contact details and links to websites.

### **Access to Archives** [www.a2a.org.uk](http://www.a2a.org.uk)

This is a database with details of archives held throughout England and Wales. You can search archives held in particular repository or region and the descriptions usually contain names of any individuals or properties mentioned in documents.

### **Familia.org.uk** [www.familia.org.uk](http://www.familia.org.uk)

Local libraries have more genealogical material than you might think. This guide covers around 85% of public libraries in British Isles lists what each has in way of the GRO indexes, electoral rolls, local newspapers and directories.

### **Societies of Genealogists** [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk)

This site has the most comprehensive family history library in the country, and this makes its online catalogue the ultimate bibliography for the UK genealogist. Particularly useful is the list of parish register indexes and copies.

### **Digital Library of Historical Directories**

[www.historicaldirectories.org](http://www.historicaldirectories.org)

A lottery funded project to digitize trade directories from 18<sup>th</sup> century to the First World War.

### **Debt of Honour Register** [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

This database from Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists all 1.7 million commonwealth troops killed in the two wars and almost 7000 civilians killed in the Second World War. Each entry indicates rank, regiment, date of death and place of burial or commemoration and, in many cases next of kin. (By Peter Christian The Genealogist Internet)

### **Land Forces of Britain**

If you have military ancestors this site is the place to look for information about the British Army during the last 350 years, with a wealth of information on regiments and their history, war and campaign medals.

### **Probate Records**

When people die, families gather—for comfort, to say goodbye, and to tie up loose ends. Loved ones of our deceased ancestors would meet for the reading of the will and to divide up the departed person’s belongings.

Today, genealogists can read all about that process in probate paperwork. These records are often packed with relatives' names, relationships and residences. They offer intimate glimpses into family love, loyalties and sometimes feuds. You often can find dates of birth, marriage and death, and clues to family migrations and household composition. You may even learn the contents of the family home, barn, closets and pantry.

Probate records can be daunting to find and use. Originals may be buried in remote courthouses or unknown archives. Different counties' records are organized differently. Thick files, packed with paperwork of all shapes and sizes, may not have been microfilmed, indexed or digitized (though that's beginning to change). Documents key to understanding the estate may be filed in several places. Unidentified documents, unfamiliar terminology and apparent omissions of loved ones or property may puzzle you.

### **The Probate Process**

Two major categories of probate records are of interest to genealogists: estates (with or without wills) and guardianship (for minors and incompetents). This article focuses mostly on estate records.

Not everyone left estate records. Some people avoided having their estates probated by distributing assets before they died. Others didn't own enough to make the estate worth probating. And before the mid-1800s or so, married women often didn't have the right to dispose of family property by will.

Estate files were probated either when the deceased left a valid will, or the estate for a person who didn't leave a will met a minimum value defined by local law. A person who left a will was a testator. The executor named in the will executed its terms in a testate proceeding. If the deceased was intestate—he left no will—the court appointed an administrator to divide the estate according to inheritance laws in an intestate proceeding or administration.

A lot of people were involved in the probating of an estate. First were the deceased and heirs. Then there were those who did the settling: the executor or administrator, witnesses, surety (see no. 6 below), appraisers and court officials who oversaw that everything was done in order. Anyone who brought claims against the estate could be listed. And in slave-owning families, enslaved people were also named as property to be distributed.

Here's an outline of the probate process and the paperwork it generated.

1. A family member and/or the executor requested that the court open probate proceedings, either by formal petition or a verbal request noted in court minutes.

2. The will, if one existed, was brought to the courthouse to be proved at a hearing (notice of this hearing may have appeared in the newspaper). Witnesses testified that the will was written as stated and that the deceased was of sound mind and not under constraint. If the will wasn't witnessed, two people who knew the deceased's handwriting authenticated it. Those wishing to contest the will presented their grounds.
3. After the will was proved, the court issued letters testamentary, authorizing an executor. The executor had to be named in the will and approved by the court.
4. If the will didn't name an executor or there was no will the court authorized an administrator by issuing letters of administration. Surviving spouses may have had the first right to administer the estate. Elderly spouses and women often declined and requested that a younger male relative handle it.
5. The court appointed guardians for heirs who were minors or legally incompetent. A guardian could be appointed as a steward of such a person's property or over the person, or both. Men were usually made guardians over minor's estates, even when a custodial mother was still living. If the father was alive but the child received assets independently (such as from the deceased mother's family), a financial guardian might be appointed. Older children, usually at least age 14, often were allowed to choose a guardian. Guardianship appointments, bonds and accounts often identify relationships between parents, children and other relatives.
6. In some cases, a relative or friend posted surety. This was a bond comparable to the value of the estate as surety against mishandling by an executor, administrator or guardian. A surety bond sometimes states the relationship of the person who posted it to the testator.
7. Three reputable people not otherwise involved in the estate inventoried and appraised all property that belonged to the testator. Inventories were very specific, often down to the number of pillowcases and spoons.
8. Public notice was posted and/or published in the newspaper that the estate was to be probated. This served as notice to creditors, who could file claims against the estate.

9. The executor or administrator began settling accounts to pay creditors. Anything owed to the deceased was collected. All these generated receipts, which may be in the probate file.
10. Personal property (or “moveable estate”) and real estate not being given to heirs was sold at public auction. Court orders were sometimes also required for these auctions, and bills of sale resulted.
11. Settlement was often a lengthy process. Meanwhile monies were paid out to support widows and minors. Expenses incurred by the executor or administrator were reimbursed. The widow’s dower rights were set aside so creditors couldn’t claim it.
12. During the probate process, the court documented changes in family status, such as if heirs moved, died or married. Courts also may have taken interim accountings of the estate, especially in complicated, lengthy cases, or those involving highly valued estates.
13. Before the case was closed, one last published notice gave interested parties a chance to make a claim.
14. When all the heirs were in agreement, and sometimes once minor heirs reached 21, the estate was settled. The final settlement may appear in a separate document or in court notes.
15. The estate was distributed according to the will and the law, including any laws specific to inheritance rights of widows and oldest sons (see “Understanding probate records”). In intestate proceedings, certain “priority” relatives were named heirs-at-law. All heirs signed receipts.

### **Finding Probate Records**

You’ll look first for evidence of the above events in estate packets—master files generated during the probate process. Original documents should be there: the will, letters of administration or testamentary bonds, claims, interim accounts, receipts, a final settlement statement and more.

In addition, the court often kept separate transcripts of records, though procedures changed frequently. The clerk may have transcribed estate documents right into the daily minutes of the court. Or transcripts of wills, inventories, bonds, letters testamentary or letters of administration also may be in separate books.

Don’t forget to track down other probate-related documents, too. For e.g. you might find guardianship documents if someone was appointed to watch over an heir’s assets. Deeds for property

sold by the estate should be recorded with other deeds. (Land transferred of “devised” in a will wasn’t necessarily recorded. But look for the next sale of that property with the heir as seller.)

1. For testate cases, the will is in the estate packet. Search for the transcribed copy in court records and compare the two.
2. In most states, a woman owning and willing real estate during this time period is a clue she was single when she wrote the will.
3. The testator’s real estate is in the same county where the will is filed, meaning the deceased lived and died there. Look for more family records in this county.
4. Willing her real estate had personal property to a sister, niece and nephew indicates she probably had no living children when she died. Look for confirmation in other sources.
5. Wills may name a relative and specify the family relationship, such as “my sister Dimmis Chamberlin” or may simply say “my heirs.”
6. Narrow the range for the death date: it’s between the date of the will and the date of the initial request to initiate probate proceedings.

### **At a Glance—Letters of Administration**

1. +Note the reference to a will, which has been proven.
2. Look for a petition in the estate packet asking for the appointment of an administrator. In this case, the petition identified Chamberlain as Lydia’s nephew and Dimmis’ son.
3. Lydia’s will doesn’t name an executor; the clerk forgot to cross out the word ‘the’. The court transcript of the letter confirms this. This authority to proceed with the estate is a letter of administration and Benjamin Chamberlain is an administrator, not an executor.
4. Here are details of the duties of the administrator, which indicate paper work to be generated.
5. Benjamin Chamberlain filed the “just account,” or final settlement, required of him 30 years later—showing how long the probate process can take.

Many probate records are still with the county courts that originally created them. These courts may be called probate, orphan’s surrogate, chancery, district or circuit courts. Note that jurisdictions can change over time, and the records may have been moved to a court that currently

handles probate. Confirm the location of probate records from your ancestor's era by calling county government offices or checking online.

In some states, county courts forward older records to the state archives; the Toolkit box (use The Family Tree Sourcebook) lists probate research guides for several states. Find out if this is the case or your ancestral county from the county clerk, online searches or a local genealogy guide.

Colonial-era estates fell under the jurisdiction of colonial governments and the oversight of the mother country. Look for these first in United States State Archives, which may at least have copies (for example, New Mexico has probates from the Spanish colonial period on microfilm). These may also be published or indexed, as are many British Colonial wills. See following website: [www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/American Colonial Probate Records](http://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/American_Colonial_Probate_Records) and Wills and Probate Records [UK]: A Guide for Family Historians by Karen Grannum (The National Archives UK). It's most effective to research probate records at the courthouse, if you can make the trip and the records are still there. You may be able to search on-site indexes that aren't available online or on microfilm. Original estate files are worth reading in person. Each folded, tattered scrap of paper (handle them carefully) they may hold new family information. And when you're at the courthouse, it's much easier to track down related documents scattered in other court files.

Some probate records and wills are online. The free FamilySearch.org website hosts collections of probate records from counties in more than 30 states. Many aren't yet searchable by name, so you'll need to browse index volumes (if they're available), then use the information in the index to find the record you need. To find these collections, go to [www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list) and use filters on the left to narrow the list to probate and court collections from the state you need.

Ancestry.com has searchable probate-related collections (such as published indexes and extracts) from all 50 states. FamilySearch and Ancestry.com plan to digitally publish 140 million US wills and probate images from 1800 to 1930, so you should see more online soon. Scattered collections are at Mocavo.com, RootsWeb, USGenWeb, World Vital Records and various state or county websites. Or search on the county and state name plus the word probate, estate or wills in your web browser.

### Probate Websites

Ancestors: Probate Records found at: [www.byub.org/ancestors/records/probate/intro.html](http://www.byub.org/ancestors/records/probate/intro.html)  
Black's Law Dictionary [www.thelawdictionary.org](http://www.thelawdictionary.org)  
Cyndi's List: (go under the country and then wills and probate.) [www.cyndislist.com/wills/](http://www.cyndislist.com/wills/)

FamilySearch.org: Probate and Court Records  
[www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list/?pages=1&recordType=Legal](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list/?pages=1&recordType=Legal)  
State & Local Government on the Net  
[www.statelocalgove.net](http://www.statelocalgove.net)  
WorldCat [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org)

### Publications and Resources

Courthouse Research for Family Historians: Your Guide to Genealogical Treasures by Christine Rose (CR Publications)

The Family Tree Sourcebook by the editors of Family Tree Magazine (Family Tree Books), The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy by Val Greenwood (Genealogical Publishing Co.)

The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy by Loretto Dennis Szucs and Sandra Hargreaves Leubking (Ancestry Publishing).

Wills and Probate Records [UK]: A Guide for Family Historians by Karen Grannum (The National Archives UK).

Women and the Law of Property in Early America by Marilyn Salmon (University of North Carolina Press). (By Sunny Jane Morton and Cheryl Felix McClellan—familytreemagazine.com—September 2014)

### 10 Lessons You Can Learn From An Oral Historian

When I first started my genealogical research in 1990, a colleague advised me to interview my oldest relatives first. I set up visits, grabbed a notebook, and I was ready. Or so I thought. I cringe when I think about all the opportunities lost, because I didn't bring a broader context or methodology to my interviews.

The following are ten lessons I learned to help with family history research.

#### 1. Signed Releases

Have your subject sign a release form. In general, a release form is a written agreement in which the interviewee consents to your use of the material he or she provides. That can include the recording, a transcript, photos, or any other material. Even if your immediate plans don't call for using these materials outside your own family, it's a good idea to have a release, also called a deed of gift. You may decide later on to use the information in some public forum, such as a genealogical society presentation or a published family history.

You can use or modify for your own purposes the release form included in The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide found at website: [www.folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/intervie](http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/intervie)

[wingguide.pdf](#) or the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress [loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/releaseform.html](#).

This is a step often missed when conducting interviews with family members. Having a signed release protects both parties from potential misunderstandings later on.

Explain about the release before the interview begins. If your family member is hesitant, allow him or her the time to consider the release form. If no permission is granted, try to get the permission verbally on tape or in front of others.

## 2. Record the Interview Digitally

A notebook is simply not sufficient to record a discussion with your family member. Even if the interview takes place over the phone, a recording device is vital, if permitted. With audio you can capture silences, attempts to find the right words, enthusiasm, sadness, and anger. With video you can capture gestures, visual responses (such as stomping a foot pounding on the table, or a mere eye-roll). With digital recording technology available today, there's no reason not to record. If you decide to use video, consider investing in an inexpensive tripod to hold the camera so you can take notes. Also bring a camera. In a series of Holocaust survivor interviews I conducted, I snapped photos of the interviewees and their memorabilia, artwork, and school-visit presentation materials they have developed.

Always remember to check your equipment before an interview. Conduct a test recording. Make sure you have fresh batteries in the device and extras on hand. Also remember that even digital recorders have limited space. You don't want to arrive at your relative's home, the one relative you have been eagerly anticipating speaking with, and then find out there's no room to record.

Before you conduct your interview, try to eliminate as much extra noise as possible. For instance a television, radio, a grandfather clock that chimes every fifteen minutes, or even a pet.

In your notes, which you should still make, jot down any observations a recording may not capture.

## 3. Produce a Transcript for Posterity

People tend to read documents more than they listen to them. Would you, for instance, listen to an audio recording of

your interview with Uncle Ted over and over? Or, would you be more likely to peruse his pages of transcript?

You have three choices when it comes to transcription. You can transcribe the interview yourself. You can hire a transcription service. You can use speech-to-text software. For a recent oral history project, I hired a service. But then the transcriptionist disappeared, never to be heard from again. Luckily, I hadn't given her any money. I sat down and transcribed four interviews. The first five minutes were tedious. But it became much easier after that. Experts suggest to judge about five hours of transcription time for every hour of interview. Much depends on the interviewee's clarity and speed of speaking. Use brackets to indicate noteworthy moments, such as pausing, laughter, weeping, or interruptions. By listening to or watching the recording for yourself, you may pick up on information that reading the transcript alone cannot provide. Send the transcript to the person you interviewed. He or she may want to make changes. But always keep a master for yourself. So that rant about Cousin Elsie remains in your master file.

## 4. Donate the Transcripts

Think about a repository for your transcripts. This could be a town, city, or county museum or archive, a genealogical society, or a university. Sometimes it can be difficult to think about the future. But at some point, a descendant or long-lost relative could be elated to find that record. Also share the transcript with other family members.

Consider, too, that family history can provide insights into popular culture that are of interest to scholars. From the daily family rituals of mealtime to how the family earned and spent money. Social historians and others use oral-based family histories to aid their research.

## 5. Multiple Interviews

Memory can be a tricky thing. Especially if your family suffered a trauma, family members may not easily discuss it. A single interview may only reveal a standard narrative, a story that has been practiced over time, the "official" view but if you can, schedule follow-up interviews. You may find inconsistencies in the narrative that could give you clues



that there is more to the story than what you are hearing.

Even an interview with someone close to you may not yield what you expect. That person may get nervous. To engender trust, start off with questions easy to answer. Then you can delve into more controversial topics, if you have any, when you sense you have that trust.

The interval between interviews allows both you and your family member to reflect upon the answers. You may come up with additional questions. The interviewee may want to talk more about certain subjects or modify a statement. Oral history is a joint product created by both interviewer and interviewee.

#### **6. Make Your Interviewee Comfortable**

One of the first interviews I conducted in my early years of genealogical research was with a family member who others told me knew everything. Perhaps she had always been interested in the family history. Perhaps she inherited all the documents. But when I talked to her, she clammed up. Apparently, she and my grandmother (who died years before I was born) had some kind of rift. Now I would know better. It's vital to make your interviewee feel his or her story—and not your research goals—is at the center of the interview.

If you sense your family member does not wish to discuss a certain topic, leave it for the moment. But do come back to it later on or in a follow-up interview.

Physical comfort is also a necessity. Make sure your interviewee has a chance to get a drink and take care of other personal needs. Note when your family member is tiring. You can always take a break or schedule another interview.

#### **7. Capture the Big Picture**

Sometimes in the pursuit of family history we want to know names, places, and dates. It is just as important to hear the stories: the how and why certain events took place. When you assemble your interview questions, take a broad view. For e.g., you could ask, "What was it like growing up in your town?" By keeping most of your questions open-ended, you'll likely get a story rather than a simple yes or no. Of course, you may also want to verify information you've collected, such as names of siblings and parents, birth dates, marriage dates, death dates, and

places. But your interview should be poised to capture larger context.

Oral historians create a guide for their interviewees, but give themselves the flexibility to follow the flow of conversation wherever it takes them. Ask relatives about their current lives as well as their past experiences. Ask about family traditions and how they've changed over the years. You may uncover far more information by relaxing your own research goals. Encourage your interviewee to tell stories; these narratives carry attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that form the core of that person's identity, experiences, and way of looking at the world.

Consider, too, adding neighbours and other community members to your list of people to interview. While interviewing a museum docent in my home town recently, he said, "Your grandmother used to make my school lunches every day." From him, I was able to gain valuable insights into her daily existence in my grandparents' store across the street from the parochial school in the next town.

#### **8. Use a Historical Framework**

In preparing questions for your interview, consider mapping the family's history as you know it against local, national, and international events. For e.g., you might want to ask about a reaction to John F. Kennedy's assassination or when V-E day was announced. You may want to examine your family member's perspective on the civil rights movement or the women's movement. Explore the family's stories relating to a local explosion, flood, or the celebration of the town's centennial. In an interview with one family member, I learned that my grandmother donated clothing to families in need after a plastics storage facility exploded one hot July night in 1933, killing many people. Note that creating this kind of larger context can also be helpful in getting seemingly uncooperative relatives to share information.

#### **9. Ask for Photos and Artefacts**

During the course of your conversation, your interviewee may refer to certain family photographs or artefacts. If not already present, ask to see them. Request permission to take photos or have copies made. Photos, letters, newspaper clippings and other ephemera, and objects can also be excellent conversation pieces, again to

stir a reluctant narrator. I asked an aunt to draw the floor plan of her family's apartment. When I later visited the space, I could envision it as it was during the 1930's. Early in my research, my father's "little black book" became a great way for him to tell me about all the people listed, from family to friends. This was especially significant, because he was a passive informant. He needed something to jog his memory.

## 10. Thank Your Interviewees

While you may verbally thank your family member for his or her help at the end of the interview, send a note by regular mail or email expressing your thanks. One fellow I wanted to interview called his cousin to make sure I was "legit". A small courteous gesture like a thank you can go a long way in ensuring future cooperation from that person or others. (Barbara D. Krasner, a historian and freelance writer—Family Chronicle—July/August 2014).

### Going To Church

For tracing religious records are key to tracing your German roots in Germany. We'll guide you to your Deutsch ancestor's church records in six steps or fewer.

### Acquaint Yourself With German Church Records

Start by getting a feel for what you can expect to find in the records. Germany didn't implement civil (government) registration of births, marriages or deaths until 1876. Before then church records are the primary source of family information. A local church, whose parish boundaries may have included neighbouring villages, kept these parish registers or church books, called Kirchenbucher in German.

Church records include information on births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials. Sometimes they also contain registers of confirmations, communions, members and families and other records. Catholic records were usually written in Latin and Protestant records in German. German records are written in notoriously hard-to-read Gothic script.

Church records from different time periods and areas of Germany vary in the details they provide. More recent records tend to give more complete information. In general, churches in western Germany

began keeping records first. The farther east you go, the later the records start. The earliest surviving Protestant records date from 1524 at St. Sebald in Nuremberg. Catholic Church records begin in 1563, and most Reformed parishes started keeping records by 1650.

You'll probably have to read websites and communicate with churches and archives in German. Don't worry: You can do it even if you don't know a word of the language. Refer to the German Word List on FamilySearch Wiki [familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German\\_Word\\_List](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German_Word_List) and use online translators, such as translate Google.com [www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com). When you visit a foreign-language website, Google's Chrome browser, a free download from [www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome), offers to translate it. If you favour Internet Explorer, the Google Toolbar [www.google.com/toolbar](http://www.google.com/toolbar) also translates web pages instantly.

### Identify Immigrant Ancestor's Parish

You need to know your ancestor's German hometown to find church records there. Records of American churches that served German families often name member's hometowns in Germany. Other sources to examine for a place of origin include family papers, death records, obituaries, naturalization records, passports and county histories. Check FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com and MyHeritage.com for your immigrant ancestor and potential relatives with the same last name. Ancestry.com's Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934 search [www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1068](http://www.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1068) are indexed for the years 1850 to 1914 and give the last place of residence in Europe. Also try to determine your ancestor's religious affiliation, usually Lutheran (often called Evangelical in Germany) or Catholic.

Distant relatives may still live in the place in Germany where your ancestor was born. If you're researching an uncommon surname, search the national phone book, Das Telefonbuch found at [www.dastelefonbuch.de](http://www.dastelefonbuch.de) Enter the name in the Wer/Was (Who/What) box and click on Finden. Also search Facebook for people in Germany with the same last name.

Once you've discovered the place in Germany, find the location and the name

of the church parish using gazetteers. It's common to find towns of the same name in different areas of Germany, so this is important. Try to identify the parish, village, district and state. A large city might've had many parishes, while a small village without its own church was usually part of a parish in a nearby larger town.

ProGenealogists has links to gazetteers for several German states and provinces found at [www.progenealogists.com/germany/gazetteersmain.html](http://www.progenealogists.com/germany/gazetteersmain.html). My immigrant ancestor Leonard Slip was born in the village of Frankfurt in the province of Middle Franconia (Mittelfranken).

ProGenealogists' Bavarian gazetteer shows that this Frankfurt is in the Evangelical parish of Obersteinbach and the Catholic parish of Scheinfeld.

The German Society for Computer Genealogy has several useful tools, mostly in German, on its website. The genealogical gazetteer of place names contains 858,000 entries. To search it, click on GOV, enter a place name in the box and click the Search button. A search on Frankfurt produces 167 matches, including an entry for the village in Mittelfranken. The gazetteer gives the district, administrative region, state and country where the village is located. Click on the place name for links to maps and an article in Gen Wiki, the society's user-generated online knowledge base for genealogy research in German-speaking areas of the world. It says that the village's Evangelical (Lutheran) church, while the Catholic Church records are held by the Archives of the Archdiocese of Bamberg. Some GenWiki articles also list local researchers willing to do record lookups.

### **A Matter of Records**

Unfamiliar handwriting and language can make German Church records intimidating but you can interpret them with practice and with a few resources. First, learn common words, such as Gatte (husband), Tauf (baptism) and names of the months. Consult old German handwriting guides, such as the one in Family Tree Magazine's German Genealogy Cheat Sheet. Also read the FamilySearch Wiki articles linked at [familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany): Look especially for the topics Church

Records, Handwriting and Language, and Languages, and for the German and Latin genealogical word lists.

German Catholic Church records are generally in Latin and Protestant records in German. If you prefer books to websites, consult Map Guide to German Parish Registers (Family Roots Publishing), a series of volumes by Kevan M. Hansen that list the parishes associated with each town, as well as neighbouring parishes.

### **Check Online For Church Records**

Few German Church records have been transcribed or digitized and placed online, but the list is growing. Here's a sampling:

FamilySearch.org: The free genealogy site from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints has a database called Germany, Prussia, Brandenburg and Posen, Church Book Duplicates, 1794-1874 with 1.6 million records. FamilySearch regularly adds a few collections. To see its complete list of online German records, go to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), click on Search, scroll down and click on Continental Europe and in the list of places on the left, click on Germany. Some of the records aren't indexed, but you can browse them.

State Archive of Baden-Wuerttemberg: Images of 70,000 pages from birth, marriage and death registers of 5 Protestant, Catholic and Jewish communities in southern Baden are online at [www.landesarchiv-bw.de/web/49484](http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/web/49484). The original records at the State Archives of Freiburg contain 2.4 million genealogical records from 1810 to 1870. They happen to cover a lot of parishes and more records are coming from this joint project of FamilySearch and the State Archive of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

### **Online German Genealogy Records and Databases: Go to website**

[www.germanroots.com/germandata.html](http://www.germanroots.com/germandata.html) for links to a range of German databases, including church records, organized by place. Note that some links go to collections on subscription websites.

### **Rent FamilySearch Microfilm**

If the church records you need aren't online, the next most convenient and inexpensive way to access them is on microfilm. FamilySearch has microfilmed records from around the world, and you

can borrow them through its network of local FamilySearch Centers. Most of the microfilm from before 1875 had come from the southwestern German states of Baden, Hesse, the Palatinate, Rhineland, Westphalia and Wurttemberg.

To determine if FamilySearch has microfilmed church records from your ancestor's hometown, start at FamilySearch.org, click on Search and then select Catalog. (You might want to use the link to the previous version of the FamilySearch catalog instead, because the film notes are formatted so it's easier to tell what's on each roll). Enter the village or city where your ancestor lived in the Place Name box and then choose the place from the dropdown menu. Note that the Family History Library Catalog records according to the political divisions of the German Empire of 1871, not today's jurisdictions. You'll get a list of records covering that place. Look for a church records heading and then click each title to see a description naming the parish and records covered. You can use Google translate to help with the German words.

For e.g. if you ran a Place search on Eichen, the first matching place suggest is "Germany, Baden, Eichen." Select that place and click Search. The one matching church record is Kirchenbuch 1605-1962. The catalog describes the Evangelical (Lutheran) church records of Schopfheim as the parish register of baptisms, marriages and deaths, including records from Eichen and several other villages.

The records are on 13 reels of microfilm, whose contents are described in detail in the film notes. The second item of microfilm No.1,189,749 includes "Eichen Heiraten, Taufen, Tote 1739-1775"(Eichen marriages, baptisms, deaths 1739-1775). The ninth item on that microfilm has a Familienbuch (family book) from Eichen from about 1787.

Click on a microfilm number to place an order online. A short-term loan costs \$7.50 and gives you 60 days to view the film at a FamilySearch Center (Go to their website at: [www.familysearch.org/locations/centerlocator](http://www.familysearch.org/locations/centerlocator) to find one near you.)

### **Write to German Churches**

If the records you need aren't online or on microfilm, contact the parish directly. Most German parishes have websites with contact information. To find a parish's website, Google the parish name plus

evangelische kirche for a Lutheran church or katholische kirche for a Catholic Church. For e.g., a search for obersteinbach evangelische kirche produces matches on the Lutheran Church in Middle Franconia and on one in another town named Obersteinbach in Alsace-Lorraine.

If a web search doesn't work, try the online parish directory of the Lutheran [www.ekd.de/english/regional\\_churches.html](http://www.ekd.de/english/regional_churches.html) Or Catholic [www.kath.de](http://www.kath.de) Church in Germany.

### **Contact German Archives**

Some original parish registers have been forwarded to a central church archive, a state or municipal archive or another office. In other cases, archives have microfilm copies of local church records. When you request information about early records from a church you might be referred to an archive search for Leonard Slip's baptismal record. GenWiki has links to profiles of German archives found at: [www.wiki-de-genealogy.net/Kategorie:Archiv\\_in\\_Deutschland](http://www.wiki-de-genealogy.net/Kategorie:Archiv_in_Deutschland). For church archives, click on the plus sign beside Kirchenarchiv in Deutschland, and select Bistumsarchiv in Deutschland for Catholic diocese archives or Landeskirchenarchiv in Deutschland for Lutheran archives. The archives often can't respond to genealogical requests, but staff may be able to tell you if they have the church records you need and recommend a researcher for hire.

Some German church archives have online inventories of their parish register holdings. For e.g. for the Lutheran Archives in Baden [www.ekiba.de/14497\\_14580.php](http://www.ekiba.de/14497_14580.php), click on Kirchenbucher at the bottom of the page. For the Lutheran Archives in Bavaria [www.lkan-elkb.de/339.php](http://www.lkan-elkb.de/339.php) click on KB\_Bestande im LAELKB at the bottom of the page, and for the Lutheran Archives in Rhineland [www.archiv-ekir.de](http://www.archiv-ekir.de) click on Kirchenbucher on the left side of the page. In general press Ctrl-F to use your browser to search the archives' homepage for links to Kirchenbucher (Church Books) or Bestande (Inventory).

Once you have the church records in hand, you'll need to read them. Accessing German Church records takes diligence, but it's probably the only way you'll trace your German ancestry. (By Rick Crume—familytreemagazine.com—November 2013)

The only rock I know that stays steady, the only institution I know that works is the family.--Lee Iacocca