

An Exhaustive Search: Leave No Stone Unturned

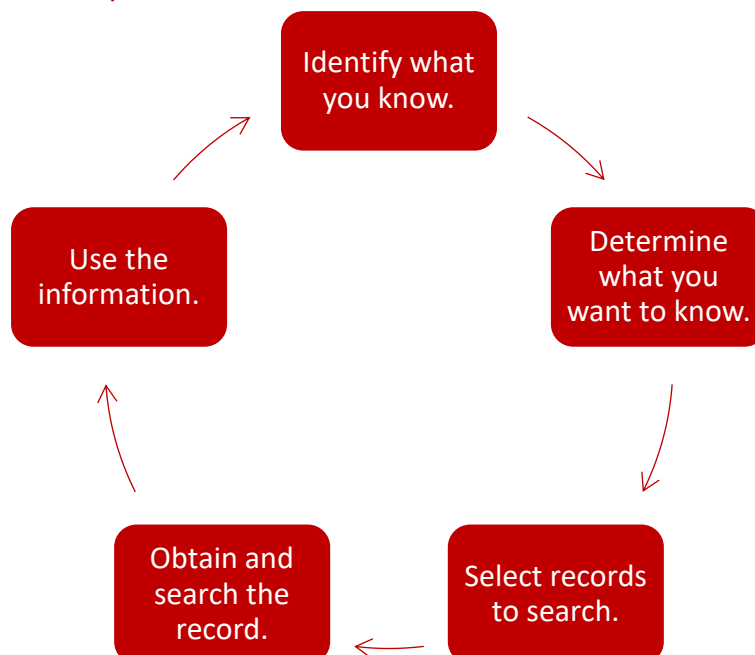
Genealogy Guidepost Series, Part I

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A Reasonably Exhaustive Search

- Familiarize yourself with available resources.
 - Variety of formats: online, print, archival, personal, government, cemetery, church, newspaper, etc.
 - Variety of record types. Different locations created different types of records.
- Find where the records are now.
 - Look for libraries, archives, court houses, churches, and others.
 - Browse catalogs, record inventories, finding aids, and talk to staff/volunteers.
- Learn about the historical context.
 - Research the history of the place your ancestor lived. Discover churches, schools, and businesses.
 - What events impacted your ancestor's life?
- Use a research checklist.
 - Review your research checklists for every ancestor your research.
 - Don't overlook a resource. You never know what information you might find.
 - What resources might be in your home or with a family member?
 - Many are available online or in how-to genealogy books.
- Use a Systematic approach to research.
 - Create name variations lists (for surnames and given names) and use check for each variation in all sources used.
 - Keep a log of where you have previously searched and what you were looking for.

Research Cycle



Search Strategies for Common Brick Wall Problems

“I cannot find them in the Census.”

- View multiple transcriptions/indexes.
 - View all available transcriptions or indexes of original documents.
 - This includes print and online resources.
 - Different transcribers may have read the information differently, or someone may have skipped or misspelt something.
- Research the entire family.
 - Look for the households of every child and sibling in the census.
 - Often parents would move in with one of their children later in life.
 - A widow might move in with a relative after the head of her husband.
- Browse images of the original census pages.
 - If you know where an ancestor was likely living (based on other records, known address, other census years, names of neighbors) read through the census for yourself.
 - You may recognize a name that was misread by the transcriber.
- Multiple entries are possible.
 - An individual or family may be recorded multiple on times during a census year.
 - This can be because of moving students, temporary living arrangements, etc.

“I cannot find their Birth/Death Certificate”

- Know what records are available based on date and location.
 - Verify that birth/death certificates were recorded in your ancestor’s location at the time of their death.
 - Verify that these records exist in the resource you are using to search.
 - It is possible that a record was never created. What supplemental records could you find instead?
 - Compliance with record requirements may have taken up to several years.
- Try searching without a name.
 - Using a date/place search, you can browse the records that were recorded at the time you’d expect to find your ancestor.
 - As you browse the records from the right time/place, you may find the record for your ancestor with the name misspelt or left blank.
- Check for a delayed birth record,
 - Look for a delayed birth record if they were born before records were required or if they did not receive a record at birth.
 - If they received Social Security, they likely filed for a delayed birth record.
 - Some Texas records can be found through FamilySearch in the record set “Texas Births and Christenings, 1840-1981” others can be found with the county clerk’s office.

“I cannot find the parents’ names.”

- Read the records carefully. Record forms vary by time period and location.
 - Documents that can be used to link two generations:
 - Obituaries
 - Birth/Death Certificates
 - Scholastic Census Records
 - Will/Probate Records
 - Baptisms/Confirmations
 - Some Marriage Records
 - Wedding Announcements
 - Federal Census (1880 & later)
 - Family Bible
 - Personal Papers
- Sometimes a relationship cannot be *directly* documented.
 - Find proof by creatin a wider search.
 - Ex: Try proving a relationship to a sibling and find the parents of that sibling.
 - Use multiple documents to create a chain of evidence.

Alternative Sources

- If you are struggling to find a document, ask: “What other sources might contain this same information?”
- Sources for birth and death dates:
 - Family Bible
 - Headstone
 - Obituary
 - Birth Announcement
 - Christening or Baptism
 - Social Security Death Index
 - Social Security Claim Index
 - Will or Probate

Historical Context

- Learn about the time period of your ancestor’s life.
- Read newspapers that were published in their area during their lifetime. This will provide perspective on the types of local events that were affecting their daily life and the types of opinions that were present at that time.
- Read books about history. Commonly books may be written about the history of organizations, schools, events, movements, places, ethnic groups, churches, or communities.
- Historic maps can help you visualize the world your ancestor lived in to better understand size of towns, transportation routes, and spatial relationships.
- Research the non-family individuals connected to your ancestor’s life. This method is commonly called the FAN approach. FAN stands for Friends, Associates, and Neighbors.