

# Breaking Through Your Genealogical Brick Wall

Class Handout – Boise Area Fall Family History Conference – 19 Apr 2008

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Brick Wall – a person or family in your pedigree that refuses to be found – we all have them

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## Some Guidelines that will prove helpful in your search:

- Go from the “known” to the “unknown” - work from recent events and go back in time
  - Document where you have been – Use a Research Log
  - Focus on one question at a time and don't give up until you succeed – Be tenacious
  - Remember to ask for help – both professional and divine
  - Share what you have gathered – Submit your GEDCOM to the Pedigree Resource File
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## Nine Steps to help break through your genealogical Brick Wall:

1. Write down everything you know – document all details in your genealogical software (PAF)
  2. Are you sure? Challenge assumptions and question family folklore especially for direct line
  3. Create and Analyze a Timeline for your brick wall person or family
  4. Learn everything you can about the locality in question (geography, history, records available)
  5. Try tracing collateral lines – this includes children and siblings of your brick wall person
  6. Get creative with name spelling – sometimes name spellings were changed or Americanized
  7. Follow the land on which your ancestors lived – use land and property records
  8. Ask for help from others – there are experts available who can guide you
  9. Search any new sources you identified – then regroup and start again at step #1 if needed
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## Some Internet sites that can help you in your research:

- Personal Ancestral File – Help → Lessons → Lesson #3 – Notes and Sources  
<http://www.familysearch.org/eng/paf/lessons/paf5.html>
  - Blank Research Log and/or Blank Timeline  
[http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/frameset\\_rhelps.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/frameset_rhelps.asp)  
Click on “Sort by Document Type” in the top left-hand corner of the screen  
Click on “Form” and then select either Research Log or Blank Timeline to view/print
  - Family History Library Catalog – look for resources to search  
[http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset\\_fhlc.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp)
  - Cyndi's List of Genealogical Sites – Search for your locality of interest  
<http://cyndislist.com>
  - E-Mail Lists for your Locality and/or Surname – Post a query  
<http://cyndislist.com/mailling.htm>
  - Try the new Family Search Wiki web site for your locality  
<https://wiki.familysearch.org/>
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## Contact an Expert at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City:

E-Mail: [fhl@ldschurch.org](mailto:fhl@ldschurch.org) (Use this address to request answers to research questions)

Telephone: 866-406-1830 (Ask for the appropriate Reference Desk)

(North America, British Isles, International etc.)

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### Sources to use in order to find missing genealogy information:

**Birth Date or Location:** Vital Records, Church Records, Newspaper Notices, Family Sources, Military Records, Census, Cemetery Records, Immigration/Emigration Records, Land Records, Will/Probate Records

**Death Date or Location:** Death Certificates, Church Records, Newspaper Notices, Cemetery & Funeral Home Records, Family Sources, Census Mortality Schedules, Military Records, Will/Probate Records, Land Records, Social Security Death Index

**Marriage Place or Date:** Marriage Certificates, Marriage Banns, Marriage License, Marriage Bonds, Death Certificates, Church Records, Newspaper Notices, Family Sources, Census, Cemetery Records, Pension Records, Land Records, Will/Probate Records

**Divorce/Marital Status:** Court Records, Divorce Records, Newspaper Notices, Vital Records, Military Pension Records, Family Sources

**Maiden Name:** Marriage Record, Church Records, Newspaper Notices, Bible Records, Military Pension Records, Will/Probate Records, Cemetery Records

**Immigration/Emigration Date:** Ships Passenger Lists, Naturalization & Citizenship Records, Newspaper Records, Census (1900 on)

**Country/Town/Parish of Origin:** Ship Passenger Lists, Naturalization Records, Vital Records, Military Records, Census Records (Individual's birthplace from 1850; birthplace of individual's father and mother from 1880), Obituaries, Church Records

**Names of Parents:** Census Records, Vital Records, Newspaper Notices (wedding, engagement, obituary), Church Records, Social Security Records, Adoption Records, Family Sources, Cemetery Records, Land Records, Will/Probate Records

**Name of Spouse:** Marriage & Divorce Records, Census Records, Church Records, Family Sources, Military Pension Records, Will/Probate Records, Newspaper Notices, Cemetery Records

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### Brick Walls Further Reading:

Breaking Down Walls, Brick by Brick: <http://genealogy.about.com/library/weekly/aa042602a.htm>

Hit A Brick Wall – Cyndi's List: <http://www.cyndislist.com/hitbrick.htm>