

Breaking Through Your Genealogical Brick Wall

Class Handout – Boise Area Fall Family History Conference – 25 Apr 2009

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

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
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
 - 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 (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

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>