

# **THE FAMILY SNOOP**

**MERCED COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

**VOLUME 38, No. 4**

**JULY/DECEMBER 2020**

## **November 2020 Meeting**



**“Using  
My  
Tree  
Tags”**

**By  
Jennifer  
McDonald**

**1:00 p.m. Saturday**

**November 21, 2020**

**Online Zoom Meeting**

**Meeting ID: 655 620 3145 - Password: 2100**

## Challenging year, but we are still meeting.

With the Covid-19 pandemic in full swing most of the year, meeting and keeping the Society going has been a challenge. Fortunately,



with Howard Smith as our president, he was up to the challenge. He uses Zoom for staying connected with other organizations as well as with the Merced County Genealogical Society. We have greatly appreciated his leadership this year.

We appreciate those who have prepared presentations for our Zoom meetings. We also appreciate those who have set aside the time to attend these Zoom meetings.

Throughout this newsletter, there will be links for recordings of Zoom meetings, as well as the links for our next meeting in November. If you are reading this newsletter digitally, you may click on the link and it will open the web site.

At some point, probably not in the near future, this pandemic will end. Hopefully, a vaccine will soon be available. We look forward to meeting in person once more. Until then please stay in touch by joining us online.

## Upcoming Meetings

Date	Speaker and Topic
November 21, 2020	"Using My Tree Tags" - Jennifer McDonald and nominations of officers
December 19, 2020	Merry Christmas! There will be no in-person Christmas buffet, but there will be election of officers.
January 23, 2021	Annual Beginners' Course and installation of officers
	Please share the zoom link and
	invite friends and neighbors

## Zoom Meeting for November 21, 2020 Merced County Genealogical Society

(Please note: the Zoom meeting link is hyperlinked.  
You may click on it to open the Zoom meeting.)

Time: 1:00 PM Pacific Time

To join Zoom Meeting, watch your email for the meeting reminder which will contain the link.

You might also find it by setting up a Zoom account (free accounts are available at <http://www.zoom.us>). On the day and time of the meeting, click on your Zoom **desktop icon**. When the window pops up, click on **Join a Meeting**. In the next window, enter the **meeting ID**, shown below, and click **Join**. Enter the **meeting password** as shown below.

Meeting ID: 655 620 3145

Password: 2100

One tap mobile  
+16699006833,,6556203145#

Dial by phone for audio only:  
+1 669 900 6833, then enter 655 620 3145#,  
then enter # again (We shared a short Zoom tutorial in our last newsletter.)

## December 2020 Meeting

1:00 p.m. – Saturday

December 19, 2020



Member  
Show  
&  
Tell

Election  
Of  
Officers

## Meeting Attendance & Members

**June:** by Zoom: Members 14 + 1 Guest totaling 15

**July:** by Zoom: Members 13 + 2 Guests totaling 15

**August:** NO MEETING

**September:** by Zoom: Members 14 + 3 Guests totaling 17

Total Members: 60 active

New members: NONE

**In Memoriam:** 16-year member Vick Loftin passed on September 28, 2020 [last active in 2017]



## Turning Brick Walls into Piles of Rubble

In July, Robert Givens gave a presentation on how to overcome one the big stumbling blocks genealogists face—"brick walls." While it is true some get stumped due to lack of thorough research, some ancestors are just plain difficult to find. Here are some notes from his discussion.



### **Avoid fallacies that can get us in trouble:**

- \* There might be some truth in family traditions, but falsehoods have probably crept in with retellings.
- \* The internet does not have all the answers. There are still many sources not online.
- \* For those microfilmed records that have not been digitized and indexed, microfilm might be the only source.
- \* There might be some cost involved in doing genealogical research, but overall, it does not need to be expensive.
- \* There are good online trees and bad online trees. Treat them as clues for your research, but verify the information found before you use it.
- \* Collaborating on research can often bring great rewards.

### **Overcome mistakes you might make:**

- \* Search everyone in the family. Research of descendents in a collateral line might lead to the information you need for your direct line.
- \* Don't develop blinders. Be creative to solve tough problems.
- \* Always start with the most recent generation and verify before moving back.

\* Most ancestors had names spelled phonetically how the recorder heard them. Look for spelling variations.

\* Research logs keep track of information found, where found, what was not found so you know to check again later to see if more records were added.

\* Transcripts and indexes are nice but look for original records, especially if you can find a digital image online.

\* Large, easily assessable databases are helpful for solving the easy problems. For the tough ones, plan to range farther afield.

\* Consider a possible migration, even a short one. People often moved. Some moved for a while and then returned.

\* Never trust one locality source. Verify the locality is correct.

\* Take time to self-educate yourself, especially if researching in a new location.

\* Organize your research so you know what you have and where it is.

\* There could be more than one person with the same vital statistics in the same geographic area.

\* A remarriage can make the family look completely different.

### **Best Practice Suggestions**

- \* The more evidence you find the more sure you can be of your conclusions.
- \* Learn the history of the area to better prepare for what you can research there.
- \* To better understand your ancestors, research their community.
- \* A careful review of records will often uncover new facts.
- \* Be creative and think outside the box
- \* Try approaching your problem leaving out some of your current assumptions. Try a new name, place, date, etc.
- \* Search neighboring (and farther) areas for your people.
- \* Learn the land boundaries of a locality when your ancestor lived there.
- \* Use historical maps.
- \* Often a timeline will point out something you are missing.
- \* Let others look at your problem – they might find things you overlooked.
- \* Siblings and aunts/uncles often provide the clues you are looking for.
- \* Follow the paper trail no matter where it takes you.

\* Don't disregard newspaper gossip columns and other social "news."

\* Learn and use the advanced search techniques of the sites you regularly use.

### For Your Reading Enjoyment:

1) [www.cyndislist.com/hitbrick.htm](http://www.cyndislist.com/hitbrick.htm) - great site with multiple links

2) Brick Wall Genealogy Solutions – A Family Heritage Resource – good site – some broken links - [www.workingdogweb.com/Brick-Wall-Genealogy.htm](http://www.workingdogweb.com/Brick-Wall-Genealogy.htm)

3) Brick Walls How to Get Through Them – <http://genealogy.about.com/cs/brickwall/>

4) Tips for Solving Brick-Wall (and Other) Research Problems – [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rwguide/lesson7.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rwguide/lesson7.htm)

5) Brick Walls from A to Z by Michael John Neill [www.rootdig.com/2008/12/brick-walls-from-to-z.html](http://www.rootdig.com/2008/12/brick-walls-from-to-z.html)

6) Brick by Brick: Building Your Brick Wall by Cheri Daniels, KHS Senior Librarian/Reference Specialist

<http://kentuckyancestors.org/brick-by-brick-building-your-brick-wall/>

7) Brick by Brick: Tips for Dismantling your Brick Walls by Cheri Daniels, KHS Senior Librarian/Reference Specialist

<http://kentuckyancestors.org/brick-by-brick-tips-for-dismantling-your-brick-wall/>

8) 50 Best Genealogy Brick Wall Solutions (Genealogy in Time Magazine) - [http://www.genealogyintime.com/GenealogyResources/Articles/50 best genealogy brick wall solutions part1 page 01.html](http://www.genealogyintime.com/GenealogyResources/Articles/50%20best%20genealogy%20brick%20wall%20solutions%20part1%20page%2001.html)

9) Brick Wall Breakthrough: Follow The Breadcrumbs On & Offline by Claudia Breland - <http://www.archives.com/experts/breland-claudia/family-history-case-study.html>

10) Using Reverse Genealogy to Overcome Brick Walls (Family Tree Magazine via Upfront with NGS) - <http://upfront.ngsgenealogy.org/2012/07/using-reverse-genealogy-to-overcome.html>

11) Brick Wall Strategies for Dead-End Families by Kimberly Powell - [http://genealogy.about.com/od/basics/a/brick\\_walls.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/od/basics/a/brick_walls.htm)

The following is the link to the July meeting in which Mr. Givens gave his presentation. If you wish to view it, please do so before the end of 2020 when it might be deleted from the Zoom cloud. Or— You can click on the links and download the video to watch offline. At the upper right of the screen, click on Download (3 files) and all three files—audio, video, and chat notes—will start to download. Click the OK button for the ones you want and click the Cancel button for the others.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/7JUtlU-qrjM3E9CVuASDAv55W9W0J6Os1CgXqPQLn0-9UCZWOWf3MOYaNLBX4c5-YEpzcGoJZQDu3QvE?autoplay=true&startTime=1595103024000>



## Finding Missing Ancestors

Our September Zoom meeting featured a presentation by Richard Rands of Brute Force Genealogy ([rrands@earthlink.net](mailto:rrands@earthlink.net)) on finding our missing ancestors. Richard used to live in Silicon Valley, but now lives in Auburn.

Here are notes from his presentation:

The level of success of discovering missing ancestors depends on four following rules:

### 1. Perseverance, determination

- \* involves focus and moderation.

- \* Keep research logs, and revisit over and over (Used to keep logs to don't keep checking the same places, now needs them to check for updates.)

- \* Apply analytical thinking and techniques to your approach.

### 2. Good systematic records

- \* personal genealogy database vs Online trees

- \* Problem with online trees – they are written in the software of the online program, and are not compatible with what is in your database. You don't have search and analytical tools (usually written by people straight out of college who don't know genealogy)

- \* Better to have software on your computer compatible with the programming language of your computer. It can then perform analytical functions (programs written by genealogy experts)

- \* Family Treemaker

- \* Legacy Family Tree



- \* Roots Magic
- \* PAF is still available for PC even though it is no longer supported.

- \* Ancestral Quest (his preference)
- \* Use online programs. Learn their applications, search criteria and how they work.

3. Use **charts and worksheets vs scribbled notes** on scraps of paper. Start a research project by recording what you know on a worksheet.

- \* (See [www.ancestry.com/cs/charts-and-forms](http://www.ancestry.com/cs/charts-and-forms) they are free)

- \* Richard Rand's Census Analysis Worksheet available free on Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group site. It shows the progression from one census to the next. It allows one to identify sources precisely:

[https://www.svcgg.org/documents/CensusAnalysisForm\\_RichardRands.pdf](https://www.svcgg.org/documents/CensusAnalysisForm_RichardRands.pdf)

- \* Use the census records from one decade to the next to track children.

The image shows a screenshot of a 'Census Analysis Worksheet'. It is a large, multi-column table designed for tracking census information. The columns are organized into sections: 'Census Year', 'Location', 'Census Type', 'Census Date', 'Census Place', 'Census Page', 'Census Number', 'Census Name', 'Census Address', 'Census Occupation', 'Census Education', 'Census Religion', 'Census Marital Status', 'Census Age', 'Census Sex', 'Census Race', 'Census Ethnicity', 'Census Ancestry', 'Census Notes', and 'Census Source'. The table is currently empty, with only the header rows filled in.

- \* Worksheet #1 (shown above) Works well from 1850s forward

- \* Worksheet #2 From 1840 earlier, called numerical census. Good to verify information on later censuses to identify correct families and their members.

4. **Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence** – doesn't mean it's not there, it means that you haven't found it yet, or it isn't available yet.

- \* Know the territory—geography, boundaries, boundary changes of locality.

- \* Know jurisdictions – how did records collections work per era

- \* Know history, what was going on country, state, and local

- \* Know relevant web sites – know the idiosyncrasies of the search engines

- \* Know location of available record collections

- \* Use FamilySearch Wiki –

[www.familysearch.org/wiki](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki)

## 5. Triage rules for identifying your ancestors:

- \* Something matches criteria
- \* No matching item, but nothing wrong
- \* Some hint that it doesn't fit
- \* Crossed out on record means something violates the criteria

- \* On Ancestry, sometimes it is better to leave a general records search and go to a special collection to search. On search criteria, add and take out information to bring up relevant names.

5. Helpful forms and presentations on Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group:

<https://www.svcgg.org/>

The following is the link to the October Zoom meeting that includes Janet's presentation. If you wish to view it, please do so before the end of the year or download it using the instructions given for Robert Givens.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/0mEkhpT7nMIT8TfgdhlONeQooTN2QeniNvbsyukKyV6qQ\\_vJ33FtQYkyTw-cNofv3prpPLIka9cc7ui.UCFY0xgP501\\_gqrv?autoplay=true&startTime=1600545703000](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/0mEkhpT7nMIT8TfgdhlONeQooTN2QeniNvbsyukKyV6qQ_vJ33FtQYkyTw-cNofv3prpPLIka9cc7ui.UCFY0xgP501_gqrv?autoplay=true&startTime=1600545703000)



## Online Databases

In our October meeting held on Zoom, Janet Brigham joined us to discuss Online Databases.



Here are some notes from her presentation:

These days, in the time of Covid, we might run out of commodities like food and toilet paper. What is needed for continued research is still available. What we run out of is time and energy.

1. Should you create an online tree?

- \* Goal is to share with family
- \* Free or reasonably priced
- \* Lasts as long as the company hosting it
- \* Easy way to quickly look for information
- \* Be careful who has access to information about living people
- \* With most, you can control who can make changes
- \* You and others can keep it updated
- \* Create multiple trees for various groups in your extended family

2. Considerations for online trees:



\* If you decide to, organize your information first  
 \* Family Tree Maker and Roots Magic will sync with Ancestry.

\* When you travel and want to research, if don't have your own database, you cannot always find out the information you need that is locked in an online database.

### 3. **Biggest online databases:**

- \* FamilySearch
- \* Ancestry.com
- \* MyHeritage.com (Janet's preference)
- \* Findmpyast.com

### 4. **Special Features**

- \* Can do fan charts with personal database over which you have control of information to include
- \* Print out reports, forms, calendars
- \* Marriage: can be officially married, or not officially married by a particular church. They might be married by another church or civilly.
- \* Sometimes use partner instead of spouse – go through all non-conformist records for that area or time period. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.
- \* Famberry does a nice job for adding pictures.
- \* Famberry and Family Echo are good sites for asking others to help keep up-to-date.

\* For issues with combined names on online trees, need to go in and sort it out using original research to make sure it is right. Damage is done if the wrong information gets on and stays on online family tree programs and people pass on the wrong information.

\* Priorities of FamilySearch not the same as our priorities – they are theological. Use as clues for your own personal database.

\* Riverton FamilySearch library has the best handouts.

Keep in mind all online tree programs thinks they alone have the ultimate experience. Don't get bossed around by them. All of them, if you allow your information to be seen publically, they will hide living information.

The following is the link to the October Zoom meeting that includes Janet's presentation. If you wish to view it, please do so before the end of the year or download it using the instructions given for Robert Givens.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/OXFNp9DBghs57zVhj0nhg2AODAPmeu1vjKFRxyc\\_N62hzCZuV2ZfKjvuLJqRCJxQ.dQfk4pQKdTG8LaAB?startTime=1602965492000](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/OXFNp9DBghs57zVhj0nhg2AODAPmeu1vjKFRxyc_N62hzCZuV2ZfKjvuLJqRCJxQ.dQfk4pQKdTG8LaAB?startTime=1602965492000)

Where can I create an online tree?			
Site	Cost	Upside	Downside
Ancestry.com	Subscription (\$99 - \$299) free 2-week trial	Popular You own your info Hints; GEDCO-friendly (import/export)	Cost Copying and junk Hints
FamilySearch.org Family Tree	Free to anyone	Popular, free, Hints Stories, photos GEDCOM-importable	Wiki; you don't own it Changes by others <b>NO GEDCOM EXPORT</b>
FindMyPast.com	Subscription (\$129-\$179/Year; free trial)	You own your info GEDCOM-friendly	Some copying and junk
Geni.com	Sub. (\$119.40/yr) Free, Pro versions Free trial	Free limited use You own your info Photos, stories Research links (Pro)	New: GEDCOM import Some copying and junk MyHeritage.com new owner
MyHeritage.com	Subscription (\$149.99/year; free trial)	You own your info GEDCOM-friendly	Some copying and junk
FamilyEcho.com	Free	GEDCOM import; manual entry	New-ish, growing
Famberry.com	Free, upgrade \$44/year Enterprise \$275/year	GEDCOM import; manual entry	New-ish, growing

Chart by Janet Brigham

**The Family Snoop** is published bi-monthly. It is sent in .pdf format and in color to members who choose to receive it by email. Those who choose USPS Mail delivery will receive black and white copies several days later than email recipients. Back copies can be requested from Treasurer Sharon Darby and will be emailed in .pdf format. **Send items, articles, stories, etc., for the Jan/Feb 2021 issue by December 24 to robynechols ATgmail DOT com.**

(No July/August edition-check email or our website for July Zoom meeting details.)

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**Dues are payable in January for 2020**

Dues are \$20 per year for an Individual or \$30 for a family living at the same address.

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**Merced County Library**

**Doris Cochran Research Room**

Wednesday & Saturday: 1:00 pm-4:00 pm

**We need volunteers to help keep it open!!**

(When we open again)

**PLEASE VOLUNTEER!**

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**Merced County Genealogical Society**

**PO Box 3061**

**Merced, CA. 95344-1061**

**Officers 2020**

President	Howard Smith	769-9304
Vice President	John Barnhart	384-3744
Secretary	Barbara Lindenberg	358-8062
Treasurer	Sharon Darby	631-7082
Membership	Margie Barnhart	384-3744
Hospitality	VACANT	
Past President	Stephanie McLeod	383-1009
Programs	Shari Stetson Michle Burroughs Susan Brower	
<i>The Family Snoop</i> Editor	Robyn Echols	769-6929

**MCGS Website:**

**<http://sites.rootsweb.com/~camcgs/>**

**Family History Center**

*(Due to Covid-19 concerns, the Family History Center is temporarily closed.)*

<https://www.familysearch.org/>

1080 E Yosemite Ave Merced. 722-1307

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday:

10:00 am-4:00 pm

7:00 pm-9:00 pm

Free access on their computers to Ancestry.com and other programs. Take along your flash drive to save and download. Volunteers are there to help you and microfilms can now be ordered online.

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**Merced County Library**

<http://www.co.merced.ca.us/77/Library>

2100 O Street Merced 209-285-7642

Fax: 209-726-7912

(Currently closed, use online services and pick-up services starting 6/15/20)

Monday ~ Thursday: 10:00 am-6:00 pm

Friday – Saturday: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Sunday - CLOSED

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**Merced County Courthouse Museum (closed)**

<http://www.mercedmuseum.org/>

21<sup>st</sup> and N Streets

P. O. Box 3557

Merced, CA 95344

(currently closed)

Wednesday ~ Sunday: 1:00 pm-4:00 pm

Free admission

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**Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County**

<http://www.cagenweb.com/stanislaus/>

Click on their newsletter to read online or download. Information about bus trips and programs offered throughout the year that may interest you.

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**Multi-Monthly Financial Report**

Jun / Jul / Aug / Sep 2020

Income	150.00
Expenses	(661.70)
Checking Balance	<u>\$4,776.20</u>
Savings Account:	100.10
CD-2-Yr; matures on 5/20/21	<u>16,548.12</u>
Savings Balance	<u>\$16,648.22</u>

**Total in Checking and Savings: \$21,424.42**