ROOTS AND BRANCHES

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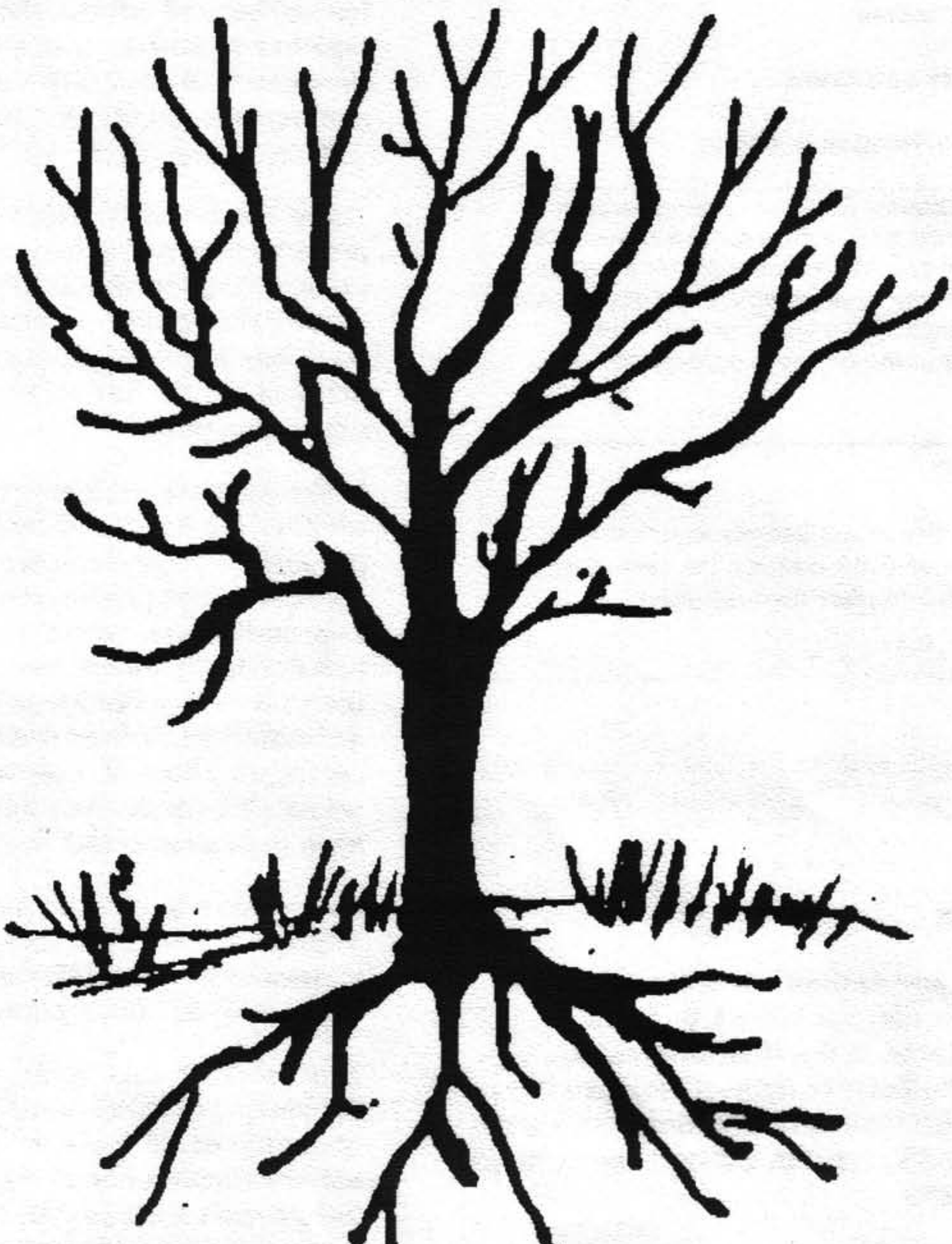

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Carol Izzo, Newsletter Editor, appreciates any genealogy-related information for the Newsletter. The information can be provided to her by e-mail (jizzo@totcon.com), at meetings, or at the DeLand Library Genealogy Room with her name on it. Please put your name on the article so you get credit.

Meeting Schedules

The Roots and Branches Society meets at the DeLand Library at 6:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month, September through June.

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REMINDER!

Do not forget to renew your annual memberships! Memberships run from January to December.

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NEW BOOKS

–The History and Antiquities of the City of St. Augustine, Florida, Founded A.D. 1565. Comprising Some of the Most Interesting Portions of the Early History of Florida - George R. Fairbanks. A fascinating historical narrative. (1858) reprint, 203pp., illus., maps, $21.50 #F2253

–History of Florida from its Discovery by Ponce de Leon in 1512 to the Close of the Florida War in 1842 - George W. Fairbanks. Florida prior to the American Civil War. (1871) reprint, 359pp., new index, paper, $29.00 #F2280

Source: Jerry Hale from Heritage News

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Reliable Information—Whatever the Source: The Key to Sound Research-

Donn Devine, Ancestry.com

One basic question we ask when doing family history is: Is that the way it really happened? Virtually all our efforts are aimed at searching for snippets of information and putting them together to answer that question. To arrive at the answer, we need to sort through the confusing or conflicting information we've collected, and decide what is really reliable.

There is now a new way of looking at the problem that can greatly simplify our analysis. Considering individual items of information separately from the sources that provided them has been taught during the past year by many of the leading lecturers at conferences across the nation.

In the past, we were taught to determine first whether the source of the information was primary or secondary. We knew primary sources would give us the most reliable information, but which sources were primary? Is a death certificate with the embossed seal of the vital records office primary? Is the annotated and edited published correspondence of a prominent person primary? With the new approach, we no longer have to be concerned with such distinctions.

Now, we are to classify a source as either original or derivative and each of the individual items of information that come from the source as either primary or secondary.

Thus, a death certificate, obviously an original document, contains both new information about the death from the attending doctor and old information about the departed and his or her parents from an informant who may have learned it from yet another source. We have to consider the two types of information

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separately in order to properly assess them, even though they both came from an original document recorded very near the time of death.

Original or Derivative Sources

Original sources are most likely to give information that hasn't been garbled when passed along, but we must still analyze each piece of information in the source. Is a piece of information primary (first-hand knowledge of the informant and given or recorded close to the time of the event) or secondary (recorded after the event or learned from another source)?

The sources that are not original are classified as derivative and are, by their very nature, subject to change or loss of data each time they are copied or transferred. However, some derivative records, such as a microfilm copy of an original document, are more likely to preserve the original information. A published book of abstracts made from typewritten transcripts of the originals may not be so accurate. The abstract, with its every-name index, may be an indispensable reference to the original record, but it is still a derivative source.

Most of us started family history research with our oldest living relatives as our sources. In some cases, they were the original sources because they were present when the events happened. But their information, given to us many years after the event when their memories were less reliable, is secondary.

Similarly, not every document we find is an original record. In fact, whole classes of frequently used official records are copies. The bound deed and will books found in county courthouses are copies. In most jurisdictions, the original deed was returned to the buyer of the property. If it survived, it would most likely be found in a collection of private family or business papers.

An original record represents the first time information was captured in fixed form, but it is often not the original source, since it had to be made by a person. That person may have been the original source, e.g., the doctor who certifies a death certificate, but more often that person was recording information given by another person–a parent or godparent at a baptism, for example, or the conveyancer who prepared the deed for a land transfer. Some original records may have been recorded by several original sources. For example, a marriage license application has information in the handwriting of the issuing clerk, the bridegroom, and the bride.

Derivative records may be as close to the original as a photocopy or carbon copy. At the other extreme, the content may have gone through twenty people before being captured in the form we observe. The more generations removed from the original, the more chance for loss or error.

We occasionally use a different type of source in genealogy–artifacts or material objects, from which we can deduce information about the people who used or made them. These artifacts include tools, keepsakes, clothing, and dwellings. Like other sources, they may be original or derivative (casts, photographs, or reproductions of the original). Artifacts do not present their information in words, symbols, or images, but instead, an observer must extract the information and make a conclusion about it. It then becomes a derivative source when passed on or recorded.

By considering the source–original or derivative–we have some idea of how accurately the information came to us from its first expression.

Primary and Secondary Information

Now we need to consider the quality of the data itself–how closely the first expression conforms to or matches some past reality; that will answer the question that opened this discussion. This quality determination is summarized in the terms "primary" and "secondary," but in actuality, we can't neatly relegate all data to two bins. The distinction is more like a gradient from the strongest "primary" shades to the lesser and weakest "secondary" shades.

Information is primary if it comes from an informant who directly observed it and who expressed or recorded it soon after. Being primary, however, does not necessarily ensure that the information reflects reality. Because information is initially perceived in the human mind, we must first look into the state of mind of the informant. Did he or she have the knowledge to correctly interpret what was seen? Can we rule out possible conscious or unconscious bias on the part of the informant? When the information meets both these standards, we have the highest possible quality of primary information.

Besides determining if the information is primary, we should also look at the formality with which it was recorded. The most formal, and therefore the least likely to contain unintended omissions or ambiguities, are those made under oath, such as testimonies or written affidavits. Next would be those that take place in public ceremony, such as weddings or public addresses. Oral history interviews are somewhat formal because they provide information that represents the subject's actual perceptions. In contrast, information imparted in casual conversation may be fully in accord with reality, but doesn't come with the same degree of assurance.

Once we've determined competence and bias of the informant, we then return to our earlier source analysis–whether the source is original or derivative–and decide how faithfully the original came to us. We should also consider whether the information is confirmed by, consistent with, or contradicted by other information derived from independent sources. If our primary information, derived from an original source or derivative image, agrees with information from some other reliable source, we can confidently use it as evidence for drawing conclusions. It is extremely important, however, to verify that the supporting information originated with an independent informant and isn't just the same information received through two different transmission chains.

In a lecture at the 2000 National Genealogical Society Conference in the States, Dr. Thomas W. Jones, CG, summed up these considerations as they apply to recorded information under four easy-to-remember headings, each beginning with the letter C.

- **Closeness–Was the record created near the time of the happening?**
- **Credibility–Was the original observer reliable and unbiased?**
- **Causality–What was the reason for making the record?**
- **Corroboration–Can the information be corroborated from independent sources?**

Researchers no longer need to deliberate between primary and secondary sources; we can now classify them as original or derivative, and reserve "primary" and "secondary" for the individual items of information the sources provide. This may not be a distinction that will soon be accepted in other social sciences, but family historians will find it very helpful in avoiding wrong conclusions, errors that double each time we move back another generation.

Source: Pat Shannon

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The Origins of Family Names

Jeff Chapman

Surnames contain a small, but well-memorialized, slice of our family histories. To those who have deciphered them, surnames offer a clue about one of our ancestors' memorable traits at the time when surnames were becoming fixed. Throughout prehistory, and for most of recorded history, most people have been known by only one name. In simpler societies, where everyone could reasonably be expected to know all their neighbors and only rarely to come into contact with people from other towns, a single name sufficed. Only in more complex societies, most notably that of the Roman Empire, were men frequently known by more than one name. The complex Roman system incorporated a personal first name, a hereditary family name, a nickname or "common name", and possibly a battery of acquired names based upon character traits or military accomplishments. People might also be known for their place of origin or residence.

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The names of famous Romans have come down through history in a wide variety of manners: Marcus Tullius Cicero is known only by his nickname, Gaius Julius Caesar is known by both his family name (Julius) and his common name (Caesar, or redhead), and Marcus Antonius is usually known by the anglicized name "Mark Anthony", probably because of Shakespeare's influence.

Medieval Names

With the end of the Roman Empire and the dawning of the medieval period, trade, travel and learning declined throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, and life once again moved at a slower, if not necessarily simpler, pace. By the fifth century, hereditary surnames had all but vanished. Those who didn't farm lived in villages or small towns where a first name, sometimes accompanied by a casual nickname, was enough to distinguish one citizen from one another. Still, nicknames were used fairly often, as our medieval ancestors drew their children's names from a much smaller pool of possibilities than we use today. In England, for example, the names John and William were extremely dominant, with the occasional Thomas thrown in for variety.

The secondary nicknames were commonly based on where one lived, one's lineage, one's occupation, or some unusual feature or habit. Only in larger towns might there be an occasional mix-up — and this sort of thing could be remedied by having one of the town's two John Smiths adopt an alternative byname, such as John the Young.

Though it did have some failings, this informal system was quite functional for most purposes. Since few people ever had dealings with the world beyond their home town, first names and casual nicknames sufficed in most situations. Most people were illiterate, and written documents were created only very rarely, so there were few pressures for standardization of spelling or form.

One of the first groups to employ standardized surnames were the nobles of Normandy, who adopted surnames for roughly the same reasons that European rulers adopted titles of nobility. A surname was seen as being a mark of status that helped to distinguish the aristocrat from the commoner. The practice spread from Normandy to the rest of France and, following the Norman conquest in 1066, the English and Scottish nobility adopted the Norman affectation with enthusiasm, though hereditary surnames had been all but unknown previously. In both Britain and France, the practice spread from the landowning class to all classes in the early 1300s, being adopted in larger settlements first.

Though the practice of employing surnames was imported from Normandy, British surnames drew from a broad range of ethnic and linguistic roots, which reflected the history of Britain as an oft-invaded land. These roots include, but are not limited to, Old English, Middle English, Old French, Old Norse, Irish, Gaelic, Celtic, Pictish, Welsh, Gaulish, Germanic, Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Though hereditary surnames had become common in England by the early 1300s, even as late as 1465 they were not universal. During the reign of Edward V, a law was passed requiring certain Irish to adopt surnames in order to make them easier to track and control. Other ethnic groups that adopted hereditary surnames comparatively late include the Norse, Welsh and Dutch, who persisted in using non-fixed bynames until as late as the 17th century.

It is interesting to note that hereditary surnames have only returned to common usage in the past 900 years, and that the possession of a middle name has only become common in the past two centuries.

Categories of Names

As mentioned, English bynames and surnames can be quite cleanly separated into four distinct categories: names based on lineage, names based on geography, names based on occupation, and nicknames based on some unusual characteristic.

Surnames based on lineage are very common in English-speaking countries. Either the name of the father is simply appended to the name of the child (i.e., John William) or a possessive "s" might be added, giving names like Williams. In some cases, the ending "son" is added, producing names such as Davidson, Richardson, or Anderson (son of Andrew). The suffix "kin" can be used in surnames as a diminutive — so Tomkin is "Little Thomas", and Wilkin is "Little William". The Irish "O", as in O'Brien, means the grandson of Brien. In Scotland and Ireland, either "Mac" or "Mc" means "son of"; "ap" serves the same purpose in Wales. Families which had settled in Ireland soon after the Norman Conquest may have a surname beginning with "Fitz" (from the French "fils", for "son"). "Fitz", as used in England often indicates illegitimacy — so the surname Fitzroy means the illegitimate son of the King (from the French, Fils de Roi). The same function is served by "ez" in Spain and Portugal; "szen" or "sen" in the Netherlands; by "sen", "son" or "zoon" in Scandinavian countries; by "ov" or "ev" in Slavic countries; or by "ibn" in Arab lands.

Surnames representing localities are easy to spot if they come from a specific geographical area or part of land. "Ewan Ireland" is obviously shorthand for "Ewan, from Ireland" — Ewan would only be called this in a foreign country. Similarly, an ancestor recorded as Tom Lincoln may have thought of himself as just plain Tom, but been called Tom Lincoln by others when outside the town of Lincoln. If your surname ends in land, ton, ville, ham, don, burg, berg, borg, bury, berry, field, fort, chester, thorpe, by, dorf, hoff, dam, veld, stead, stadt, stad, grad or any similar place-specific suffix, you can probably find the origin of your name by simply perusing a comprehensive atlas. The evolution of language has made others less obvious: Cullen ("back of the river"), and Dunlop ("muddy hill"). Saxon names referred to the bearer's place of residence using the word "atte" ("at the"), which has survived in surnames such as Atwood, Atwell and Atwater. Continental European names often employed the particles des, d', de, de la, de las, della, del, di, du, da, van, vande, van der, von and ten — all of which mean from, at, or of.

Occupational surnames were derived from a man's occupation (Carpenter, Taylor, Baker, Mason, etc.). Some names which refer to a social situation – such as Lord, Young and Freeman — are also placed in this category. Some obvious occupational names aren't what they may seem. A Farmer did not work in agriculture but collected taxes, and Banker is not an occupational surname at all, meaning "dweller on a hillside". Another common stumbling point in the deciphering of occupational names is that many medieval jobs no longer exist. While it's still fairly easy for us to understand that a Falconer trained falcons, it never occurs to us that a Purcell would be a seller of pork, that a Walker would walk on cloth, or that a Kellogg would kill hogs.

Nicknames are perhaps the most fascinating surnames. They were most commonly based on some obvious physical trait — Long (for height). Three examples of an individual's personality — Gay, Moody and Stern. The nicknames were not always flattering, of course. Beckett is Old French for 'little beak', Courtney is French for 'short nose', Cameron is Gaelic for 'crooked nose'. Nicknames based on animals with distinctive traits are common, particularly in Germany and Eastern Europe. Wolves, bears, eagles and ravens figure prominently. Some nicknames such as the English Drinkwater or the Czech Nejezchleba ("Don't eat bread!") refer to characteristics or incidents that modern bearers of the names can't easily comprehend.

Family Names in North America

Canada and the US employ a greater variety of family names and first names than anywhere else in the world. Surnames have been imported from almost every region of the earth, and some have been newly invented, either accidentally or intentionally. Some changed their names to something "American sounding" upon arrival so as to leave the past behind. Others translated their old name into English. Some families had no fixed surname until after their immigration, where they had to commit their family name to paper for perhaps the first time. (Or rather, what the clerks thought they heard was committed to paper.) Source: Ancestry.com