



# Irving Genealogical Society

## Officers:

President: Joe Sissom

Vice President: Jeanne Mantooth

Secretary: Is Needed

Treasurer: Erle Kellogg

## COMING EVENTS

**Monday, May 21, 2007** – Betsy Mills, the State Coordinator for the ARGenWeb Project, County Coordinator for counties in the TXGenWeb and ARGenWeb Projects, Vice President for the Lamar County (TX) Genealogical Society and member of several lineage societies, will be our speaker. Her topic is Dating Old Photographs: Learn how to identify old photographs by using modern technology to analyze the type of photograph, identify the people in the photograph, determine the styles in the photograph and find other often-missed clues. Today's technology has improved the chances of identifying those unknown photographs in your photo album.

**Saturday, June 2, 2007** – Resources and Methods for Genealogical Research Featuring John Sellers – Presented by the Mesquite Historical and Genealogical Society at the Mesquite Main Library, 300 W. Grubb, Mesquite, TX – Pre-Registration \$20.00, Walk-Ins \$25.00. John's topics will be "Dusty Books and Musty Rooms," "Researching Your Ancestor's Plot of Dirt": The Adventures of Courthouse Land Research," "Making Sense of the Internet Census Searching," and "Women, That Gender You Can't Do Without In Your Research." If you are interested in attending, you can pick up a registration form at the IGS May meeting.

**Monday, June 18, 2007** – **Help!** We need someone to volunteer as host or hostess for our annual June pot-luck supper. As most of you know, instead of a regular meeting at the library in June of each year, we have an informal get-together to share some of our favorite dishes. Please let Joe know as soon as possible if you are willing to be our host or hostess.

## Old Business

Cemetery Update - The sheriff in west Texas has been supplied with the AG's opinion that he may proceed with the maintenance of private grave sites in their county cemetery.

The Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson has asked us to hold off on a course of action until after the legislative session is over.

The Tennessee legislature is also in session, and our cousins there are having problems with a bill which would enable a land owner on which there was an isolated cemetery to deny access to any person or group that could not PROVE to being a descendant of someone buried there.

Cemetery preservation is constantly under attack and gensocs will always be called on to take action.

The head of the Dallas Co. Cemetery Preservation Assn, Dan Fauer will be our speaker in July.

Joe Sissom

### **Tom Thumb**

A reminder for all of us – Tom Thumb donates a small percentage of our purchases to the society when our Good Neighbor No. 6070 is given to the clerk at checkout time. Even though it is a small percentage, it adds up over time, and is an easy source of income for the society.

### **More Brick Walls from A to Z - Ancestry Weekly Journal dated May 14, 2007 by Michael John Neill**

Last year we looked at [Brick Walls from A to Z](#). Unfortunately most of us still have brick walls. In recognition of the many attempts we make to break them down, this week we include an additional list.

#### **A is for Assumptions**

While it is necessary to make assumptions in order to begin work on some problems, there often comes a time when the assumption must be put aside. The search for a marriage record may begin in the location where the first child was born, but if records are available and no marriage can be located, then it may be time to let go of that assumption. Always state assumptions as such. Once an assumption becomes confused with fact, it is difficult for it to return to the land of assumptions.

#### **B is for Boundaries**

An incorrect knowledge of the county boundary, the state boundary, or the national boundary can cause a researcher to search in the wrong location. Political boundaries may be precise, but they may also be in constant flux. Linguistic boundaries are much more fluid and rarely clearly defined.

#### **C is for Culture**

What do you know of your ancestor's culture? Is your ancestor's ethnic heritage impacting his actions and the kinds of records she leaves? Don't assume you act like your ancestor or vice versa.

#### **D is for Descendants**

Your great-great-grandparents may have many descendants outside of your immediate family. Any of these descendants may have family information or memorabilia that could be crucial to your research. Seek them out.

#### **E is for Estrangements**

Is the reason you cannot find your ancestor's parents because the family had a falling out at some point in time and there was no reconciliation? It could easily have happened.

#### **F is for Friends**

Are your ancestor's friends what caused him to emigrate from point A to point B? And because these friends have no blood ties to your ancestor, you have overlooked them or perhaps even had difficulty determining who they are?

### **G is for Geography**

Is your lack of geographical knowledge impacting your research? Was it easier for your ancestor to travel to the next county to get married? If your ancestor left home looking for work, what was the route to take? Where was the largest nearby city?

### **H is for History**

If your knowledge of history is weak, you may be making incorrect interpretations or about your ancestor's actions and records. The genealogist needs to have an understanding of national, regional, and local history applicable to the time period being researched. One level of history is no more important than any of the others.

### **I is for Ignorance**

Is it our ancestor's ignorance that is causing the problem? Did your ancestor make bad mistakes that sent their lives into a tailspin? Maybe the reason our ancestor's decisions do not make any sense is that our ancestor was not making good decisions to begin with.

### **J is for Job**

Do not forget that your ancestor's job was crucial to his existence and the lack of one might have been the reason for his sudden migration from one point to another. Your unawareness of that job might be causing your brick wall.

### **K is for Knocking**

Are you knocking when you should be ringing the doorbell? Perhaps there is a different tool you should be using to solve your research problem. Are there other records you are not even aware of? Make certain you are using the right tool and that you have all the available tools at your disposal.

### **L is for Language**

Do you understand how your ancestor pronounced the name of his place of birth? If your Swedish-born ancestor indicated he was born in "Cheesa" on a marriage record, he actually might have been referring to Kisa. The way it sounded to an American clerk might not have been the way it was spelled on a Swedish map.

### **M is for Maternal**

Are you too focused on the paternal line? Just because that was the last name that got passed down from one generation to another does not mean it necessarily exerted any more influence on your ancestor than his maternal relatives. It might have been maternal uncles that brought your relative to Nebraska instead of his father's family.

### **N is for Nicknames**

Is a nickname causing you to overlook your ancestor in a record? Lizzy, Beth, Betsy are all diminutives for Elizabeth, Sally is one for Sarah. Keep these in mind when researching. Your ancestor who was married to Lucinda in one census and Cindy in the next might have only had one wife.

### **O is for Out-of-Date**

Are you using an out-of-date finding aid or resource? Make certain you are using a corrected or updated versions if necessary. Keep in mind that in some cases, there may be multiple indexes to the same set of records. Use all indexes in case the desired entry is rendered differently in each index.

### **P is for Patronymics**

If patronymics are being used in an area where you are researching, keep in mind that no one will have the same last name as their mother or father and that some families may choose non-patronymic surnames for their children. This is done solely to confuse the researcher.

### **Q is for Quirky**

Maybe the reasons your ancestor and his records do not make sense is simply that your ancestor was just "a little different." Sometimes we have an ancestor who was slightly flaky.

### **R is for Recorded**

Have you considered looking at the miscellaneous items that are recorded in many county recorders' offices? There are more than just deeds and vital records. I have found out-of-state divorce decrees, military discharges, medical licenses, etc., recorded in the books of miscellaneous records. Give them a try. You never know what your relative thought he should have recorded.

### **S is for Step-Parent**

Is the reason you cannot find your ancestor in the 1860 census because the mother remarried and you do not know the new husband's name? If the child is enumerated with the last name of the step- father and that name is unknown to you, locating the family may be difficult and determining the name of the second husband should be high on your priority list.

### **T is for Transcription**

Are you using an incorrect transcription which you have never compared to the original document from which the transcription was made? A slip of the keyboard may have created your brick wall.

### **U is for Unrelated**

Are you assuming two individuals with the same last name have to be related? It may be that those two with the same surname are completely unrelated and moved near each other just to confuse their descendants.

### **V is for Vital Records**

Have you made your own brick wall by not obtaining vital records on all your ancestor's children--not just the direct line? Answers to your problem may be resting in records of aunts and uncles instead of those on your ancestor.

### **W is for Why?**

The good genealogist should be like a toddler, constantly asking "why?" If you are not asking yourself why a record was created when it was, why a name was spelled the way it was, why your ancestor lived where he did, why your ancestor waited until he was forty to get married the first time, you may be missing out on important clues.

### **X is for EXtraneous Information**

Official records rarely include extraneous details just to alleviate the boredom of the clerk. There is usually a reason for the apparently "extra" information. An 1850s-era marriage license indicates the bride had "no lawful husband living." In this case, reference was not to the bride's deceased husband, but rather to a subsequent "husband" with whom the bride had a relationship, but not one with whom she had a "valid" marriage.

### **Y is for Yo-Yo**

Was your ancestor a "yo-yo?" Did he immigrate to the United States more than once? Two of my wife's ancestors did. My own ancestors were not that indecisive, but it does happen. Sometimes people went back to the homeland and never did re-emigrate.

### **Z is for There Is No Z**

Are you looking for a record that was never created? Are you looking for a reason that really is not there? Remember that not every question has an answer and not every action has a reason. And remember that there are genealogical questions that will never be answered.

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Michael John Neill is the Course I Coordinator at the Genealogical Institute of Mid America (GIMA) held annually in Springfield, Illinois, and is also on the faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois. Michael is currently a member of the board of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS). He conducts seminars and lectures nationally on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including *Ancestry Magazine*. You can e-mail him at [mjnrootdig@myfamily.com](mailto:mjnrootdig@myfamily.com) or visit his website, [RootDig.com](http://RootDig.com), but he regrets that he is unable to assist with personal research.

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