

Set a Goal • Plan Your Work

• Work Your Plan

by Hal Braschwitz

I recently reviewed my family genealogy status and found that my maternal grandmother's family tree, the **Quaders**, was my weakest link. This was not surprising since the family did not have any known contact with these relatives. The only "fact" I was aware of was the family lore which stated that one of my grandmother's brother had drowned in a ditch in New York City while being drunk.

One of the basic tenets of genealogical research is to determine what your goal will be for each individual search. I decided, then, that my goal here was to increase my knowledge, about this branch of my family. It was a challenging endeavor as none of the members of this branch of the family are still alive. In fact, my only first cousin still living claims that her memory is gone and she remembers nothing of the family anymore, so I was left with searching any written documents about these folks which might still be available.

From ship manifests I was able to find when my grandmother and some of her siblings emigrated to this country. From that source I was able to establish the members of my grandmother's family who came here. There were at least four brothers and one sister who all settled in Cleveland. I then found find more information on the family members through marriage licenses, city directories, Ancestry.com, census pages, death certificates, Cleveland Public Library Necrology database and finally, from coroners reports.

The Coroner's Inquest Report, available from the Cuyahoga County Archives, shed the bright light which led to the explanation of the old story regarding the death of one of my grandmother's brothers, my great uncle. The Report stated that he did die from drowning in six inches of water in a ditch in Independence, Ohio on the morning of April 3, 1897, as a result of having an epileptic fit and falling face forward into the ditch. Adding to this wealth of information, it was also noted in the Inquest Report that he had two minor children and had been deserted by his wife. Furthermore, no one from his family attended the Inquest.

The family lore was apparently partially true, but was in error in several details. He died in Ohio, not New York City and apparently became unconscious from an epileptic seizure, which he had regularly, not from being drunk. His demise occurred about 9 AM, which made being drunk unlikely.

The Coroner's Inquest Report, made in 1897, was handwritten, so understanding and deciphering it was quite a challenge. Several members of our genealogy group took the time to help me decipher sections of it, for which I am very grateful.

It is quite amazing what one can glean from various available documents even when no living relatives are around to fill in the details. By having a goal and utilizing existing resources, I was able to add significantly to my family tree.

