



The Five C's for Success in Genealogy Today

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Today's genealogists often solve problems that stumped them just a few decades ago by combining classic and computer resources, collaborating with cousins, citing sources consistently, and doing comprehensive searching. This lecture focuses on advanced search techniques in combination with newly reachable resources from the modern era of genealogy.

PARTS I & II: COMBINING CLASSIC AND COMPUTER RESOURCES

PROBLEM: How to identify end-of-line ancestor Martha GRAY's parents?

SYNOPSIS: Martha GRAY born 1784 in Virginia and married Edmond GROSS in 1800 in Washington County, Virginia (which had one courthouse fire). There were two GRAY families living in Washington County, Virginia in 1800--but at the opposite end of that large county from the GROSSes. These Washington County GRAYs fought in the American Revolution, their families are well documented with no female children named Martha for several generations, and my Martha GRAY born 1784 does not fit into those families. Five years later, Martha and Edmond GROSS were living in Campbell County, Tennessee (which over the years had several courthouse fires). There were no other GROSSes living in the area that became Campbell County in 1806, but many GRAYs -- all difficult to sort out because of the spottiness of early records for the county. This female end-of-line ancestor had me stumped for more than thirty years. Can combining classic with computer and Internet resources help solve this problem?

QUESTION #1: How did Edmond GROSS meet and court Martha GRAY?

QUESTION #2: What resources can be used to sort the GRAYs in early Campbell County, Tennessee into groups?

QUESTION #3: How can those groups be traced forward in time to other areas to hopefully overcome the lack of early records for Campbell County, Tennessee?

PART III: COLLABORATING WITH COUSINS

PROBLEM: How to determine if Margaret ("Maggie") Lillian DAVIDSON FULKERSON SALISBURY ROBERTS CUNNINGHAM was an only child?

SYNOPSIS: The earliest record found for Maggie was the 1850 U.S. Census in Montgomery County, Missouri (a burned courthouse county) where Margaret DAVIDSON age 36 female born in Virginia and Margaret DAVIDSON age 6 born in Missouri are enumerated in the household of Samuel A. WHEELER age 25 farmer born Missouri and his wife Margaret C. WHEELER age 19 [daughter of Colonel Robert Craig FULKERSON, county treasurer in Montgomery County]. No records found from 1970 until 2008 gave any hint as to the Maggie's

mother Margaret's maiden name or the number of children Margaret may have had by Mr. DAVIDSON before marrying Colonel Robert Craig FULKERSON in about 1853 in Montgomery County, Missouri [a burned courthouse county].

PART IV: CITING SOURCES CONSISTENTLY

You will (as shown in the two problems above) be going back to use your sources again and again, want to share them with "cousins" and other researchers, and include them with your work posted online in a variety of venues. This is a dangerous proposition, but you have to give to get.

Exactly how you cite your sources is not as vitally important [to me] as doing so consistently and thoroughly (putting in enough identifying pieces of information to track that source again later).

REMEMBER: An online family tree without sources is nothing more than a fairy tale.

Where to find help citing your sources:

1. Your personal genealogy database program should include source templates to prompt you on what pieces of information to include for that type of source and the typical order in which they are entered. The few surviving personal genealogy database programs today have source templates based on the seminal work of professional genealogist Elizabeth Shown Mills. Or you can live dangerously and post your work in online trees (like FamilySearch and Ancestry).
2. Richard S. Lackey's book: *Cite Your Sources: A Manual for Documenting Family Histories and Genealogical Records*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985.
3. Elizabeth Shown Mills' book: *Evidence! : Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1997.
4. Elizabeth Show Mills' Quicksheet: *Citing Online Historical records: Evidence! Style*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2005.
5. Elizabeth Shown Mills' book: *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2007. [Also available in PDF format for electronic searching and easy portability.]

PART V: COMPREHENSIVE SEARCHING

CHANT for 19th and 20th Century U.S. Research (from most complete and likely to be accurate down to least complete and less likely to be accurate): CIVIL > CHURCH > FAMILY > SINGLE > MULTIPLE > CENSUS > and PROBATE.

CIVIL: Government registrations of births, marriages, deaths, and divorces...etc...etc.

CHURCH: Church records of key (identifying) life events including christenings, marriages, funeral/ memorial services, and confirmations (establish probable age of the child and often give parents' names).

FAMILY: Family bibles, diaries, correspondence, photos (hopefully with identifying information on the back or a location or photographer's name stamped on the front), scrapbooks, recipes, etc.

SINGLE: Any other single original source that gives all the basic identifiers (names, date, place, and relationships) for an identifying life event (birth, marriage, death, burial, divorce, etc.).

MULTIPLE: Any combination of original sources used to find all four basic identifiers for an event (such as using a family bible for names, date, and relationships then using a birth announcement in a newspaper to identify the place of birth).

CENSUS: Census records are notoriously inaccurate and the indexes taken from them even more so. Find your ancestor (and all their family members) in all the censuses they would have been enumerated in then look at the whole picture. Remember: the closer a record is recorded to the date and place the event occurred, the more likely it is to be accurate (especially for the age of that person).

PROBATE: This is the lowest source on the chart for several reasons. Not everyone had a will--or debts requiring probate proceedings if they died intestate (without a will). There are a multitude of reasons why not all the heirs would be mentioned in a particular will.

NOTE: All of the above refer to original records and not compiled sources.

For more specific help refer to Record Finder Tables by going to *wiki.familysearch.org* and in the "Search by place or topic" box enter the name of a place followed by **Record Finder Table**.

Comprehensive searching means working your way down through this hierarchy of sources and going after additional (less commonly searched) sources that are not online, not easy to find or not easy to search--but that could prove invaluable in solving your research problems.

PART VI: A NEW ERA IN GENEALOGY

We have entered a new era in genealogy--one like nothing that has gone before.

CHANT: FIND > CITE > SEARCH > COPY > EVALUATE > REPEAT (until solved) > then ADD (it to your proven family tree data).

FIND = 3 routes today

1. Find a copy of the original (maybe even online) (or in rare cases an original document)
 - a. via a searchable index
 - b. a browse-able database of extracted records
 - c. sometimes even an image of an original record (but even that doesn't always show you what was written in the margins or on the back or on the next page)
2. Find where that source can be found and searched (Internet Archive at Archive.org)
 - a. catalogs (example: WorldCat.org).
 - b. books, newsletters, and periodicals(Google Books and Internet Archive at Archive.org)
 - c. Web sites
3. Find out more about the history of a particular sources/how to interpret/analyze/evaluate it.

CITE = (see PART IV above)

SEARCH = (see PART V above) Online resources bring so much to our fingertips at our convenience, but you need to remember not all records are online. Once you have surveyed what has been published in compiled sources, be sure to go on to search in original records (or at least copies of original records). Seek out original sources, to build strong family trees (histories) packed with details and richness and to avoid errors and junk genealogies.

FAN out = Family, Associates, and Neighbors also need to be researched.

COPY = Abstract, extract, transcribe, and digitize what you find into usable formats to facilitate the preservation and sharing of your work.

Use your favorite personal genealogy database program (or word processor) to create other types of files to save and share at your discretion.

1. X Files (called Xsurname) to hold, make searchable, and make easier to share your findings on that surname in that area in that time period that don't (yet) fit onto your proven family tree.

2. Research databases contain everything you find of interest relating to your families and their associates in a particular locality and time period. (This type of database is especially good for building information on collateral lines that may hold the solutions to your ancestral problems.)

3. Surname Files contain everything you've found about a particular surname, perhaps in more than one location and time period. It may or may not include what you have found on collateral lines and associates. FAN = Family, Associates, and Neighbors

EVALUATE = 4 helps

1. When you copy your finds into one of the types of personal genealogy databases above, your program should warn you when the information you enter is illogical (child born before parents were born, etc.).

2. Your personal genealogy database program should also provide you with a possible record problems list helping you evaluate your database information. Online trees also give hints.

3. Build your background knowledge about that type of record and its handwriting style; study the history of that locality and its jurisdictions; learn more about local cultures, ethnic groups, commerce (especially when the railroad came to town) , and legal systems, etc. This is the foundation for all your family tree tracing.

4. Consult others. One of the greatest strengths in the evaluation process is to publish your analysis for peer review. (See PART III: Collaborating with Cousins.)

Business (and genealogy wiki) axiom: "We are smarter than me!"

a. Publish on paper (classic)

1) magazines

2) books

b. Publish online (computer)

1) Web sites

2) Wikis & blogs & discussion groups

REPEAT = As your time and personal resources permit, go after the records that are harder-to-find, access, read, and evaluate. New tools are coming online all the time to make finding and searching books, church records, manuscripts, and other hard-to-find records easier than ever.

Examples: NUCMC and NIDS

ANALYZE + ADD = 4 ways

1. Add to your personal "proven" genealogy database

2. Publish compiled "proven" family histories OR research summaries/reports

3. Add to an online family tree

4. Add to a surname or location Web site or specialized Web site like **Find a Grave**.

Do you fear your work will be stolen if you share GEDCOM files and publish your research findings? Typically what is stolen is data: names, dates, places, and relationships. Voluminous notes, sources, and analysis typed into the notes and sources area of your personal genealogy program (or added to sources for your online tree) are much harder to pirate and put their name on. NOT sharing is NOT an option or your life's work dies with you! Get your finds and analysis out there with your name and date of publication stamped on them and leave a legacy of success for generations to come.