



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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www.birminghamgenealogy.org

<http://birminghamgenealogy.wordpress.com/>

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2017

General Meeting for April: The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, April 22nd** on the fourth floor of the Birmingham Public Library (in the Computer Lab next to the Arrington Auditorium). The Board of Directors will meet at 1:00 p.m. in the same room.

Please join us as for a Round Table Discussion! It is an opportunity to hear different ways to research your family as well as share your story or brick wall ancestors! Come and share! **Please join us for the April Meeting!**

Research & Genealogical Tips - courtesy of © Michael John Neill,

“Genealogy Tip of the Day.” <http://genealogytipoftheday.blogspot.com>, TIPDATE.

It's hard to write a "quick tip" or set of rules for making certain that two records refer to the same person. There are many variables to consider when deciding that two people in different records are the same person. That said, here are some things to think about when trying to determine if two records actually refer to the same person: are the names reasonably similar? Are the ages consistent? Is the occupation and lifestyle consistent? Are you not violating the laws of physics or biology? Are the locations reasonably consistent? Think before you conclude that two people in different sources are the same person. Don't just assume that they are.

When you get all "into" researching a person or family in an area that is unfamiliar to you, do you stop and take the time to find maps of the areas where the people of interest live? It is important to know county, state, and other boundaries and the relative proximity of the places where you think people live. It's even more imperative in a "new" area where the geography may be unknown to you. Don't assume you "know" the geography "good enough" or that the states are small enough that it doesn't matter. Look at maps. Analyze locations. Determine how far apart different residences for your ancestor are. Don't get so caught up in the search that you lose sight of the geography in the process.

Researching the "entire family" can get expensive, particularly if a family is relatively large. However, do you have any female siblings of an ancestor who were military widows and who applied for a pension benefit based upon their husband's service? While the information about the husband may not always be directly related to your research on the wife's family, the paperwork the widow filed may mention her date and place of marriage and even include testimony from those who knew her before her marriage or who were at her marriage. Frequently these people are biological relatives of the wife. And those are people in whom you are interested. It's even possible that your ancestor provided a statement in his or her sister's widow's pension application. So look at those aunts of your ancestor--did any of them apply for a widow's pension?



The past is not dead. It isn't even past. --William Faulkner

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor

7 Little-Used Tricks for Finding That Missing Maiden Name Courtesy of Family History Daily

Contributed By: Melanie Mayo | Editor, Family History Daily

If you're completely stuck trying to find the maiden name of one, or many, of your female ancestors you're not alone. Because women often left their maiden names long behind when they got married they can be incredibly hard to uncover in some cases — and not being able to find one can often mean a complete dead end. If we're lucky, we can find a maiden name in one of the usual resources — on a marriage certificate or death record, in the census, or listed on the birth or baptismal record of a child. But very often this is simply not the case. Too often, informants on death records did not know, or bother to list, the maiden name of a woman, or married names were used in place of maiden names. Sometimes these records simply aren't available, especially if you're researching women before 1850.

There is still hope, however, even if you have come up short in the past. Take a look at these 7 unique tips for finding a maiden name and see if you can apply them to your own research.

1. Look at the first and middle names of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

As most family historians recognize, families often honored their loved ones by naming their children after relatives. And this wasn't only true for first names. Many families incorporated the surnames of women into first and middle names. Examine the names of your female ancestor's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren carefully for clues. Do any names stand out to you as looking like a surname? Does that surname fit in anywhere else in your tree already? If not, you may be on to something. Try temporarily 'pretending' that this is the woman's maiden name and doing some new searches for her using it. It may turn up records where none were before. Some women also tacked on their maiden names to their middle names when they got married, so look for clues there as well. Just be careful not to make assumptions that can lead to incorrect additions to your tree. Use this trick, and all tricks in this article, as helpful tools only— always look for solid verification before adding any information to your files. Before adding a maiden name to your tree, make sure you find a connecting document (a document that lists both the woman's known family, such as spouse and children, along with her maiden name or parents).

2. Look at informant last names.

An informant is someone who provided information about a person when they were unable to do so, usually after their death. If you can locate the death record for your female ancestor, and it doesn't show the maiden name as it usually should, look at the last name of the informant. This person is very often related. Often, it is a child or spouse, but sometimes it can also be a sibling. If the person is a male sibling, or unmarried female sibling, you could be in luck. As with the tip above, this is only a clue. Remember that this person could be completely unrelated, or the surname may be irrelevant. Some death records listed the relationship of the informant and some did not. But if you think there is a chance that the surname could be a match, try doing some new searches using this information and see what you come up with.

3. Look at neighbors in census records.

Census records are a huge part of building most family trees since they provide so many valuable clues. A maiden name can be one of them, if you know how to look. Of course, the federal census did not ask for maiden names (wouldn't that be lovely) but it can still provide clues. Take a look at the people listed directly before and after your ancestor in the census — at least on the same page and the page before and after. These were your ancestor's neighbors, and they could be family. Seeing a matching surname to the head of household is always a clue that this was an area of relations, of course, but since many families tended to stay close together any one of these people could be the parents of your female ancestor. They wouldn't share a surname with her if she's married, but there are other clues. How can you know? Well, you probably can't know for sure, but you can look for hints. Do you see a family where the head and/or spouse may be the right age to be the parents of your ancestor? Do you see children listed with them that you have seen mentioned elsewhere (ie a 'Louise' when a 'Louise' also informed at your

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ancestor's death). These possible connections should be examined carefully. If you think there is any chance that this could be a match, look into it — it's worth a shot. Follow every avenue, and always, always look for proof before adding anything to your tree.

4. Look for an elderly mother or father living with the family.

This brings us to another way the census can help us locate maiden names. Very often, as a person aged and their spouse passed on they went to live with family. Make sure you look at every census record you can find for your female ancestor, right up until the end of her life, and see if you can find an older woman (or man) living with them (or next door). Check the census records of grown children too. This person would be listed as 'mother,' 'mother-in-law' or 'grandmother,' but not always. Sometimes enumerators mixed up relationships. Leave no stone unturned, this may be the break you're looking for.

5. Leave out a surname completely when doing a record search.

Often times, we feel like we need to have a surname to do a record search for a person. For those of us looking for a maiden name, we will often use the married name so that we can locate matching records. This is, of course, the best first step. But what happens when we continually fail to find what we need? It's time to leave out the surname in our searches.

Try searching by first name only and add some other identifying information (such as a birth date or death date) or relationships (such as spouse or children). Removing that surname will allow whatever database you're searching to explore new areas that may turn up records you haven't seen. You might be surprised how well this can work. This trick works especially well for women with uncommon first names — but can also work well for common names. Just make sure you don't grab the records for the wrong "Ann" or "Elizabeth." Unrelated people can have incredibly similar details, so always make sure the person you think might match actually does.

6. Search for the married surname only.

You probably already realize that some people tended to use their middle names (or nicknames) as their first names in parts of, or throughout, their lives. This could mean that if you're searching for a woman listed as "Mary" in one record (that you have no maiden name for) and searches for that "Mary" plus the known married name have turned up no results, you could be looking for the 'wrong' person. She could be listed as middle name/nickname plus married name instead — or under a misspelling of her first name. Avoid this by using the same strategy as above (include other identifying details) but exclude the first name in your search, or use a middle name or nickname if you have one. This may turn up records where both the married name and the maiden name are included and give you the break you need.

7. Look where you wouldn't normally.

You've checked all the normal suspects (marriage records, birth records of children, death records) but what about some more unusual sources? Many can be great places to find maiden name mentions. These include:

- the birth records of ALL children of a female ancestor (just because you couldn't locate the maiden name on a birth record for the child you descend from in your female ancestor's line doesn't mean you won't find it on a record for one of her other children)
- an obituary for your ancestor or her spouse or children
- in a will
- in a burial record
- or in a military pension record.
- other special local, cultural, religious, military, federal or employment records

Check everything you can find very carefully and you may just put an end to that brick wall.

Pizitz Department Stores

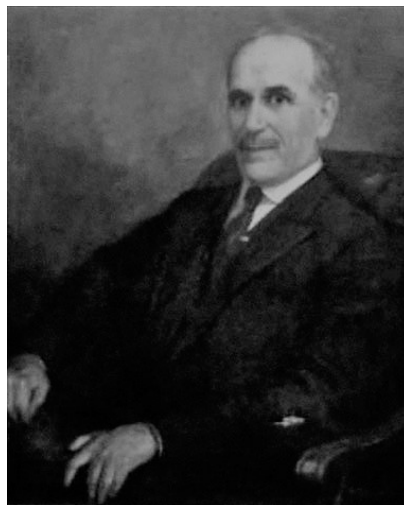
Courtesy of *Alabama Pioneers* – contributed by Donna Causey

Do you remember Pizitz Department Stores in Alabama? The Pizitz chain was founded as a family business of its flagship building in downtown Birmingham. It was sold to McRae's in December 1986, and all former Pizitz stores became McRae's. Born in Poland, the ancestors of Pizitz immigrants were in the tanning business in Poland. He immigrated to America in 1889 without a dollar in his pocket and walked around the streets for three days until he was befriended by a woman from his hometown in Poland, named Mrs. Frank, who wanted to help him. She was from Augusta, Georgia where she owned a supply of peddlers' goods. Louis worked for her as a peddler for two and a half years. His nephew Max Pizitz, having completed a military tour in the army of the Russian czar joined him in Georgia where he also became a peddler. Louis managed to save \$750 and opened up a small store in Swainsboro, Georgia which was a success. Louis' wife encouraged him to open a store in a larger city. On March 15, 1899, Louis opened his Birmingham store at 2026 1st Avenue but did little business. Three weeks later, his nephew Max apparently joined him and they opened a new store. On March 15, 1899, Louis opened his Birmingham store at 2026 1st Avenue, but according to his biography, he did little business at this location. A Tuscaloosa news article (History of Tuscaloosa published in *The Tuscaloosa News* July 31, 1949) states that his nephew Max joined his uncle in Birmingham and invested his savings in the store. Advertisement reports that a new permanent store was opened on April 5, 1899, at 2nd Avenue and 19th Street where it remained for the next 87 years. After Louis' death in 1959, his son Isadore inherited his business. Nephew, Max Pizitz, returned to Poland in 1903 to visit his family. After a year, Max returned to America and later brought his family from Poland to America. In 1913, Max Pizitz went to Tuscaloosa and purchased an interest in Saks and Company. After putting the store back on its feet, Max Pizitz became its sole owner in 1916. He remodeled it and installed new equipment and developed it into the large department stores Pizitz Department Store. Later, Max Pizitz took his two sons, Sam and Isadore, into the store. When the elder Mr. Pizitz died in 1948, the sons became co-owners of the store in Tuscaloosa. At its peak, there were 13 Pizitz stores in operation. Many of the former Pizitz locations are now closed, but the Pizitz family (via Pizitz Management Group) still owns the buildings of most of its former stores.



Pizitz Department Store delivery truck, 1938,
Photographer O. V. Hunt (Birmingham Public Library)

Louis Pizitz, by artist N.R. Brewer
Jefferson County Historical Society



Cemetery Etiquette: What you Need to Know for that Cemetery Trip

Courtesy of Ancestry.com

Gravestones can have useful information that could help you break through a brick wall, and grow your family tree. Although not all cemeteries are local to your area, with sites like FindAGrave.com, distant gravestones are made available to you online. If you're lucky and find that a gravestone you are looking for is near you, there are some things you'll first need to know before you visit the cemetery. With these quick tips, you'll be 'graving' in no time!

This really goes without saying, but sometimes we need to be reminded. A cemetery is a place for families to mourn and visit their loved ones. Be respectful of those around you. Remember not to leave any trash when you leave, and not to disturb what might be at the memorial. If there are flowers, coins, photos, etc. be careful if you move them and put them back leaving everything as you found it. These are memorials, places where people come to remember a lost family member. Keep them as such. Sometimes in all the excitement of finding a grave marker that might have information we need, we forget about the basics – we want to preserve that marker and information on it, not damage it.

Many beginners will find a gravestone that they are looking for and the first thing they'll do is rub it so as to get the information onto a piece of paper. This can often damage the stone, causing chips and deteriorating the grave marker. Before you do any kind of gravestone rubbing, first check with the group that is in charge of the cemetery or find another method that is safer for the stone to get the information you need. Never use untested methods to make the gravestone more readable. People have been known to chalk the writing, clean the stone with soaps or detergents, and spread shaving cream onto the stone in hopes it will soak it in and make it more visible – these methods might get you what you need but will ultimately harm the grave marker and are not recommended by professional graveurs.

Always remember that these gravestones should and need to be preserved for the families and other genealogists down the road so do your best to keep them safe. For a more exhaustive list of what you should and should not do with gravestones, visit the [Association for Gravestone Studies](#).

If you are visiting an active cemetery – one that still has burials occurring – try contacting or visiting the office of whoever is in charge of the cemetery. There may be one onsite or a nearby church could be running the cemetery. If you find a manager/superintendent, they might be able to quickly check records and give you the information that you are looking for or help you locate a gravestone. This may not always be the case as with older cemeteries and gravestones, records are often lost or destroyed, but it never hurts to ask. You might be surprised by what you'll find. It is also a good idea to contact them, as they will let you know what their rules are for photographing or rubbing the gravestone.

If the cemetery is no longer active, then you will need to find out who is currently in charge of the cemetery. Start by doing a quick Google search of the name of the cemetery to find out who is in charge and then you might need to make a few phone calls to see the state of the cemetery, if they have any records, and what their rules are.

Remember that some cemeteries are public and some are private – it's important to understand that there is a difference. Some are public and you can visit any time when they are open (usually dawn until dusk). However, some cemeteries are on private property and you might be trespassing if you show up without having talked to whoever is in charge. This is why it is important to do some research before you embark on your graving journey. If the cemetery is on private land, find who owns the land or is in charge of it and make a phone call to arrange a visit, ask if you can take photographs, and it's sometimes nice to give them your contact information in case they have any questions about your research project.

Hopefully with these tips you'll be off to the next cemetery in no time to find your distant ancestors gravestone. Just remember to always be respectful and do your best to preserve the artifacts that are still available.

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MASON CEMETERY African-American Cemetery

Intersection of 39th Court North & 24th Street North - Across from New Carver High School

Transcribed by Scott Martin

GRAHAM Rev. M.C. 15 October 1856 29 October 1925

(AL Death Certificate # 22485 – Mitchell G. Graham, died 29 October 1925. Husband of Georgia Graham. Born in Columbus GA, son of Frank Graham. Profession: Minister. Residence: 17 West Acipco, Birmingham, AL. Place of Burial: Sayreton AL).



HARRIS Madison 1893 1925

(Per WWI Draft Card, Madison Harris was born 16 March 1893 in Greenville GA AL Death Certificate #17411 – Madison Harris, died 9 July 1925. Husband of Frances Harris).

HILLIARD Adline 24 June 1864 17 January 1914

KEELER Joseph E. 2 February 1873 13 October 1921

MARSHALL Pauline 15 January 1864 2 November 1921

(On 1920 Jefferson County AL Census, Precinct 42, ED # 182, household 26 lists Will Marshall, aged 50 with wife Pauline, also aged 50).

MASON Gertie

TAYLOR Della 9 June 1899 6 April 1924

WATTS Samuel A. 13 May 1875 18 June 1924

(AL Death Certificate #14142 – Samuel Watts died 19 June 1924. Son of John and Sarah Watts. Husband of Frances Watts. Place of Burial: Mason Cemetery.

YOUNG J.W. Died 15 September 1924 age 31

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