



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded April 15, 1959

www.birminghamgenealogy.org

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

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017

General Meeting for February: The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, February 25th** 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 Jim Anderson presents: “Why Can’t I view Great Grandpa’s Will? – the Good, Bad and Ugly of the Loose Records Project” Some of the most valuable records for our research are the archived case-files in our counties’ Probate Offices. Jim updates us on the project to make images of these records available. He will name counties where we know these images exist but we can’t easily search for or view them. An obscure national initiative will be revealed that raises questions on how free is access to these images.

Research & Genealogical Tips

© Michael John Neill, “Genealogy Tip of the Day,”

<http://genealogytipoftheday.com/>, TIPDATE

Were The Kids Farmed Out?: If you “lose a child” of a couple on which you are working, don’t assume the child died? It’s possible that he went to live with a relative or even a stranger if the family had too many mouths to feed or if the relative needed extra help on the farm or with the household chores and young children. It was not unheard of to “farm out” children to others—and this applies to farming and non-farming ancestors. If the child disappeared, consider that she could be living with other relatives. If that relative lived a distance away, the child may have ended up settling in that area.

SAVE THE DATE! UPCOMING GENEALOGICAL/HISTORICAL MEETINGS!

Alabama Genealogical Society Spring 2017 Seminar, Saturday, March 25th, Samford University

“Telling Family Stories that are Complete and Convincing” presented by Diane L Giannini, CG

Registration Form <http://algensoc.org/main/SeminarFlyer.pdf>

Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance, 16th Annual Workshop, Saturday, May 13th, Auburn University

Library – Registration form www.alabama-cemetery-preservation.com

Alabama’s 13th Annual Blue Star Salute, May 20th, Battleship Memorial Park, Mobile

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

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor

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DID YOU KNOW? The **Battle of Avondale** was actually a very brief skirmish between Union officers of Wilson's army and a local guard in the spring of 1865 at the home of Jefferson County Sheriff Abner Killough as it was reported in an 1885 story in the *Weekly Iron Age* and an 1893 story in the *Birmingham Age-Herald*. The Killoughs had been granted 1,640 acres covering most of what is now Avondale and Forest Park in 1858. They built a home with a veranda perched on top of the hill next to an apple orchard in what is now Avondale Park and was then known as Big Spring for its cold spring-fed pool. According to the 1885 account, Mrs Killough was home alone, knitting on her porch, when a group of U. S. Army officers who had been camped on the ridge of Red Mountain brought their horses down to the spring to water and stopped at the house to pass the time. They were laughing and singing when a unit of the home guard led by Captain James Truss of St Clair County, a veteran of the 10th Alabama Infantry, saw them gathered around the house and took them for looters, perhaps after the gold Killough was rumored to have stockpiled on the property. The guardsmen took aim and fired to disperse the Yankees, but Mrs Killough, standing to signal to them, was the only casualty, suffering the passage of a lead ball through her shoulder. The Yankees retreated to the ridge and were not pursued. In the 1893 account, the Union officers were racing to rejoin their unit on the road South to Selma and stopped to water the horses at the Spring. The home guard, which had stationed themselves outside the Killough's house, spied the blue coats from about 300 yards away and took aim for a volley. The rifle balls hit the water like hail and prompted the Yankees to return fire, one of their bullets wounding Mrs Killough in the breast. Other neighbors appeared at the sound of firing, but before the conflict escalated, the officers beat a hasty retreat, resuming their Southward course. Mrs Killough recovered from her wounds. She and her husband sold the property to Peyton King in 1876 and moved to a new home near Montevallo.

(Source: http://www.bhamwiki.com/w/Battle_of_Avondale)

"ANN KILLOUGH SURVIVES"

WEEKLY IRON AGE, Birmingham, Ala., 3 September 1885

A few days ago an AGE reporter was out at Avondale Park, rambling about over the hills. When the rain began to fall in torrents, shelter was sought in the front veranda of the old looking house on the top of the hill above the apple orchard. As he was watching the rain drops patter against the side of the walls of the porch, a number of small holes were observed that looked as if they were caused by bullets. The companion of the reporter, who was one of the oldest settlers of Birmingham, remarked that the holes were made by bullets and that the old house was the scene of the first battle and the only bloodshed that occurred in Jefferson county during the late war. He was asked to tell the story and he did so: "It was in the spring of 1865, when Wilson's army marched through this section, southward. The command camped in Elyton (later called Birmingham) and the picket lines extended around the mountain side to Avondale Park. At the time, the house was occupied by Mr. Abner Killough, the sheriff of the county (Jefferson), who owned considerable money and had it hidden in the hills around. Mrs. Killough, the wife of the sheriff, was one day seated in the veranda knitting when she was approached by a number of Yankee officers who came to the porch where she was sitting with her head leaned back against that old window in an old rocking chair. The soldiers were laughing and singing when suddenly the home supporting force, commanded by Captain Truss, rode up to the corner of the yard, and seeing the verandah lined by blue coats, fired and the bullets flew fast and thick. Mrs. Killough, recognizing the Confederates, arose from her seat and was pierced by a ball which passed through her body sinking in the wall beyond. She fell and was picked up bleeding and unconscious. She survived the wound and now lives with her husband near Montevallo, Shelby County. The Yankees fled and no one was hurt except Mrs. Killough. This was the first battle and only blood shed in Jefferson County during the war." The gentleman took his pocket knife and began to cut around the dark-looking hole and out rolled a battered bullet, the one that had wounded the good woman. The ball had been imbedded in the wood for just twenty years.

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Using Funeral Home Records for Genealogy

Provided by Christine Woodcock @ www.geneosity.com, 15 June 2015

Once you have found the obituary for your ancestor's death, take note of the name of the funeral home that handled the arrangements. Then, contact them to see what information they have in their records regarding your ancestor. Funeral homes keep detailed records about the individuals that they provide service to and care for. Funeral home records can be a valuable resource. The funeral home will have a copy of the "funeral card" or the card given to those who attend the service, a copy of the death record they issued for the family and information on the next of kin. They will also have a list of all of the newspapers that the obituary for your ancestor was published in. If an autopsy was performed on your ancestor, the funeral home can supply you with the information for the name and address of the coroner as well, which will allow you to contact that resource for detailed information and details surrounding the cause of death. The funeral home can provide you with the name of the deceased's family physician, the name of the insurance company, (if the insurance company paid for any part of the funeral), the name of the clergy that performed the service, and often they can provide you with information about where to find a will for the deceased.

During the interview conducted by the funeral home at the time that the funeral arrangements were made, a number of details are provided. These may include: education, church affiliation, military service, membership in organizations. Plans for the service might include: the place, time and location; the names of any pallbearers (and perhaps their relationship to the deceased), music played, readings, prayers, speeches or eulogies.

You will learn whether there was a burial or a cremation, the date of the burial or cremation and if cremated, the disposition of the cremains (whether they were buried or perhaps given to a family member for safekeeping etc). Don't be shy. Start writing letters requesting the information you are looking for regarding your ancestor. This information will provide you with the details you need to help "flesh out" who your ancestor really was. Always include the offer of paying for photocopying and mailing of the information (most of these resources will not charge for this information, but will be pleased that you acknowledged their time). Include an e-mail address so that if possible, the records can be scanned and sent to you electronically. Also by providing this contact information, the funeral home can contact you with any outstanding questions that they would like clarified before they send out the final reports to you.

Can't Find the Grave? Alternative Locations for Burial Places for Your Ancestors

Courtesy of AncestralFindings.com

Looking for the graves of our ancestors is a basic part of genealogy. The headstones provide a tangible link between us and those who came before us. It is something... and often the only thing... that we can touch that is intimately associated with that ancestor. Standing on the ground over which their earthly remains lay is as close as we'll ever get to the more ancient ancestors we never personally knew. Finding the grave puts a bookmark at the end of that particular ancestor's story (and it's up to you to fill in the details in the beginning and middle of that story through additional research). It also tells you a lot about where that ancestor lived and what his or her life might have been like in that place long ago.

But what if you can't find the grave? Not everyone has one that is easily located. Some may not have one at all, such as if they were buried at sea (or lost at sea) or were among the missing in a war (in which case, all you may know is that they are buried on the battlefield somewhere). Here are some of the most common reasons why you may not be able to easily find a grave, or find one at all, and what to do about it.

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The Town Where Your Ancestor Lived Had No Cemetery

This was not uncommon in early colonial times, and sometimes even into the later colonial era. Pioneers to the west in the mid to late 19th century may also have encountered this problem. If there was no town cemetery, your ancestors had two options for burial:

1) Use the Closest Cemetery: The closest cemetery may have been a town or even a few towns away. As long as a funeral procession could get there and back on foot in a day, the person was usually buried there. So, if you're looking for a headstone for your ancestor in the town in which they lived and can't find one, try looking in cemeteries in neighboring towns. Even if the town has a cemetery now, it may not have had one during the time of your ancestor. Such was the case with Salem, Massachusetts. For the first decade or two of its existence, it had no cemetery. People were taken to Ipswich for burial in the ancient cemetery there instead. Salem had its own cemeteries by the 1660's, but early colonial ancestors were probably buried in Ipswich.

2) Use the Family Property: This was another common option when a cemetery wasn't available nearby (or plots in it were too expensive to purchase). Roadsides and even some front and back yards of private houses all over New England have these little family cemeteries, which are protected by the state. In many cases, though, no headstones were used. In order to know if your ancestor was buried on private property, you will need an obituary or some other ancient document such as a will to prove it.

The Headstone Is No Longer There (or Never Was): In really old cemeteries, vandalism and weathering have been problems. Many of these old cemeteries have broken headstones, or ones that can no longer be read. I ran into this in Gloucester, Massachusetts in the town's oldest cemetery. The vast majority of the stones were either broken or unreadable. While I did find a headstone for my ancestor there, it was a new one, put up by modern descendants. A railroad track had been built through the cemetery, and the actual burial spot of my ancestor was believed to be under the track or in the woods beyond it, where the cemetery used to extend. Some graves originally had headstones, but they were made of wood, and destroyed through weather or vandalism or age-long ago. Other times, no headstone was ever there, either because the ancestor's family couldn't afford it, or, as in the case of Quakers, their religion preached against headstones as symbols of vanity. If you think your ancestor is buried in a particular cemetery, but there is no headstone (or no readable one for you to be sure it's him or her). You can go to the town hall or town historian to see if they have a map of burials in that particular cemetery. If they do, you can use the map to find the grave. If there is no map, as is the case with most ancient cemeteries, you may never actually be sure of the exact spot your ancestor is buried. If you can find an obituary or will that provides the information, you will at least know they are there somewhere. If it is the only cemetery to exist in the town when your ancestor died, you can also be content knowing they are there, and you visited the place, even if you didn't find the exact location.

While it can be frustrating to not be able to find a headstone, it is a jumping off point for doing additional genealogical detective work. A headstone may, in fact, exist, just not where you expected it to be. It is your job to track it down. If there was a headstone that is gone now, or if there never was one, you might be able to find a map showing where your ancestor is buried in a particular cemetery. If not, knowing the cemetery they are most likely to be in and visiting it to pay your respects to your ancestor is the most you can do. It's not like having a headstone you can touch or standing over the ground where your ancestor is, but you at least will know you walked on the ground where their relatives once stood when they brought the person there to be buried. Even standing in the probable cemetery where your ancestor is buried is a link to them and the past in its own unique way.

Every Little Detail

The following article is from the Ancestry Daily News and is (c) MyFamily.Com. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the Ancestry Daily News is available at <http://www.ancestry.com>.

They say "the devil is in the details." While I'm never certain who this mysterious "they" is, one thing is for certain: The details can create headaches or opportunities, depending upon whether they are noticed and how they are interpreted.

Those Short Phrases: Three or four words "squeezed" in at the very bottom of a document may be the largest clue of all, even if the handwriting is microscopic. Mrs. Barbara Pickert marries in Hancock County, Illinois, in 1859. A slip of paper included in with the marriage indicates in tiny script at the very bottom of the page that Mrs. Pickert "has no lawful husband living." I almost ignored the reference. Barbara's first husband Peter Bieger (or Pickert) was known to have been dead by late 1855. It was initially thought that the reference was to him. The longer I thought the more odd it seemed that the phrase "no lawful husband living" was used when the shorter term of "widow" would have sufficed. Later research revealed that Barbara was apparently married for a short time in 1856 to a George Fennan who abandoned her--hence the phrase "no *lawful* husband living."

How Long Have I Known You? There may be references in a record or document that have no bearing on the case, but that do have bearing on the family being researched. Court testimony from an 1877 court case indicated that Christian Williams had known my ancestor Mimke Habben for at least twenty years. Mimke immigrated to the United States in the 1860s. If I had not known where Mimke was from in Germany, my research should have concentrated on Christian. Since Christian had known my ancestor since at least 1857, they had known each other in Germany. Court testimony and military pension papers are great sources for finding references to individuals who have known your ancestor for a specified period of time.

What Does It Mean? In a guardianship record from Kentucky in 1814, my ancestor is referred to as an infant. In 1815 she marries. Before anyone draws any inappropriate conclusions, it should be noted that the guardianship record is using the legal definition of infant. Consequently the 1814 reference to Melinda Sledd as an infant only indicates she is under the legal age of majority, not that she is a newborn. Viewed in this light her 1815 marriage to Augusta Newman is no longer viewed as suspect.

Are They Sharing Luggage? When one of my ancestral families immigrated in 1853, the passenger manifest indicated that they and another couple were sharing a set of luggage. The clue was not obvious--just a bracket on the far right-hand side of the manifest indicating that three bags belonged to the families of George Trautvetter and George Mathis. I kept the Mathis family in mind as I researched and eventually discovered that George Mathis' wife was George Trautvetter's niece.

How Does One Notice These Clues?

Sometimes it can be difficult to pick up on subtle references or turns of a phrase. The way to avoid overlooking these clues is to make certain that:

- You know the definitions of all words in the document.
- You determine if any words have specific legal definitions different from the way the word is used outside the legal system.

There are additional things that can be done.

Obtain the Original Document: Transcriptions may occasionally leave out pertinent details. The Trautvetter and Mathis families located on the passenger lists were originally located in the series *Germans to America*. This finding aid, while a great help, did not include the notation that the two families were sharing luggage. Of course, this was a significant clue only discovered by viewing the actual manifest.

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Type the Document: Transcribing a document, forces the transcriptionist (you) to look at every word more closely. It is easy to overlook clues when you are reading silently. I know of one genealogist who received a transcription of a document that had an error. She could not determine what the error was. When typing up the transcription as part of a report on the entire family, she realized how the likely error occurred and was able to make additional headway with her research. Reading the document over and over did not bring about the revelation.

Read the Document Out Loud: While this may not make you immediately popular with others in your household, it can make it easier to notice details based upon the way words could have sounded to your ancestor. Sometimes when we read something aloud or hear it read something "clicks" that did not click before.

Read the Document Backwards: Again this forces the reader to look at every word. While the document probably won't make too much sense this way, it may cause you to notice a word or phrase that you had previously overlooked. And that is the entire point.

Create a One-Page Summary of Your Problem: Those who go with me on my research trips are encouraged to submit a one-page problem for me to review. While the limitation to one page makes for less to read, it forces the genealogist to narrow their problem and determine what details are important. While there are situations where one page is not sufficient, the hope here is to make the person look at all the details and decide which details are crucial to the problem.

The mark, the twist of phrase, the scribbled reference at the bottom of the page--it may be meaningless, but maybe not. But if you never notice it and analyze it, you will never know!

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) www.fgs.org. He conducts seminars and lectures nationally on a wide variety of genealogical and computer topics and contributes to several genealogical publications, including *Ancestry Magazine* and *Genealogical Computing*. You can e-mail him at mjnrootdig@myfamily.com or visit his website at www.rootdig.com, but he regrets that he is unable to assist with personal research.

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