



## THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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[www.bgsal.org](http://www.bgsal.org)

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

THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

JULY 2019

**General Meeting for July:** The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 2:00 p.m. on **Saturday, July 27th** 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 Paul Boncella, Map Conservator and Book Mender in the Southern History Department, Linn-Henley Research Building, presents: “The Present and the Future of DNA Evidence for Lineage Societies”. Genealogy and genetics have become interconnected. Discover what two major lineage societies are currently doing in terms of DNA evidence and consider what the future may hold for such organizations that accept such proof as genetics and genealogy become ever more fully integrated. **Please join us!**

### Research & Genealogical Tips

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**Track the Widowed Ancestors:** It can be easy to lose a female ancestor after her husband dies. Sometimes she’s right there where she always was and sometimes she’s not. Failing to research the widow after her husband’s death can cause the researcher to overlook additional information and possible clues about her origins and parents. Sometimes additional children are overlooked. If you’ve lost your widowed ancestress, consider:

- searching marriage records to see if she remarried;
- looking for deeds drawn up after the husband’s death or (more likely) settlement deeds drawn up after the widow died;
- whether she moved in with one of her children who had left the area;
- looking to see if she’s buried near any of her children in cemeteries other than where the husband is buried;
- seeing if she applied for any military pensions based upon her husband’s service.

These suggestions won’t apply to all people in all places, but they are worth considering. And, as always, learn as much as you can about the local records that were created and being kept during the time period your ancestors lived there.

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

*Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor*

## Overcoming Brick Walls in Your Family Tree with a Genealogy DNA Test

February 22, 2019 - by Amie Tennant (Family Search Blog)

Today, many people are turning to DNA testing to overcome brick walls in their family history research. When you are unable to find information to go back any further in your family tree, DNA testing might help you break through these research barriers.

To get through a brick wall, successful genealogists often start by using traditional research methods and tried and true techniques. A genealogy DNA test can work alongside these methods and help break through a brick wall when nothing else can.

### Three Types of DNA Testing You Might Use to Overcome Brick Walls

There are several DNA companies that provide opportunities to find relatives in what is generally called a “DNA match list.” DNA cousin matches are people whose DNA significantly matches your own. But with many types of DNA tests, how do you know which one to use? Below is a quick summary of three types of DNA testing that can help the most with brick walls.

- **An Autosomal DNA Test**—This DNA test can be taken by males or females and will typically give you DNA matches within about 5 to 6 generations on both your mother and father’s sides of the family.
- **The YDNA Test**—This DNA test can be taken only by a male, as it is used to track the Y chromosome passed from father to son over the generations. It extends back many generations. The YDNA test can provide relative matches and a paternal haplogroup. If a father’s family line is in question, this DNA test July help break down that brick wall.
- **The mtDNA Test**—This DNA test can be taken by males or females, but it looks only at the genetic markers of your mother’s maternal line. It too extends back many generations. The mtDNA test will provide a maternal haplogroup and DNA matches for the maternal line. If your brick wall involves your mother’s maternal family line, this DNA test July be helpful (although an mtDNA test will naturally have a higher margin for error in the maternal line than a YDNA has in the paternal line).

### Strategies for Overcoming Brick Walls with DNA

After you’ve taken a DNA test, various strategies can help you break through your brick wall problem. Here are some common problems that DNA can help with and strategies for tackling these brick walls with your DNA test results.

#### Using DNA to Find an Unknown Parent or Grandparent

To find an unknown parent or grandparent, start by sorting your DNA matches into groups. Many companies help you do this sorting by using a shared or “in common with” feature to show you matches that share DNA with each other. When a whole group has matching DNA, it July mean they all share a common ancestor.

Compare trees with some of these matches to see which groups are connected to your known parents or grandparents, and set these aside. With these set aside, you can focus on matches that might lead you to your unknown relative. Compare trees with these matches, and try to find an ancestor who appears in more than one of the trees. This approach provides a starting point for traditional research, as this common ancestor is possibly related to you and your unknown relative.

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As you research the descendants of this common ancestor, look for dates and places that match the information you know about yourself and your unknown relative. Confirm your relationship by asking other living descendants to take a DNA test.

## Using DNA to Find New Avenues for Research

If your research hits a brick wall due to immigration or migration, name changes, or missing records, DNA July suggest clues that can lead you to new relatives, surnames, or locations. To identify these clues, you'll need to use information about your brick-wall ancestor (the ancestor whose family line ends or who you're trying to find more information about).

First, identify other descendants of your brick-wall ancestor who have also taken a DNA test (or ask other descendants to take a DNA test). Use the shared or "in common with" feature provided by your DNA testing company to identify other DNA matches connected to the same brick-wall ancestor. Review those matches and their trees. Look for people, surnames, or locations that match the information you already know about your brick-wall ancestor. Next, use records to research these relatives and try to connect them to your brick-wall ancestor.

## Using DNA to Confirm a Relationship

If records were burned or are missing or were never created, you can break brick walls by first hypothesizing and then using DNA to confirm a relationship. Start by researching your brick-wall ancestor and identifying possible relatives. Then locate and test living descendants of both your brick-wall ancestor and the possible relatives of this ancestor. Compare the DNA of the descendants of the brick-wall ancestor with the DNA of the descendants of the proposed relatives. If the DNA matches at an expected rate, the relationship probably existed.

## Using DNA to Do Collaborative Research

Once you have identified DNA matches that July be related to your brick-wall ancestor, contact these matches to discover what they know about their family lines, especially if they have not uploaded a tree to the DNA testing site.

If your brick-wall ancestor is more recent, a DNA match July have living memory of the person or the person's descendants who can help you track down relevant records and vital information. They July also have a family tree or other information that can help.

If your DNA match does not include a family tree or has limited information but you both want to learn more about your ancestors, you July want to work on the problem together. A family history site that allows you to upload and share family tree data can be a good way to learn from and collaborate with DNA matches. FamilySearch.org offers a shared family tree for free.

## Getting Help

Solving brick walls with DNA is not a simple or easy process, but many places offer DNA help. Consider asking an expert for help in setting up a strategy for you. Family history and DNA experts can also advise if DNA testing can help with your particular brick wall and can even help you with the research itself.



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## No Stone to Leave Unturned

From the Ancestry Daily News  
Michael John Neill – June 16, 2004

Finding the burial place of an ancestor can be one of the great hunts of genealogy. It can also be one of the most frustrating parts of the research process. This week we look at some ways to determine where your ancestor is buried and the additional records that may be available. First, we will look at some records that may indicate the ancestor's burial place.

**Death Certificate:** For relatively recent burials, the death certificate should provide the relative's final resting place. Bear in mind that the names of some cemeteries may have changed over the years. Attempts to locate the death certificate should be at the county or state level.

**Obituary:** Your ancestor's obituary or death notice may provide information on her place of burial. Even the name of the church or the officiating minister may be a clue as to where the internment took place.

**Burial Permits:** In some areas, records of burial permits were kept. These records may be helpful if you are reasonably certain where your ancestor died but you don't know the place of the burial. These records (if kept) are typically created at the county or city level.

**Church Records:** Is your ancestor buried next to his church? If so, the church may have additional records on your ancestor, particularly a death or a burial record. If you know your ancestor's denomination, were there particular cemeteries in the area that catered to members of that faith? If you are not certain of your ancestor's religious persuasion, are there clues in her background that might make memberships in some denomination more likely than others? French-Canadians tend to be Catholic, Germans tend to be Lutheran or Catholic, Swedes tend to be Lutheran, Irish are typically not Lutheran, and so on. These are tendencies, not hard and fast rules---there are always exceptions and a lone staunch Lutheran on the frontier may easily attend the local Baptist, Methodist, or other church.

**A Proximity Search:** Look for your ancestor in cemeteries near where he is last known to have lived. Remember if your ancestor "evaporated" that he might have died where he last is known to have lived, or he might have moved several states away to live with one of his children and died there. Consequently your search for an ancestor's stone should include all those areas where his children lived.

**Battlefield Burial:** If your ancestor was in the military service and died on the battlefield, he may be buried in a military cemetery or in an unmarked grave. This may be noted in his military service record.

**No Burial:** Was your ancestor not even buried? I've got one whose body was turned over to the Illinois Demonstrator's Association in the early 1900s. This was noted on his death certificate. He has no known final resting place.

**Some Finding Aids:** The inscriptions of the stones of some cemeteries have already been copied and may have been published. When using any type of transcribed tombstone information, try to determine if the information you are viewing is an actual transcription of the stone or if it is a listing of burials in the cemetery. There is a difference. Keep in mind that some stones might have been difficult, if not impossible, to read, and that other stones might have been buried themselves and overlooked when the transcription was completed. Once you know your ancestor is in a certain cemetery, it still may be a good idea to view the stone yourself or see if you can get a picture.

**Published Transcriptions:** Published transcriptions can be relatively easy to locate even if they were published in a small quantity. Card catalogs of the Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)), the Family History Library ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)), the Allen County (Indiana) Public Library (<http://acpl.lib.in.us>), and other libraries (including those in your region of interest) may contain references to published transcriptions for the area under study. Keyword searches in these card catalogs for "your county county cemetery" or "your county tombstone"

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should pull up some desired results. Searches of the Family History Library Catalog should be for the specific county and state of interest.

**Online Transcriptions:** Online cemetery transcriptions can frequently be obtained via the County USGenWeb site ([www.usgenweb.org](http://www.usgenweb.org)) or other geographically based genealogy pages. Searches for "cemetery name city state" at Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) may also bring up additional references.

**Unpublished Transcriptions:** Not all transcriptions have been published; many exist only in manuscript format. Locating these unpublished transcriptions requires a little more work but may be well worth the effort. The county historical or genealogical society is the place to start this search, but regional and state archives, state historical societies, and public and private libraries within the region may also house these materials.

**Sexton's Records:** Some cemeteries keep excellent records. Others do not. Generally speaking, one is less likely to find records for small, rural cemeteries. Larger, more urban cemeteries may still not have extant records for the earlier burials and lot owners. Those with family members buried in larger cemeteries currently accepting new interments might find that locating some information is as easy as making a phone call to the cemetery.

Those trying to locate records for a rural cemetery may have more difficulty. In some areas, cemeteries that were once maintained by a church or a private group of individuals may now be under township or other government maintenance, or no maintenance at all. Local historical or genealogical societies may also be able to provide information or at least give the name of a contact person for the cemetery. Keep in mind that for some cemeteries, records of burials and lot owners were never kept.

**Specialized Finding Aids:** There are a few specialized finding aids for burial information.

*Card Records of Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, ca. 1879-ca. 1903* (National Archives and Records Administration microfilm publication number M1845) contains information on the burial location of thousands of veterans. While 99% of these burials are from the Civil War, occasionally the veteran of another war slips in (well, not literally). There is a card for James Kile, a War of 1812 veteran, buried in Keithsburg, Illinois, in 1852. In some states, lists of military burials were published, some have been reprinted, and usually local historical or genealogical societies have copies or are aware of their existence. Statewide finding aids (if available) are also included in the appropriate state research guide from the Family History Library ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)).

Searches of various library card catalogs using the following subject headings resulted in numerous matches of this kind of material:

United States History Civil War, 1861-1865 Registers of dead

United States History War of 1898 Registers of dead

Readers are encouraged to alter the search terms for other wars and periods.

Performing these subject searches at online library catalogs like the Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)) or the Allen County Public Library ([www.acpl.lib.in.us](http://www.acpl.lib.in.us)) resulted in several references. Those wishing to locate similar references in the Family History Library Catalog ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)) should locate the particular locality and then choose "Cemeteries" under that geographic location. This should be done at least twice, once for the state and once for the specific county.

**No Stone:** Lastly, your ancestor might not have a tombstone or may never have had a stone at all. This makes it rather difficult to find one! In some cases, you may never find your ancestor's final resting place. I'm still looking for Augusta Newman who died in White County, Indiana, in 1864 and for Peter Bieger who died in Warsaw, Illinois, in 1855! I'm afraid that I'm going to be looking for quite some time, too.

## Birmingham's Vulcan To Be Dedicated Soon

"Vulcan", world's largest iron figure and the second largest statue in America, will be formally dedicated with a mammoth Spectacle, staged at the foot of the statue on Red Mountain May 9-17. Visitors from every state in the union are expected to attend the event, which will be one of the outstanding civic affairs ever held in Alabama.

Nationally known theatrical directors have come to Birmingham to select a cast of 1,000 persons and direct rehearsals for the Spectacle, which has been written around the history of Alabama's natural resources and the mythological story of Vulcan.

The Spectacle will be an elaborate display of fast moving pageantry, gorgeous costumes and spectacular lighting effects, and the event will attract many nationally known celebrities to Alabama.

Among the special events being planned will be a Religious Night, an Alabama Night, a Labor and Industry Night, Agricultural Night, Education Night. Mayors from all Alabama towns will be honored on Alabama Night and Governor from several southern states will be presented one night during the celebration.

The Vulcan dedication celebration is being sponsored by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and other civic interests.

*Shelby County Reporter, 13 April 1939*

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