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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

# PastFinder

## Gathering the facts? Start with THE CENSUS

*By Allin Kingsbury*

Research undertaken to trace the family history of individuals born in the late 1800s or early 1900s is both challenging and interesting.

It is challenging because key information may be unavailable, to protect the privacy of individuals, and interesting because of the large and diverse amount of information that might be available.

Conducting research on these individuals is important when you want to identify and expand your collateral ancestral lines. Not only can it put you in touch with living distant cousins who may be willing to share their side of your family history, but it will broaden the scope of your own genealogy.

I have learned that the best strategy for a search such as this is to begin with census records. A census record can pinpoint when and where an individual lived, and can identify other family members living at home at the time.

Even though a census record reflects only for a single point in time, it can lead to finding other records. Furthermore, the birth locations for family members can provide a migration history of the family. Knowing the date of a census record will place the family in the context of the local history, adding vital clues to help expand a research plan.

An example is the case of a Harry Branchflower, who was the son of Edward Branchflower. When I started, all I knew about Harry was that he was born in Canada about 1879.

A search for Harry Branchflower

using Ancestry.com led to the following in the 1920 U.S. Census for Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington:

- Name: **Harry Branchflower**
- Age: 41
- Birthplace: Canada
- Birthplaces of parents: Canada and England
- Year of entry to the United States: 1900 (naturalized)

He was living with his wife:

- Name: **Joey Branchflower**
- Age: 41
- Birthplace: Kansas
- Birthplaces of parents: North Carolina and New Jersey

No children were listed with the family in 1920.

Earlier information about Harry included an entry in the 1910 U.S. Census, also for Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington:

- Name: **Harry Branchflower**
- Age: 31
- Birthplace: Canada
- Birthplaces of parents: Canada and England
- Marital status: single

He was living with his brother Edward, Edward's wife, Christina, and their three children. Edward was born in Canada and had entered the United States in 1890.

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### Outside and inside

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- Questions, questions! Civil war records, baffling abbreviations, page 6

## Start with the census *(continued)*

676	116	116	Branchflower Edward	Head	W	Or	45	M	14		Can English
			Opertina M	Wife	W	Or	37	M	14	63	Michigan
			Lytle E	Son	W	Or	13				Washington
			Warron H	Son	W	Or	10				Washington
			Howard H	Son	W	Or	3				Washington
			Harvey	Brother	W	Or	21				Can English

A portion of Harry Branchflower's 1910 Census information, accessed at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

Next I found Harry in the 1930 U.S. Census for Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington:

- Name: **Harry Branchflower**
- Position in family: head
- Age: 50
- Age when married: 35
- Birthplace: Canada
- Birthplaces of parents: Canada and England
- Year of entry: 1900 (naturalized)

His wife, **Joey Branchflower** (incorrectly indexed as *Jacy*), is listed:

- Age: 50
- Age when married: 35
- Birthplace: Kansas
- Birthplaces of parents: North Carolina and Kansas

Two additional individuals were in the household:

- Name: **Claude D. Coble**
- Relationship to head of household: brother-in-law
- Age: 54
- Age when married: 24
- Birthplace: Kansas
- Birthplaces of parents: North Carolina and Ohio
- Name: **Nellie F. Coble**
- Relationship: sister-in-law
- Age: 52
- Age when married: 22
- Birthplace: Kansas
- Birthplaces of parents: Ohio and Missouri

The 1930 census indicated that Harry Branchflower owned his home, although neither he nor the other occupants were listed as having an occupation.

The birthplaces of the parents indicated that Joey T. Branchflower and Claude D. Coble appeared to have the same father. This meant that her maiden name probably was Joey T. Coble, and that I could find her parents by searching earlier census records.

Harry Branchflower evidently was not listed in the 1900 U.S. census. Since he emigrated in 1900, he also was not in the 1901 Canada census.

One other important source was also available for Harry Branchflower—his World War I draft registration:

- Birth date: 11 April 1878 (no birthplace listed)
- Employer: E. Branchflower
- Occupation: clerk
- Nearest relative: Joey Theresa Branchflower
- Citizenship: naturalized
- Features: blue eyes, brown hair, medium height, and medium build

The search for Joey Coble turned up the following family in the 1885 Kansas State Census for Hillsborough, Marion County, Kansas:

- Name: **R. C. Coble**
- Age: 41
- Birthplace: North Carolina
- Occupation: merchant
- Name: **Mary A. Coble**
- Age: 39
- Birthplace: Ohio

The following were all listed as born in Kansas:

- **A. B.**, age 18
- **Minnie**, age 16
- **Claude**, age 9
- **Joah T.**, age 5

The 1900 U.S. Census for Marion, Marion County, Kansas had the following:

- Name: **R. C. Coble**
- Age: 58
- Birthplace: North Carolina
- Occupation: manufacturer, hay stacker
- Name: **Mary Ann**
- Age: 53
- Birthplace: Ohio
- Name: **Mary M**, age 32
- Name: **Joe T.**, age 22

Joe was listed as a female born in November 1878. The Mary M. listed probably was Minnie, who evidently went by the name *Mary Minnie*.

The 1900 U.S. Census indicated that the parents, R. C. and Mary Ann, had been married 35 years

## Start with the census *(continued)*

and had five children, four still living. Claude was living with his wife, Nellie, in Marion, Kansas, when the 1900 census was enumerated.

Further back, the 1880 U.S. Census for Marion, Kansas, listed the following family:

- **Roddy Corothane Coble**, age 38
- **Mary Ann Coble**, age 34
- **Anna Belle Coble**, age 14
- **Mary Minnie Coble**, age 12
- **Claudius Dwyer Coble**, age 5
- **Joey Theresa Coble**, age 1

Roddy Coble was listed as the county treasurer, which means he may have been mentioned in local history books.

The 1910 U.S. Census indicated that the families of Roddy and Claude Coble lived next door to each other in Mount Vernon, Washington. Joey and Mary Minnie were living with their parents. Roddy was retired; Claude, Minnie and Joey all were listed as dry goods merchants.

### Look for other sources

The Find a Grave Web site ([www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)) indicated that Harry Branchflower died in 1934, and his wife, Joey, died in 1966. Both were buried in the Mount Vernon Cemetery, Skagit County, Washington.

I found no evidence that Harry and Joey Branchflower had

children; none were recorded in the census.

I compiled this information from the Web in several hours. Obviously, more searches are possible, and more records may be available. Possibilities include local records, probate records, newspapers, histories, and letters and manuscripts. A good place to start would be local libraries.

### Family trees

Beware of family trees, but look for them. One should always look for family trees on the Web. Almost all of my ancestors born in the 1800s can be found in family trees on the Web. Some sites are excellent, with documented sources, family pictures, obituaries, and more, but many sites lack research and require verification or correction of the information.

I did find a family tree for the Coble family at Ancestry.com. It listed Roddy Caruthers Coble, born 17 February 1844 at Caulford County, North Carolina, and died 1927 at Skagit County, Washington. He was listed as the son of George Paul Coble and Theresa Hanner. His wife was listed as Mary Griffith, with no dates or places. Four children are mentioned, with no other information provided about them:

- Belle (F) married Henry McLean
- Claudius (M) married Nellie Brown

- Josie (F) married Harry Vanceflower
- Minnie (F)

As you can see, this is the same family but shows an absence of research, incomplete information, and corruption of names. Starting with the family tree may have led to the same results, but researching the names *Harry Vanceflower* and *Josie Coble* would have wasted time and perhaps never led to the correct information.

I did not find much more about Harry Branchflower, but his cousin, Norman, was a dentist in Seattle. I found that he had purchased a home in 1936, and found his office listing in the register of historic landmarks, with three pictures of the building. I found pictures of other cousins on the Web. Another cousin was a naval architect living in Seattle.

You would think that for an unusual name like *Branchflower*, records would be easy to find. Extraction of handwritten records and family recollections yielded variations such as *Vanceflower* and *Branchflomer*. These variations in spelling do not show up on Web searches; in several cases, I had to use a first-name search with birthplace and county of residence. In these cases, it was obvious from two or three hits which surname was actually *Branchflower*.

*(Continued on page 4)*

200	212	Branchflower, Harry	Head	W	M	36	2	44	WA	1900	Pa-1910	Wash	Wash	Canada
		Joey	Wife	F	36	41	1							Canada
201	213	Philip, Charles J	Son	M	14	21	42	36						Canada

A portion of Harry Branchflower's 1920 Census information, accessed at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

# Spiderwebs Backing up...German records...Civil War...

## Comparing online backups

It's your worst nightmare: Your computer hard drive crashes and cannot be restored. You turn to your external backup drive, only to find that it also has died.

If your computer has been backed up frequently and regularly by an online service, the nightmare becomes only an annoyance. Having an account with an online backup service means that your work and your information are not lost: You can restore the files to another computer.

The services provide a range of options. Some have unlimited storage space, while others charge by the gigabyte. Some provide backup for multiple users and multiple computers, while others offer individual plans. Some allow backup between local computers rather than online storage. Files can be backed up with encryption, for security.

Price varies by features and plan. Services also vary in backup and retrieval speed and ease. Some services offer a free trial period, which may be helpful before you commit to a service for long-term

storage and security.

Which of the various services would best meet your needs? A review in *InformationWeek* online compares backup services:

[tinyurl.com/2a9t2q6](http://tinyurl.com/2a9t2q6) or  
[www.webcitation.org/5tEYHEwuv](http://www.webcitation.org/5tEYHEwuv)



## German genealogy

Online German Genealogy Records and Databases has a directory of Web sites with online Ger

man genealogy databases. Links, which are organized by province, connect to general records, such as passenger lists, city directories, family heritage books, and military graves.

Local record links include birth, baptism, marriage and death records; church books; and burial indexes. See: [www.germanroots.com/germandata.html](http://www.germanroots.com/germandata.html)

## Civil War—National Graves

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War—National Graves Registration provides a database of gravesites of Civil War veterans, both Union and Confederate. The site also accepts registration of gravesites if the veteran is not in the database. See: [www.suvcwdb.org/home/](http://www.suvcwdb.org/home/)

## Genealogy in Time

The free online genealogy magazine *Genealogy In Time* publishes articles, guides, and listings of genealogy records. A weekly column offers news about products and records of interest to genealogy enthusiasts. To read or subscribe to *Genealogy In Time*, see: [www.genealogyintime.com](http://www.genealogyintime.com) 

## Start with the census *(continued)*

### The collected data tell a story

The census data and other sources told a story of the family. The information indicated what they did and where they went.

The 1880 through 1930 U.S. censuses showed relationships among individuals, occupations, ownership of property, wealth, and moves

within the United States.

The census often is the best place to look first because it gives the essential information: who, when, and where. You must know these facts to gather additional information.

Major moves were usually about opportunity, which may have

meant affordable land for farmers, or a good job. A Web search often can turn up surprises such as obituaries, local histories, biographies, and photographs. Many family histories on the Web include photographs and headstone inscriptions.

The more you search, the more you can find. 

# *POW! A great time was had by all*

By Patricia Burrow

Did you know that you could get family history book templates online? If you attended Janet Brigham Rands' session "Getting the Most from MS Word and MS Publisher" at our recent Publish Our Work! workshop, you would know.

Many members of SVC GG and the Santa Clara County Historical & Genealogical Society were busy on September 11 getting ideas on publishing their family history and sharing their research with others. The two organizations co-sponsored a full day of learning opportunities and idea exchanges. The five tracks were bursting with topics on producing books, writing blogs, preserving photos, scrapbooking, creating Web sites, and much more.

In addition to SVC GG and SCCHGS members and other interested genealogists, participants came who had not attended a genealogy event before. In fact, this was one-of-a-kind in subject matter. Many organizations sponsor conferences and seminars on genealogy research, search techniques, and specific historic or location subjects, but this was the first area event focusing on publishing and sharing the research we have accumulated.

With more than 200 in attendance, the workshop reflected great interest in writing and preserving our family stories.

Richard Rands, president of SVC GG, kicked off the event with a welcome and introduction to the all-day activities. With 24 sessions to choose from, the audience was anxious to spread out and begin exploring the new subjects.

## **Want to see and hear more?**

The work of **Sandy Hart**, presenter of "Family Photography—Outside the Box," is in an exhibition at the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles until October 31, Tue-Sun 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; [www.sjqmilmuseum.org](http://www.sjqmilmuseum.org)

**Bill George**, who presented "Reunion Web Family Cards," has created a Web page for additional notes: [svcgg.bdgeorge.com](http://svcgg.bdgeorge.com)

**Pat Burrow**, who presented "iPhoto for Genealogists," will be adding notes to the dedicated SVC GG Reunion page: [www.ReunionNotes.com](http://www.ReunionNotes.com)

**Richard Rands**, who gave four presentations at the workshop, will be the keynote speaker and a presenter at the Concord Family History Seminar, October 16, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at 1590 Denkinger Rd., Concord, California.

One of the high points of the day was the Showcase, a lunchtime display of memorabilia. The wondrous array of books, heirloom quilts, charts, maps, photo-books, calendars, and dolls was an inspiration.

- Julie Lindsey's display case featured her grandmother's doll and rocking chair.
- MaryAnne Casella had a quilt she made for her parents' 50th wedding anniversary.
- Sue Costa showed her family histories and photobooks.
- Mark Moore offered to show how he made a calendar with his ancestor's photos and birth dates on it.
- Lane Pendleton displayed six feet of charting, with fan charts and a descendant chart featuring a simple photo of his immediate family.

In addition to door prizes provided by RootsMagic, Reunion, and private donors, silent auction items were from the National Institute for Genealogical Studies, Ancestry.com, Shutterfly, and Brute Force Genealogy. The proceeds from the auction go directly to the SVC GG and SCCHGS to enable free education programs.

If you were not able to pick up a syllabus at the event, be sure you get one at the next SVC GG meeting. The book is full of helpful hints and information on each of the subjects covered in presentations. Every hour featured five learning opportunities, so even those who attended have four sessions per hour to catch up on.

Don't miss the numerous helpful tidbits in the syllabus, such as Richard Johns of Superior Labs recommending Kirkland Select (Costco) photo paper (about \$20 for 150 sheets) as "the absolute best buy on the planet." Or the interview pointers from Pamela Erickson, such as bringing a photograph or keepsake to get a person talking in an interview. Or Blog Carnivals from Steve Danko.

If you already have a syllabus, open the inside cover and read the names of the organizing committee and others whose contribution was appreciated. Other volunteers from the two sponsoring organizations helped as well. These are the people who gave their time and energies to bring this event to your community.

Many people from both groups worked hard to ensure that it was a good experience and that those attending were offered something of value. Be sure to nod a thank-you when you see them. 

# Ask the doctor

## Finding un-indexed Civil War records...

**Q Family records indicate that some of my ancestors served on the Union side during the Civil War. But I am confused by the discrepancies that appear in the various collections of online indexes, especially the pension indexes. What is the best way to find my Civil War ancestors?**

The first thing to keep in mind is that there is no single index to service records for all Union soldiers. In most cases, men volunteered, or were enlisted by officers of a specific unit for each state, and sometimes soldiers were enlisted in a neighboring state. Furthermore, it was not unusual for a soldier to serve in more than one unit.

The indexes compiled by the National Park Service, Ancestry.com, and Footnote.com should all be consulted if you are having difficulty locating an ancestor. But don't forget to try all potential variations on the spelling of a name. Sometimes a notation on an index entry will cross-reference it to a different index entry where the soldier's name is spelled differently, or will link to a different unit.

When looking for Civil War service records, understand that there are no "real" service records similar to those for later wars. We only have something called Compiled Service Records, or CSRs. Essentially, several decades after the war was over, military personnel pored over the remaining records of each unit and extracted the names of every soldier, recording them on small index cards, listing the name, the

unit, and the nature of the record. Then the cards were sorted by unit and name. Sometimes additional documents for a specific soldier were added to the collection of index cards.

The files are stored at the National Archives in unit number sequence, then by name within each unit. When you open the CSR for a soldier (an envelope about the size of a standard number 10 envelope), you will find a collection of index cards, and optionally a small envelope with various pertinent documents.



A typical CSR will have an index card with the initial muster-in details, a few cards indicating that the soldier was present or not present at subsequent unit musters, and a final card listing the soldier's final status. Other documents might include a certificate of enlistment, a medical discharge certificate, or a death certificate with an inventory of personal effects.

Sometimes a card from a muster roll will declare that the soldier was not present and deserted. I recommend that you read about desertion during the Civil War before you judge your ancestor's loyalty.

Pension records are another matter. Pensions were paid from

federal funds, so the records were managed by the federal government. The process of applying for a military pension was so complicated that a pension file might contain many pages of documents and affidavits. The indexes for pension files are far from straightforward. Pensions fall into two major categories, an *invalid pension* given to veterans who could prove that their disabilities were caused by war-related injuries, and *widow or dependent pensions* given to surviving family members when a soldier was killed in action, or when he later died.

In many cases, an application was initiated as an invalid pension, but took so long to be considered that the veteran died, and the pension application then became a widow's pension. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the veteran and the dependents probably were living in a different state when the pension application was filed.

The National Archives maintains two indexes for Civil War pension files—a general index (record group T288), and an organizational index (record group T289). Web company Ancestry.com purchased the microfilm for the general index, and Footnote.com purchased the organizational index.

In the process of indexing these collections, indexers inadvertently omitted some records. In some units, as many as one third of the names are missing, according to Archives staff. Neither index covers every pension file, and importantly, even the two indexes combined do not cover all pension files. Even if you consult both online indexes, you might not find your

*(Continued on page 7)*

## ...Deciphering ordinance codes

(Continued from page 6)

ancestor. Ancestry.com concedes that “a small percentage of the pension cards were not included in this index.” To increase the chances of finding your ancestor’s pension record, you should consult the original indexes at the National Archives. In one recent case, the pension application for a father, who died years after the war as a veteran, and a son, who died during the war, were included together in the same file.

The bottom line is that you should not give up if you cannot find your ancestor’s Civil War records online. Make an effort to go to the National Archives yourself, or engage an experienced researcher to go there for you.

**Q** **Genealogy software programs often contain the option for LDS data. The ordinances and the “temple codes” are confusing. Since LDS abbreviations are included so often in family records, I’m afraid I might be missing useful information by ignoring them.**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS, Mormon) has kept records of its ordinances since the church’s earliest days. Notations about ordinances do show up frequently in GEDCOMs, family group sheets, and pedigree charts.

Information about ordinances performed during an individual’s lifetime can indeed provide useful genealogy information, although they require careful interpretation, comparable to interpreting Anglican christening dates. Just as a christening sometimes

occurred years after an individual’s birth, some LDS ordinances do not necessarily coincide with specific time points.

The LDS ordinance codes that might be useful to you include the ordinances *baptism* (B), *endowment* (E), *sealing to spouse* (SS), and *sealing to parents* (SP), and the condition of being *born in the covenant* (BIC). The ordinances can be done during an individual’s life, or can be done by proxy after a person’s death. If an ordinance date falls within the person’s lifetime, the individual would have been involved personally. Proxy ordinances are not performed for the living.

An LDS baptism (B) differs from some other Christian baptisms in that it is done at age eight or older, but never younger. A baptism date during someone’s life implies only that the person was at least eight years old at that point.

In the earlier days of the LDS Church, baptisms sometimes were repeated during the person’s life (rebaptism), often as an indication of continuing commitment. LDS records might reflect a rebaptism date rather than an original baptism date.

An endowment (E) is an ordinance done when an individual is an adult. It is never performed for living children. When an endowment was not performed for a person during his or her lifetime, the proxy ordinance may be performed after the person’s death, as long as the person lived at least to the age of eight. Sometimes when the age at death is not clear, a proxy endowment may be performed anyway.

A sealing to spouse does not

necessarily indicate that the couple was first married at that point. Couples who were already married could have taken vows again in a sealing ceremony. That means you can’t assume that a sealing date is an original marriage date, although it could be. In some cases, we have gone back to original historical records (clergy notes, diaries) to determine whether a sealing was the original point of marriage.

Sealing to parents is an ordinance performed only if the parents had not been sealed (SS) before a child’s birth. Sealing to parents can be conducted during an individual’s lifetime. Children born after parents were sealed would be considered born in the covenant (BIC). These abbreviations often show up in older family group sheets of LDS ancestors.

To add to the alphabet soup of ordinance abbreviations, sometimes a *C* shows up. This stands for “children ordinances completed,” and is shown on older pedigree charts when all the ordinances for all of the children of the person have been completed.

Temple codes—yet another ingredient in the alphabet soup—show which LDS temple was the site of an ordinance. This can be useful if ordinances were performed during the individual’s life (less so for proxy ordinances, since those may indicate nothing about where the person lived or traveled). A list of LDS temple codes is kept current at:

[www.ldschurchtemples.com/codes/](http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/codes/)

For a broad view of searching for LDS ancestors, see:

[www.svcgg.org/LDSancestor.pdf](http://www.svcgg.org/LDSancestor.pdf) 



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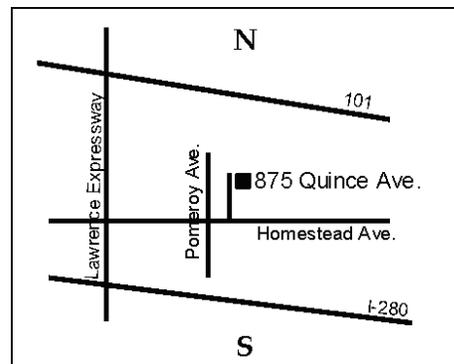
Electronic contribution of articles is welcome. The editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit articles.

## Upcoming SVC GG meetings, events

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 a.m. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right).

- Organizing your hard-drive
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- Beginning genealogy

**No December meeting** 



See [www.svcgg.org/directions.html](http://www.svcgg.org/directions.html)

### October 9 meeting

These are the October classes:

- English civil registration
- Using RootsMagic 4
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- PAF and PCs for beginners

### November 13 meeting

These are the November classes (tentative listing, may change):

- Finding descendants and collaterals

## About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVC GG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. The group is based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California, but members live all over the world.

*PastFinder* is the official publication of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. Published monthly except December, *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to

members in attendance and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter by e-mail containing a download link.

SVC GG offers research tools and materials through its Web site, [www.svcgg.org](http://www.svcgg.org).

Membership dues are US\$15 per household per year, US\$20 for Canada, and US\$25 for other international locations. 