

Volume 22 Issue 6

June 2011

SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

Does 'filter bubble' affect genealogy Web searches? Should we worry?

By Janet Brigham

Our Web world changed in 2009, but few of us knew it. That's the point when the Web searches we thought we knew became narrower channels into what we thought was still a wide-open Internet universe.

Harbingers of change were obvious before then; when we searched at Amazon.com for a specific gift, such as a book on horses, Amazon then recommended other horse-related merchandise.

What we didn't see coming was the personalization of our Web searching. Google, for example, quietly entered an era of tailoring searches based not only on search terms and search history, but also on a host of behavior variables we didn't know were being collected.

We knew our privacy was dissolving, but we didn't know that our access to the world of information was being prioritized for us, based on algorithms designed to predict our preferences. Author Eli Pariser calls this "the filter bubble." Google indicates that tailoring merely prioritizes search results and doesn't filter content. Even so, content prioritized to later pages may as well be filtered entirely if we never reach those pages.

The implications for personal privacy are one thing, but what about the implications for genealogy searching?

We already know that results differ dramatically among browsers, and that small tweaks in search techniques can make big differences in results. We set out to see if personalization or tailoring of search results would confound all that we've learned about searching for genealogy information in Web searches.

To test this, SVC GG conducted a small, nonscientific study. A dozen persons recently conducted a Google search on two typical genealogy search

phrases, at approximately the same time on the same night.

The results surprised us. All results matched exactly. All 12 people got identical search results on each of the two searches, despite being geographically and demographically diverse, and despite having varying interests and browser habits. Even ads appearing on the search results pages were the same.

The take-home message may be that for the time being, tailoring isn't a threat to genealogy Web searching, using standard search methods. Differences among browsers appear to be greater than differences related to tailored searching. For now.

That said, you might not want to be "tailored." To limit the extent to which your personal preferences and browsing styles are stored and used by content companies, try browsing incognito. These instructions work in three popular browsers:

Chrome: right-click on the Chrome icon and select *New incognito window*.

Internet Explorer: Select the *Safety* pull-down tab and select *InPrivate Browsing*. You also can select *InPrivate Filtering* to prevent companies from gathering your browsing information.

Firefox 4: In Firefox or Tools pull-down menu, *Start Private Browsing*.

Also, clear your browser history and cookies occasionally, and remember to wear a moustache and shades.



Outside and inside

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Finding a Civil War Widows' Pension file

By Richard Rands

A primary enticement the United States government used to get men to enlist for military service, beginning with the Revolutionary War, was the promise of free land. But by the time the Civil War broke out, the prospect of monetary com-

penetration was considered to be a far more effective means to fill the ranks of the Army.

Congress enacted a rudimentary pension plan at the outset of the war, but by the end of the century, the pension policies were considerably more comprehensive and involved billions of dollars.

Union veterans and their survivors were covered by the federal government, and some Confederate veterans were assisted by the states of the Confederacy.

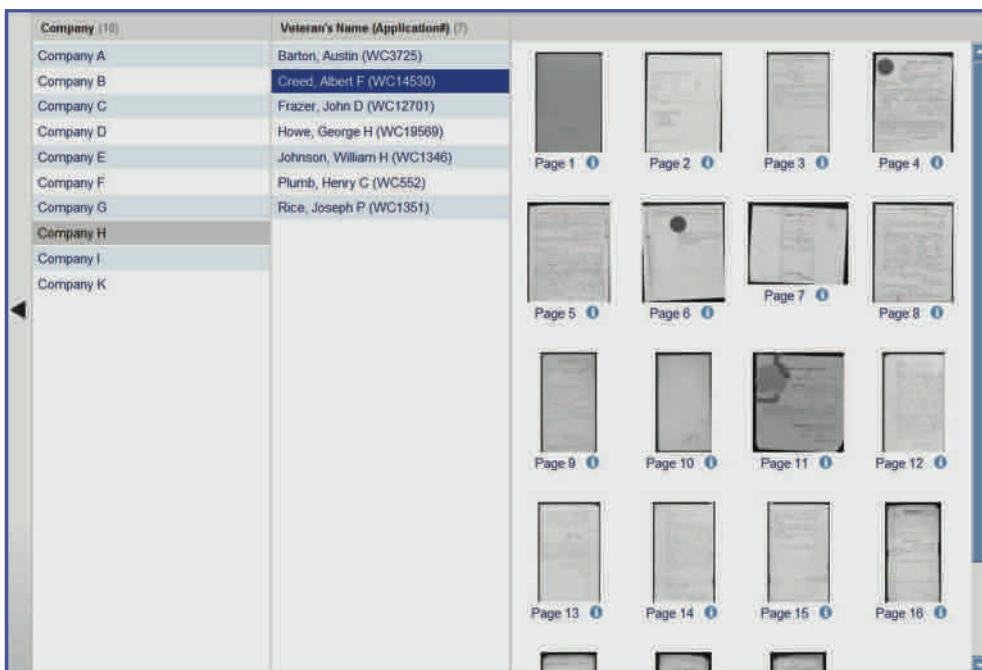
Boxes of more than two million Union veteran pension files are archived at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. (NARA), and researchers can access them free at the archives, or a copy can be ordered through their website (www.nara.gov) for a hefty fee, by completing an online order form with the requisite details.

However, NARA has begun to make digital copies of a portion of the pension files, the Widow's Pension files, available online at www.footnote.com. Presumably, the files for the injured veterans, their minor descendents, and mothers will be added in the future. For the time being, we have only indexes for these latter groups of pension files, which you can use to gather the details for ordering copies of the original contents.

Footnote is a subscription-based website, but it can be accessed free at many public



At Footnote.com, select *Civil War "Widows' Pensions,"* the state, and the type of unit in which your soldier served.



If your soldier's widow applied for a pension, his name will appear in Footnote.com with thumbnail images from the pension file.

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Finding a Civil War Widows' Pension file *(continued)*

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libraries and every LDS Family History Center through the FHC Portal. Note that Footnote has two distinctly different methods for searching for a veteran's pension file — one that is fairly easy to follow if you know the basic details of the veteran's service, and another that is more complicated, but is effective if you don't know much about your veteran ancestor.

Step one is to determine whether your prospective Civil War ancestor was in the age range for enlistment or the draft. Union soldiers had to be between 18 and 35; Confederate soldiers were eventually conscripted at 17 to 50. There are cases of under-age boys joining, but they are exceptions. Search your family histories and your database for men born between about 1817 and 1847.


Step two is to find which state they were living in when the war started, because virtually all of the soldiers were enlisted by each state to fill quotas allocated by the federal government. One of the best ways to figure this out is to find them in the 1860 U.S. Census. You may be able to find your ancestor in an index without knowing where he lived, but you also may discover that many soldiers had the same name, which makes it difficult for you to pinpoint which one is your ancestor.

Once you know which state he served from, step three is to go to an index and identify the type and number (or name) of the regiment and the company he was assigned to. Check in

Ancestry.com, Footnote.com, and the free National Park Service's Civil War website www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss/. Each offers searchable indexes that indicate in which unit the soldier served.

The final step to viewing a Widows' Pension File is to go to Footnote.com and select the *Civil War era* from the horizontal scrolling timeline partway down the home page. A new page will appear with a scrollable listing of 31 publications from Admiralty Records to Utah Territorial Case Records. Click on *Civil War Widows' Pensions* to get a list of states. Clicking on the name of the state from which your ancestor served will display a list of the types of units (*Arm of Service*) that were created from that state, for example, infantry, cavalry, artillery, or engineers. Selecting the arm of service will produce a list of regiments to choose from, followed by a list of companies.

After you select the company, a list of veterans' names for which there is a Widows' Pension File online will follow. If your veteran is listed, click on his name to see thumbnail images of each page in the file, loading on your screen. Click on an image, and it will load in a viewer with zoom controls at the top left corner. A typical file will have dozens of pages, sometimes hundreds.

Because of widespread belief that there was rampant fraud by women claiming to be war widows, the amount of genealogically rich documentation that had to be produced and validated will astound you. 


2011 Fall Seminar: All about archives

Our September 10 fall seminar will provide an unprecedented peek into the most hallowed halls of genealogy: Archives.

Rob Richards, director of Archival Operations for the National Archives at Atlanta, Georgia, will present an all-day seminar exploring what an archive is, what archivists do, what the National Archives does, and how to preserve family documents and materials.

The seminar, scheduled September 10, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the meetinghouse at 875 Quince Ave., Santa

Clara, California, will be free and open to the public, with no reservations needed. Ample free parking is available, and light refreshments will be served at breaks. Participants can bring lunch or eat lunch out.

Records that Richards will discuss include slave manifests, Railroad Retirement pension files, Tennessee Valley Authority family/cemetery removal, World War I draft registration, crew lists, Merchant Marine logs, naturalization from 1790, oaths of amnesty after the Civil War, and Civil War tax lists. 

Would you like to see the photos of my vacation?

Or, maybe not...



By Patricia Burrow

Last month, my husband Rich and I had the opportunity to do a nice vacation, cruising across the Atlantic to Lisbon, Portugal, and then making several stops in Spain. We disembarked in Barcelona, rented a car, and drove into France for a week of family research, cave crawling, and castle trekking. It was really great fun! My husband's grandparents were born in France, and we have done other research trips in the past, but this was the first time we were able to visit the Landes area and really dig into family history.

Several years ago, Rich made contact with a lady in Landes (France is divided into départements, this one in the South of France, western side near Bordeaux) who did some research and provided us with a pedigree chart that went back four generations. It showed that there were four brothers, of which Grandfather was the youngest. We had done some research ourselves and knew that he came to America in 1898 but never talked about his family back in France, so we did not know whether any family members were left.

When we first arrived in Monségur, we went straight to the church and cemetery. I knew something was amiss when we could find only three items with dates on them. Most everything looked relatively new (less than 100 years or so), huge granite slabs and very few old headstones. The story we later learned was that the town had moved the cemetery and church, stone by stone, from a mile or so away to place them closer to the juncture of the two main roads that passed through the area. If families could

not afford to pay for remains to be moved, the remains were left in the original field. All of this was done around 1900. Today, the new cemetery looks somewhat sterile, with little or no sign of the ancestors who founded the town. Granite markers say things like "Famille Costedoat," with no more detail.

We stayed at a B&B (bed-and-breakfast, no hotels) in Monségur, a small town with fewer than 400 residents. This is where Rich's grandfather was born. The owners of the B&B came from Belgium four years ago and did not know anyone with the surname COSTEDOAT, but did know the secretary at the Marie (mayor's office). They speak four languages, and we came to depend on them to translate most of the conversations we had with our relatives. Word got out very quickly that we were interested in the COSTEDOAT surname. We were known as "the Spanish couple" because our car had a license plate from Spain. Every day someone new would call or show up who was or knew one of the COSTEDOAT relatives.

The first to contact us was a "cousin" who had inherited the property from one of Grandfather's brothers. They converted the original stone farmhouse into a garage and live in a new house adjoining. It was exciting to see the building where the four brothers were born, even if it had some additional doors. The cousins brought out their photo album, and I took pictures of pictures, including one of the original farmhouse, and poses of family members all together.

Later we met descendants of another brother and a great-uncle. Clicking my camera every chance I got. Taking pictures of any marriage record, birth record, or document that came out of hiding. Putting a flash into the eyes of everyone who would stand still.

The battery on my computer started acting up a couple of weeks into the trip, and by the end of the trip was dead, dead. In the process of its dying, the sudden shutdowns did something ugly to my operating system. Apple support suggested reformatting the hard drive and doing a clean install of the operating system — I did have a backup of my data, didn't I? I said yes, as I had seen the icon for the Time Machine backup system running every day since my return from vacation. And, of course, I always practice 3-2-1 — (3 copies of important data, 2 different media, and 1 copy offsite). In this case, I was cheating just a little bit because I had not pulled additional copies of the



The farmhouse at Monségur, in Landes, France, where the author's husband's grandfather and three brothers were born.

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Or, maybe not... (Continued)

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vacation pics to send to my daughter in another state, but that would be okay, because I had everything backed up with the Time Machine.

Or not!!! When I reinstalled my data, it had only files from a month earlier, one day before I left on vacation! My heart sank. Two thousand photos gone. Now, I can live without another 200 pictures of Lisbon. But the photos of the cousins were irreplaceable. I supposed I could go back to France and ask them to smile again, but it wouldn't be the same. Bummer.

At this point, my face was very, very red, and my husband was very, very blue. I know better than to trust just one backup, and I also know to always check the backup itself. Lesson learned.


In the end, I was able to download some data recovery software that accessed the original files on my camera card and did, in fact, recover 602 photos (including all of the most important ones — the cousins in France and the old home place).

Here, too, is a lesson: Don't erase your camera card until you get back home and transfer your photos to other media. If you need more storage space, buy



Photo albums belonging to "cousins" had pictures of ancestors and their homes.

another camera card on your trip. Better yet, carry an extra card or two with you.

I hope that your summer vacation is a fun one and your next research trip is fruitful. But most of all, I hope that, unlike me, you heed the warnings about backing up your data, so that you have more than memories to pass on to your descendants. 

New Stuck-on-Sources pads are even better, cost less

Sometimes the best ideas come from desperation and frustration. That's how Stuck-on-Sources (SOS) pads were created: After a lengthy research trip, two SVCGG members looked at their piles of photocopies, with marginal notes and little slips of paper, and decided that there must be a better way to do this.


The better way turned out to be pads of 3x4-inch Post-It notes, preprinted with an information template. Filled in, an SOS note provides the source documentation that researchers need. They are handy to fill out at libraries before you make copies, and useful for labeling documents in a your files.

Why not just write in the margins? You can always do that, but (1) will your marginal notes be legible? And (2) will they be complete? SOS pads provide a

template of the specific information you need, including the date you retrieved the data, a personal identifier, title, author, publisher, publisher's location, date of publication, repository, call number or URL, and the significance of the information.

Stuck-on-Sources www.svcgg.org	Today's date:	My info:
Title:		
Author:		
Publisher:	Where published:	
Date published:	Repository:	
Call number/ Web page:		
ID/significance:		
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Since 2004, SVCGG has printed and sold thousands of SOS pads. Now in their fourth printing, the pads have slight modifications for easier use. The Title area is larger, the section labels are shorter, and the paper is a slightly lighter shade, for greater contrast. As always, they are genuine Post-It notes, for maximum stickability and paper quality.

The best news is that they now cost less, thanks to bulk printing costs. SVCGG sells them at meetings, and through its online store, www.svcgg.org. Prices are lower at meetings — no postage required. 

How I found it: Tracking a separated family

By Allin Kingsbury

I was filling in details about the family of Wallace M. Lankford and his wife Caroline who lived in Marietta, Ohio. Their family, as listed in the 1910 U.S. Census for Marietta is:

- Wallace Lankford**, age 49, married, head of household, born in Ohio
- Carrie Lankford**, age 48, married, wife, born in Ohio
- Henry W. Lankford**, age 29, single, nephew, born in Ohio
- Laverne Lankford**, age 3, single, granddaughter, born in Pennsylvania

There are a few interesting discrepancies in the census pertaining to this family:

- Henry W. Lankford, the nephew, is not the father of Laverne. Although he is living with the Wallace Lankford family, his presence isn't relevant to a study of the descendants of Wallace and Carrie.
- Carrie (Caroline) had one child, who is living, according to this census. It is somewhat unusual that the granddaughter is living with grandparents rather than parents.

In the 1920 census for Marietta, Ohio, I found the following:

- Wallace M. Lankford**, age 58, married, head of household, born in Ohio
- Caroline Lankford**, age 57, married, wife, born in Ohio
- Harry W. Lankford**, age 36, divorced, son, born in West Virginia
- William C. Lankford**, age 11, single, grandson, born in Ohio

The 1920 U.S. Census may resolve discrepancies found in the 1910 census. First, the missing son is Harry W., who was living with his parents and his son, William C. Lankford. The birthplace of Harry is stated as West Virginia, which is consistent with the birthplace for the father of Laverne stated in the 1910 census. Second, the marital status of Harry W. is "divorced," which answers the question of why there is no mother for Laverne in the 1910 census. Laverne has a brother, William C., which lends credibility to the idea that Harry is the father of the grandchildren. Another discrepancy in the 1920 census is that the father of William C. was born in Pennsylvania.

The major unanswered question that remains is this: Who and where is the divorced wife of Harry W. Lankford? A more thorough look at the 1910 census reveals the following family in Ward 4 of Cambridge, Ohio, which is in Guernsey County:

- Harry W. Langford**, age 27, married, head of household, born in West Virginia
- May F. Langford**, age 23, married, wife, born in England, immigrated 1893
- Laverne Langford**, age 3, single, daughter, born in Pennsylvania
- William C. Langford**, age 2, single, son, born in Ohio

Despite the difference in spelling of the surname, this appears to be the same Harry W. who was listed as living with his parents in Marietta. Laverne Lankford/Langford is listed twice in the 1910 census.

Also stated in this census is that Harry and May had been married four years and had two children, both living, according to this census. If Harry and May separated about the time of the 1910 census, Harry could have taken Laverne with him to his parents' home in Marietta, and perhaps Laverne later went to live with an aunt and uncle. The 1920 U.S. Census for Newark, Ohio, indicates:

- Samuel D. Stephens**, age 44, married, head of household, born in Ohio
- Laura F Stephens**, age 33, married, wife, born in England
- Laverne L. Sandford**, age 13, single, niece, born in Ohio

The surname *Sandford* appears to have been a misinterpretation in indexing, as it could be *Lankford*. A close look at the handwriting revealed that the census enumerator wrote capital letters *L* and *S* almost identically. If Laverne is the daughter of Harry W, then Laverne's mother May could be a sister to Laverne's aunt Laura. A first-name search of the 1900 U.S. Census for a Laura born in 1887 in England yielded the following in Guernsey County, Ohio:

- William Lewis**, age 38, married, head of household, born in England
- Fannie Lewis**, age 39, married, wife, born in England
- Laura Lewis**, age 14, single, daughter, born in England
- May Lewis**, age 13, single, daughter, born in England

(Continued on page 7)



Ask the doctor More Windows 7 aggravations

Q I notice that you are getting queries about using Windows 7. I recently bought a new desktop with Windows 7, and many things are incompatible now! I can't connect my two-year-old printer to this computer, and the computer's DVD/CD combo drive won't play some of the CDs I made at the Family History Library a few years ago. I contacted the computer manufacturer's support, which was useless.

I'm having to keep my older Windows XP computer connected on our home network, just to have access to the printer and to read data CDs with genealogy images. I'm wasting energy and space for this awkward arrangement, and it's neither ideal nor stable.

Our Macintosh friends in the SVC GG are sure they know the answer to your problems...but that's another matter; no new operating system is perfect. That said, after we moved to Windows 7 recently, we also bought the book *Windows 7 Annoyances* by David Karp.

It sounds like your two major problems are both compatibility issues. Many headaches can be avoided by going to the Microsoft Compatibility Center website before you upgrade to Windows 7 (www.microsoft.com/windows/compatibility/windows-7). There you can verify which printers and other peripheral devices will work under Windows 7, and which software products are compatible.

The manufacturer of your printer might release a new driver, so keep checking. A few words of caution: In your desperation to connect your printer directly to your Windows 7 computer, you might be considering downloading unofficial drivers, some coming at a cost, and some offering to review all your drivers. Be cautious, because *a scam could cause serious problems*.

If you have Windows 7 Professional, Ultimate, or Enterprise edition, choose the *Select XP Mode* option when you install programs. You may need to download and install the XP Mode, however; search for *install XP mode Windows 7* to find the download from a Microsoft site.

This isn't available for the Home edition. In all editions, you can open the Program Compatibility Troubleshooter. Our experience with troubleshooter utilities isn't always happy, but sometimes they help.

As for the CD/DVD drive...it's unlikely that the manufacturer will replace your drive for compatibility issues. If you can access a portable USB CD/DVD drive, which is handy to own if you have a netbook, connect it to your Windows 7 machine to read CDs or DVDs of any vintage. (Ours was under \$50.)

Another alternative is to access the CDs or DVDs on whatever computer will read them, then load the contents onto a flash or backup drive, or copy contents through a network. You can access these backups rather than the original CDs/DVDs. This also would ensure that you have a functional backup.

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 6)

Alice Lewis, age 12, single, daughter, born in England

Frank Lewis, age 5, single, son, born in Ohio

Elizabeth Lewis, age 1, single, son, born in Ohio

This is the only family in Guernsey County that has daughters Laura and May both born in England, and both having the right ages. They were living in the Ward 4 of the town of Cambridge, where Harry and May lived ten years later.

My working hypothesis is that the wife of Henry Wallace Lankford was May Lewis, the daughter of William and Fannie Lewis. An undocumented online tree indicates that William Benjamin Lewis

and Fanny Kate Harris had a daughter, Laura Fanny Lewis, who married Samuel Dighton Stephens; he is the uncle whose home was opened to Laverne Lankford after her parents divorced. Harry Lankford and his wife were not in the tree.

The wife of Harry Wallace Lankford appears to have been May Lewis, the daughter of William and Fannie Lewis, but more evidence is needed.

Still I was not done. I went on to find the exact birth date of Harry Lankford, the names and birth dates of his daughter and son, the spouse of their daughter, and their grandson. I am sure there is more information to be found, but individuals born after the last publicly available census can be difficult to find on the Internet.



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Upcoming SVCGG 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).


See the Meetings section of our website (www.svcgg.org) for any last-minute changes in the class lineup each month.

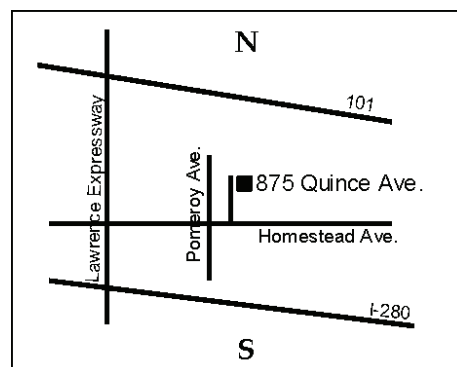
Classes for 11 June 2011

Opening session: backup files vs. GEDCOM files

- Colonial research
- Data storage & backup, part 2
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- RootsMagic webinar with discussion
- Beginning genealogy Q&A

Classes for 9 July 2011

- Intro to Norwegian research
- Digitizing documents
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- RootsMagic webinar
- PAF & PCs for beginners 



See www.svcgg.org/directions.html

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG 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.

SVCGG offers research tools and materials through its website, www.svcgg.org.

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