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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

# PastFinder

## Life and death in old envelopes

By Janet Brigham

It was all in a day's work for my husband. He was the tag-along spouse for a business trip I took to Washington, D.C., in 2010. While I was in meetings, my husband, Richard, was at the U.S. National Archives, looking into old envelopes containing Civil War records about my ancestors.

The National Archives is home to the nation's collection of pension files regarding soldiers in the Union Army and their survivors. If my ancestors had fought for the Confederacy, we'd have needed to go to state archives.\*

We started by narrowing and focusing the field. A cross-sectional look at my genealogy database showed who had been the right age to serve in the Civil War. One family in particular had several sons and grandsons the right age to serve in the Union Army.

The soldiers were from the sizable family of Michael Overacker and Lucinda Briggs of Michigan. Michael died in 1833, and Lucinda remarried several years later.

Richard photocopied 40 pages from a file about **Cassius M. Overacker**, one of Lucinda's grandsons, and his father, Lucinda's son **Simeon Overacker**, my second-great-grand-uncle. Cassius enlisted at the age of 15 in August 1862 at Webster City, Iowa. He died three months later of measles, soon after his 16th birthday.

\*See <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/civil-war-genealogy-resources/confederate/pension.html>

Cassius's file was combined with that of his father because the pension claim was from his mother, Caroline Paddock. The pension application and its accompanying documentation are a family history bonanza. The "Declaration for an Original Pension

of a Mother" from February 1886 indicated that Simeon, age 68, was a "permanent invalid," unable to perform manual labor. She wrote:

"My husband has never abandoned me nor failed to support me to the best of his ability from the time of our marriage up to the present but failing health and the infirmities of age...render it no longer possible."

She listed the full names and birth dates of her other children born by 1862. A son **Albert G. Overacker**, listed as "a

babe" born in 1862, wrote a letter in 1927 to inquire about his father's military records; the letter was included in the file.

"Our family has been supposed to be at least 100% loyal to our country," Albert wrote.

Also included with the file was an affidavit from two persons (one being Caroline's sister) who were present at Simeon's and Caroline's marriage ceremony. This not only expanded the documentation about them, but expanded our knowledge of

(Continued on page 2)



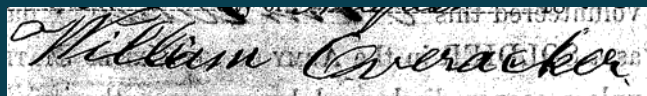
Michigan grave of Michael and Lucinda Overacker (photo courtesy of Linda Wilbur)

### Outside and inside

- An archival Civil War account, above
- How I found it: Missing children, page 3
- Ask the Doctor: Download v. DVD, page 6
- Santa Clara County Archives, page 7

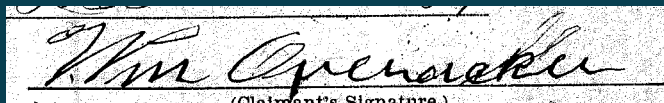
# Life and death *(continued)*

1862

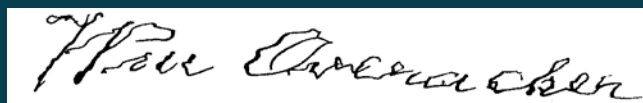


December 1879

November 1881



(Claimant's Signature)



William Overacker's enlistment signature (top) and pension application signatures (lower row).

*(Continued from page 1)*

Caroline's family of origin. The file also contained the marriage certificate, a list of Simeon's real estate, and his December 1886 death certificate.

Without the pension application file, we had known little about the family. Now we had documentation of life events and a framework for understanding their lives.

A separate file was equally rich with detail about the life, service, and death of **Henry Overacker**, Simeon's brother, who enlisted in 1861 and died two years later of dysentery at Memphis, Tennessee. Henry's file is complex because his widow remarried, and had to prove not only that she and Henry had been married, but also that she received no other pension from subsequent marriages.

As with the file for Cassius and Simeon, the file materials from Henry's survivors contained names, birth dates, residences, and other life details.

Some of the files raised as many questions as they answered. The file for **Anthony Overacker** indicated that during a seven-month period in the military, he had aged seven years. Also included with his file was a card for a **Matthew Overacker**, whose relationship was not stated and whose identity remains unknown to us.

Our keenest interest was in my second-great-grandfather, **William Overacker**, who was injured near Vicksburg, Mississippi. William enlisted in the infantry at age 35 at Newport, Ohio, and was discharged seven months later.

An 1881 affidavit signed by William indicated that he had lived as a farmer in Jones County, Iowa, for three years prior to his enlistment. He explained:

"About December 1862 while engaged in my duty viz lifting on a piece of timber...above Island No 10 the said timber carreened and the end of said timber struck me in my bowels. And the next day I was sent to the Hospital at Helena, Arkansas, was transferred to the Hospital at St Louis, Missouri, and in March 1863 was discharged, and I went back to my former residence." His occupation became "peddling trees, shrubs, & machinery."

He then stated the date when his family left Iowa and moved to Red Willow, Nebraska, and then when they moved to northern Idaho. He indicated what doctors and hospitals provided his medical care in those locations.

He sought but was never granted a pension for his injuries. The final rejection was recorded four years after his death. His widow, **Lydia Kramer** (sister of Anthony Overacker's wife Phebe Kramer), and their surviving children also applied for a pension.

The file traced the many hurdles the family faced in attempting to secure a small pension. William was required to travel to a government fort (initially one that was 800 miles away) to be examined by a surgeon. At Fort Lapwai, Idaho Territory, the surgeon described William as 6 feet tall, with both "dark" and "fair flesh" complexion. His face was "disfigured" by "necrosis of the bones" of his nose bridge. That, however, was deemed unrelated to his military service and the internal injuries he suffered.

Among the pages of medical records is a statement from a Lutheran pastor who provided an affidavit stating that William was unable to work. When the pastor was asked if he had "ever been in the practice of procribing [sic] and administering medicines," Pastor Christensen (who described himself as "about 44 years old") reported that he had prescribed medicines

*(Continued on page 3)*

# How I found it: Finding missing children

By Richard Rands

In a previous “How I Found It” column, I gave an example of using English Civil Registration records to locate details about children who had been born and died between the decennium period of a census.

Many children have been overlooked in family histories because they do not show up on the census records, and a family researcher has not thoroughly searched alternative records for the early deaths of family members. It is always important to study the gaps between the births of children in a family as listed on census records and to consider the possibility of missing children. In many cases, these premature deaths carry a significant part of a family's story and provide a clue to dramatic changes, such as moving to a different part of the country, or siblings' being sent to live with other family members.

Recently I helped trace the ancestry of someone whose great-grandfather's name was Henry Emery. Henry was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1825 and

emigrated to America through New Orleans in 1848 with a large contingent of Mormons on the ship *Car-natic*, along with his widowed father and a sister.

Undocumented family records indicated that Henry married Elizabeth Brewerton in Iowa in 1851, and listed six children born between 1852 and 1860. Sure enough, a quick look at the 1860 census for Salt Lake City revealed six children ranging from son Henry, born in 1852 to a one-month-old daughter, Fanny Jane, born in 1860; also listed was Henry's widowed father.

I tried to imagine six children born in eight years on the frontier. When I moved on to the 1870 U.S. census, it was clear the family record keeper had not had access to that census. Enumerated along with four of the original six children were six additional children, born between 1862 and 1869.

I struggled to imagine 12 children born in 17 years,

(Continued on page 4)

|    |                  |      |   |   |     |      |    |    |    |    |  |  |
|----|------------------|------|---|---|-----|------|----|----|----|----|--|--|
| 53 | Emery, Elizabeth | Wife | W | M | Aug | 1847 | 2  | 8  |    |    |  |  |
| 54 | Emery, Elizabeth | Head | W | F | Feb | 1828 | 72 | Wd | 16 | 12 |  |  |
|    | Isaac A.         | Son  | W | M | Dec | 1858 | 41 | W  |    |    |  |  |
|    | William L.       | Son  | W | M | Jan | 1869 | 31 | S  |    |    |  |  |
|    | Samuel F.        | Son  | W | M | Aug | 1870 | 29 | S  |    |    |  |  |
|    | Emery, Elizabeth | Head | W | F | Feb | 1828 | 72 | Wd | 16 | 12 |  |  |

Elizabeth Emery in the 1900 U.S. Census (Image from FamilySearch.org)

## Life and death (continued from page 2)


only privately. He said he had never studied at a medical college, and had no diploma. He had, however, treated William for “chronic catharr [catarrh] & neuralgia” as well as kidney complaints.

It may have been a blessing that William died before his daughter was murdered in 1886, and before his son died of meningitis in 1892 after coming to California for an education.

Going through the small mountain of pension papers, I was amazed by the wealth of information as I had been when we spent several days there a year earlier working through dozens of land patent files. In a

time of rapid-fire online searching, it is stunning to unfold old papers that have not been touched in more than 100 years, and to find evidence of frustration and tenacity—and sometimes the word *DEAD* stamped in half-inch-high letters.

The records are powerful in their starkness. The mother who lost a son did not describe the last time she saw him. She listed instead bare details of siblings who grew up never knowing him.

These documents remind us that we are here because these ancestors were resilient in the face of indignity, injury, and injustice. 



# How I found it *(continued)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

and I made a note to look for the death records of the two children born before 1860 who did not survive for the 1870 U.S. census. Of course, they would have been 13 and 10 years old, capable of staying with other family members to help with household or farming duties.

As a matter of course, I checked the 1880 U.S. census for Henry's family and was startled to find three more children added to the family, born between 1871 and 1874, for a total of 15 children. The three oldest children were not listed, but they were well past the age of setting out on their own. The two children missing in the 1870 U.S. census were also not there, but they too would have been old enough to be living elsewhere and were not necessarily dead.

Without an 1890 U.S. census, I searched for the family in the 1900 census, recognizing that both Henry and Elizabeth would have been in their early seventies, and finding them might be unlikely. The search for Henry Emery returned no results, but a 72-year-old widow, Elizabeth Emery, was living with two of the children listed in the 1880 U.S. census. I actually found myself a bit disappointed that no new children were listed. I was already pleased to point out to my friend that he now had 15 more cousins that he hadn't known about

But what about the status of the two children missing since the 1870 U.S. census? Those familiar with the 1900 U.S. census know that it has two columns not part of previous censuses that ask mothers how many children they have borne and how many are still

living at the time of the census. Imagine my surprise when Elizabeth reported giving birth to 16 children, only 12 of which were still alive! That meant I was still missing one child and that two more than I'd known about had died. The situation had just become far more complicated. (See image of 1900 U.S. Census results for Elizabeth Emery, page 3.)

I was now faced with at least one child who probably was born and died between censuses, plus the death of at least one of the older children who died after leaving home. I studied the gaps between each of the children to look for an obvious time period, but without precise birth dates of each of the children, I could not identify a likely period for an infant death.

*(Continued on page 5)*

The screenshot shows the FamilySearch.org search interface. At the top, it says "Discover Your Family History" with navigation links for "Records", "Trees", "Catalog", and "Books". The search form includes several fields: "First Names" (empty), "Last Name" (Emery), "Event" (Death), "Place" (Utah), "Year" (1880), and "+/-" (20). Below these are fields for "Relationship" (Parents), "Father, First Names" (Henry), "Father, Last Name" (Emery), "Mother, First Names" (Elizabeth), and "Mother, Last Name" (empty). There is also a "Batch Number" field. At the bottom, there is a "Search" button and a checkbox for "Match all terms exactly".

A search by parents' names at FamilySearch.org

# How I found it *(Continued)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

Since the United States did not mandate the equivalent of the English Civil Registration, and it was often much later that states implemented it, the task ahead meant browsing through reels of microfilm of sketchy frontier birth and death records while hoping to fill in the gaps.

One line of hope was the fact that the FamilySearch indexing project is plowing through a vast collection of microfilms at an amazing rate, putting the results online at [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) as quickly as they can.


In addition, the revised version of the accompanying search engine contains a nifty feature that allows searching for records when you only know the parents' names. Even though I don't know the given names of the missing children in the Emery family, this feature allows me to search for all the Emery records in a time period when Henry and Elizabeth Emery were having children. The maximum period for a

given search is 40 years (plus or minus 20 years), so I conducted two searches to cover the period between 1851 (the date of their marriage), and 1900, when Elizabeth reported having had 16 children.

## Among the results of both searches were the four deaths that I needed to document.


Among the results of both searches were the four deaths that I needed to document—two for the children who died before the 1870 U.S. Census, one for an adult child who died in 1899, and one for a new

child, Martha, who was born in 1875 after the last one listed in the 1880 census.

All the answers to a complicated problem were solved in essentially one search. At the time of this writing, 204 collections of birth, marriage, and death records for the United States are on the [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) website. It may be that not all of the parents' names of who died young are contained in the indexes, but you won't know until you search by parents' name at [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org). 

### Historical Records

1–20 of 167,250 results for >Name: **Emery**, Event: **Death**, Place: **Utah**, Year: **1860–1900**, Father Name: **Henry Emery**, Mother Name: **Elizabeth**

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <a href="#">Martha Emery</a><br>Utah Deaths and Burials, 1888–1946   | birth: 15 Mar 1875 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah<br>death: 22 Mar 1875 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah  | parents: Henry Emery, Elizabeth Emery     |
| <a href="#">David S Emery</a><br> Utah, Salt Lake County Death Records, 1908–1949 | death: 06 Mar 1899 Utah   | parents: Henry Emery, Elizabeth Brewerton |
| <a href="#">John Alma Emery</a><br>Utah Deaths and Burials, 1888–1946  | birth: 12 Jul 1857 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah<br>death: 31 Dec 1865 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah  | parents: Henry Emery, Elizth. B. Emery    |
| <a href="#">Fanny Jane Emery</a><br>Utah Deaths and Burials, 1888–1946   | birth: 12 Mar 1860 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah<br>death: 27 Mar 1860 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah<br>burial: Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah | parents: Henry Emery, Elizth Emery        |
| <a href="#">Harriet O. Emery</a><br>Utah Deaths and Burials, 1888–1946   | birth: 11 Aug 1876 S. Lake, S. Lake, Utah<br>death: 27 Sep 1880 Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah   | parents: Henry Emery, Louisa E. P. Emery  |

All of the death records in Utah for children born to Henry and Elizabeth Emery between 1860 and 1900 (Image from FamilySearch.org)



# Ask the doctor Download v. DVD

**Q** I'd like to learn about Reunion, the genealogy software program for Macintosh, of which I know nothing except for good reviews by two friends who use it. I have not yet got the program and am wondering if I should try to order the DVD by mail rather than downloading the program from the Web?

**My other concern is whether the Personal Ancestral File (PAF) files from my old PC--which were copied when Apple transferred everything to the new computer and which show as two files on my desktop--actually will convert to Reunion. Some of my Microsoft Word files did not come through unscathed.**

We expect that the pertinent information from your PAF files can indeed come through unscathed, so put your mind at ease for now. To address your first question: Should you download the new program or order the DVD?

The answer to that is the same for most genealogy software. The developers of genealogy programs continually add "bug fixes" and minor upgrades to the latest downloadable versions. Note that this is one hallmark of a good software developer—it's the good ones that add new features, fix bugs, and respond to their users' comments.

If you download Reunion software when you buy it, you'll get the latest version. If you order the DVD, you'll probably still want to download the latest version. DVD access is generally most useful for those who don't have access to broadband Internet.

That's true of software outside the genealogy universe as well. You won't be asked to pay for most of these upgrades, since companies usually charge only for major upgrades

Regarding your PAF files...Even though your Mac probably isn't set up to run PAF, you will need to have an experienced PAF user look at what files you have, to determine how to recover your database.

**Q** I was the victim of unauthorized use of family photos and information that I put up on a social network site for genealogy. A site member copied my photos and published them in a book. The social network site will not take responsibility even though all members had signed terms of use, which in-

**cluded copyright infringement. Are there any articles about protecting one's rights on the Web?**

Whether it's legal or not, people tend to consider anything on the Web fair game. We recommend notifying the book's publisher of the possible copyright infringement. Publishers often require authors to declare that any copyrighted material in their book is used with written permission.


The following statements are from a government website about copyright protection ([www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html](http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html)), (quoted here as it is in the public domain):

In the case of photographs, it is sometimes difficult to determine who owns the copyright and there may be little or no information about the owner on individual copies. Ownership of a "copy" of a photograph—the tangible embodiment of the "work"—is distinct from the "work" itself—the intangible intellectual property. The owner of the "work" is generally the photographer or, in certain situations, the employer of the photographer.

**Your content on the social network site is your intellectual property unless you signed away the rights. Using someone else's photos without permission is unethical and may violate copyright law. To continue:**

Uploading or downloading works protected by copyright without the authority of the copyright owner is an infringement of the copyright owner's exclusive rights of reproduction and/or distribution. Anyone found to have infringed a copyrighted work may be liable for statutory damages up to \$30,000 for each work infringed and, if willful infringement is proven by the copyright owner, that amount may be increased up to \$150,000 for each work infringed. In addition, an infringer of a work may also be liable for the attorney's fees incurred by the copyright owner to enforce his or her rights.

**How much of a copyrighted work can be used legally without permission?**

Under the *fair use* doctrine of the U.S. copyright statute, it is permissible to use limited portions of a work including quotes, for purposes such as commentary, criticism, news reporting, and scholarly reports. ...Whether a particular use qualifies as fair use depends on all the circumstances. 

# Indexing goes local in Santa Clara County

Since 2007, local volunteers have been working diligently in California to index a collection of historical materials at the Santa Clara County Archives. These indexing projects have resulted in five online indexes at [archives.sccgov.org](http://archives.sccgov.org): Indexes for wills, probate cases, recorded map books, naturalization records, and coroner reports.

Without the hard work of these dedicated volunteers, none of these five collections would be indexed, which would make access to these collections nearly impossible for researchers. These indexes are a valuable tool for the archives and for researchers from around the state, country, and world.

Data from the archives' website reflect how popular these indexes are. Since 1 January 2011, the online indexes have been viewed by people from 67 different countries including Romania, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, China, Israel, France, Australia, India, Russia, Ukraine, Mexico, Ireland, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, and Kenya. This includes someone from every continent except Antarctica. In all, more than 5,000 people have viewed these indexes online.

Visitors, emails, and phone calls have requested documents discovered through the online indexes.

- A professor in Sweden, researching Swedes who moved to Santa Clara County in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has found coroner reports to be useful.
- An Alberta, Canada, man visited the archives to research ancestors who briefly lived in Gilroy.
- A physician in Toronto, Canada, was pleased to receive a copy of a coroner report about his great-uncle.
- A North Carolina woman received a copy of a coroner report on a second-great-grandfather.
- A New York City man got copies of his second-great-grandparents' probate cases. His given name was the same as their surname.
- Employees from an architectural firm in Los Angeles flew to San Jose to look at maps in the archives' Recorded Map Book index.

Numerous local researchers have conducted valuable genealogical research using these indexes. Many researchers have filled in holes in their family trees.

New volunteers are welcome and needed. Please contact the archives for indexing hours: Trista Raezer, archivist, County of Santa Clara, 1875 Senter Road, San Jose, CA 95112; email [Trista.Raezer@ceo.sccgov.org](mailto:Trista.Raezer@ceo.sccgov.org); (408) 792-1895; [archives.sccgov.org/](http://archives.sccgov.org/).



## *Santa Clara Archive celebrates fifth anniversary*

Happy anniversary wishes are in order for the Santa Clara County Archives, which celebrates five years of achievement and preservation of county history.

An open house 21 October 2011, 5 to 7 p.m., will feature a sneak peek at the County Supervisors History Project, a presentation by County Archivist Trista Raezer about resources available at the archive, a display of historic documents, tours of the facility, and refreshments. The anniversary party will be at the archives, 1875 Senter Road, San Jose.

To attend, RSVP to (408) 792-1895 by 14 October 2011. 



Santa Clara County, California,  
Hall of Records, c. 1965.





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

## Upcoming SVCGG meetings

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). The group is not affiliated with the LDS Church.

(Richard Rands)

- Reunion for the Mac (Pat Burrow)
- Getting started with Reunion (Deb Callan)
- Getting started in genealogy

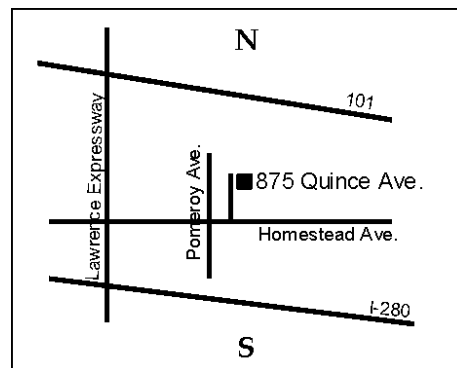
**December, no meeting**

### October 8, 9-11 a.m.

- Swedish research (Richard Rands)
- Digitizing documents (part 2, Janet Brigham)
- Reunion for the Mac (Pat Burrow)
- Getting started with Reunion (Pat Solomon)
- PAF & PCs for beginners

### November 12, 9 to 11 a.m.

- Scrapbooking (Pam Fujii)
- English/Welsh research



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

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

**Late newsletters: mea culpa.** The August and September newsletters were mailed late due to bulk-mail problems with the U.S. Postal Service. Many apologies!