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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

Learning about World War I

By Janet Brigham

A hundred years ago, at this writing, Germany invaded Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany, and World War I was launched. An incident became a conflict engulfing millions of families.

Today the world is still lamenting its lack of peace, 100 years after the war that was supposed to end all wars. For genealogists, the war continues in the legacies now available to descendants of those who were affected.

You may not yet — or may never — have access to an ancestor's World War I military service records (vetrecs.archives.gov), but you do have access to the tone of the time.

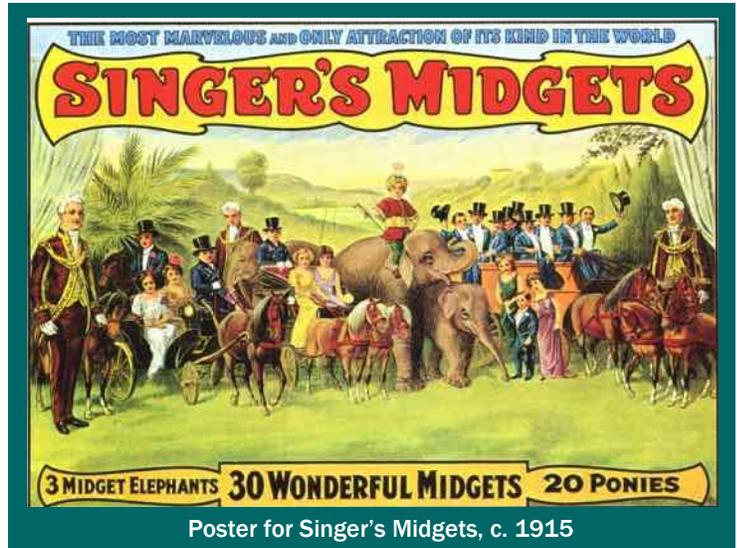
Fold3.com, the premier U.S. military records site, does not have digitized service records from WWI. Those that survive are housed at the National Archives at St. Louis.

Easier to access are records such as federal investigative reports and cablegrams from World War I, now available on Fold3. Fold3 describes the investigative files:

They include tales of espionage during World War I, case files for German aliens who were politically suspect, records pertaining to Mexican neutrality, and reports dealing with alleged violations of Federal laws. Serious, as well as far-fetched accounts will give you a fresh insider's perspective to the history of this time period.

One free example on Fold3 (a subscription site with some free records) is the investigation of Singer's Midgets, a popular 20th century vaudeville

group. A New York man reported the group to the FBI and recommended that "[Leopold] Singer and his whole troop [sic] are dangerous aliens and should be interned." No doubt you already know that internment in this sense is incarceration during wartime. The United States did it to Americans of Japanese ancestry



Poster for Singer's Midgets, c. 1915

during World War II, a few decades later. Whether or not we learn much about Singer's Midgets (an unfortunate label for a troupe with "3 midget elephants," "20 ponies," and "30 wonderful midgets"), we do learn other things from the files, which can help us understand the culture in which our ancestors lived.

I learned recently that shortly before WWI ended, my grandfather — an

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Learning about World War I *(continued)*

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upstanding state legislator and homesteader— was arrested for seditious talk and hoarding; he had sacks of flour to feed his large household through the winter of 1918-1919. The sacks were not hidden, and my grandfather crabbily told local authorities that the government could come take them.

I first read about this situation in old newspapers but was unable to determine what led to and followed the arrest. Recently, in information buried in more than 2.3 million indexed “FBI case files” now available through Fold3’s World War I link, the story has emerged. The picture is complete with self-important local officials, a feisty farmer, and federal agents trying to be patient with overexcited locals.

Until I read the Bureau of Investigation (later the FBI) file, I was baffled by the situation that erupted. Later accounts of my grandfather’s life, including his obituary and later articles, did not mention the arrest or its outcome, and my father (who would’ve been three years old at the time) never mentioned it as part of the family stories. Although the incidents may have resulted in much ado about next to nothing, the facts appeared to be worth pursuing.

A first question involved credibility. A newspaper reporting the arrest also noted that a local draftee who had been declared “delinquent” was actually already in military service in France. Oops. So even if the newspaper got the facts right, did local or federal officials have adequate access to facts? Did they resemble Keystone Cops more than they resembled fictional agents Fox Mulder or Seeley Booth?

The investigation files on Fold3 include a multi-page report and exchange among federal agencies regarding my grandfather’s wheat. The reports of two agents are attached as affidavits. The official exchanges, which include the notation that the Secret Service was *not* investigating the case (implying perhaps that they had no interest in it), show agents bickering about who reported how much wheat, and whether the account was sufficient. Evidently one agent was not specific in counting the sacks of wheat my grandfather had in an outdoor shed. Also muddying the report was the fact that wheat was my grandfather’s primary crop. And the fact that the wheat he had not grown, he had purchased when it was legal to do so.

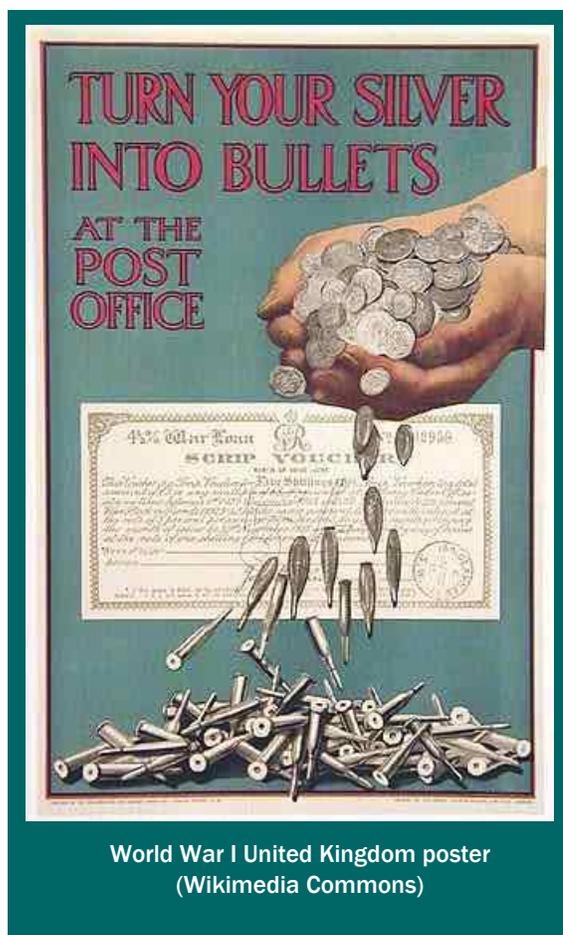
Credibility aside, it appears that the tiff leading to my grandfather’s arrest (and release on his own recognizance) involved whether local agents would pick up the wheat, whether it would be given to merchants in town to sell for profit, and whether my grandfather, then age 61, was expected to deliver it to a government office. The matter was acrimoniously resolved with a request for an extension of time for disposition of the wheat.

Federal agents noted, with apparent distaste, the desire on the part of local authorities to punish my grandfather as an example because of his prominence in his (extremely small) community.

As we know, the war officially ended four months later. I do not know who got the wheat.

I wonder, now, what triggered the complaint about Leo Singer, founder of Singer’s Midgets? Was it merely because he was an Austrian who profited in America?

And what became of Singer’s little people? Remember the Munchkins in the movie of *The Wizard of Oz*? Those were mostly Singer’s Midgets. The next time you watch that movie, ask yourself: Were most of the 124 Munchkin actors actually aliens deserving internment? 



World War I United Kingdom poster
(Wikimedia Commons)



Ask the Doctor *Missing children*

Q My online family tree seems to be missing children in some families. How can I locate missing children who were never listed with the family? I also would like to locate cousins who may be able to contribute to our family's genealogy.

This is a great question, and one that has many possible answers and ramifications. Here are some ways that the Doctor sniffs out incomplete listings of children in a family tree, whether or not the Doctor is the person who entered the information (although, of course, the Doctor does not make mistakes!).

First, let's consider an imaginary Aunt Bessie, who was middle-aged about 1900. As many of us do, she suddenly became interested in doing the family's genealogy. She found that her extended family included lots of grandchildren, grandnieces, and grandnephews whom she added to her records, and then she set the records aside to record more information later.

As time went on, more children were born to members of her extended family; she recorded some, but did not know about others. Aunt Bessie passed her genealogy information on to younger members of her family, but the holes were never filled in. Eventually, her descendants used the information to fill in a personal database and an online tree.

The result: Missing children for an unknown number of families, despite Aunt Bessie's best efforts.

You may run into similar variations on this scenario. Innumerable factors can lead to someone's not being included in a family genealogy. The bottom line is that you want to discover missing individuals in your personal database or online tree, so that you do not perpetrate incomplete information and also so that you can begin to identify close or distant cousins who may have information.

A way to do this is to **scan each family** to look for signs of missing people or empty boxes. Once you identify potentially missing people, you can **search basic sources** online to locate possible people. If the people you identify are younger than, say, 110 years old, you can search for contact information or evidence of death (obituary, entry in an online grave search site, or the Social Security Death Index, at FamilySearch.org/search/collection/1202535).

Census records from 1850 onward also are a

great place to start, since they list the names of all members of the household.

What are some typical signs of missing individuals? Here's a partial list of situations that might indicate one or more missing children:

- Children born several years after a marriage date, or long gaps between birth dates for children
- Apparently unplanned children born later in the marriage of a couple
- A couple with no children or fewer children than was common in the family and the community
- The death of a young spouse, especially the wife, with young children (Look for a subsequent marriage with additional children.)
- Large age difference between spouses, suggesting the possibility of a previous marriage with children
- Adoptions
- Blanks where names should be
- Entries such as *unknown* or *living*, where the individual's name wasn't known or where the individual was still living when the record was entered, but the individual most likely is no longer alive
- The 1900 and 1910 U.S. censuses included information about how many children a woman had given birth to and how many were surviving. This indication of how many children had died can be a starting point for finding records about those children.
- When a birth record suggests that a child has more or fewer siblings than your records indicate, this indicates the need to identify those who are missing or who do not belong in the family.

Also, remember that in FamilySearch Family Tree, many online trees have been merged, and incomplete or even spurious data may have been merged into your otherwise-perfect tree. In trees on commercial sites, many tree-builders do little more than copy other trees, so you will want to do your own research to verify information. 

How I found it Pros and cons of indexes

By Richard Rands

Recently the indexing managers at FamilySearch.org announced a new push to break the record set back in 2012 of more than 49,000 indexers all working over a 24 hour period. A new record was set in July 2014 involving 66,511 individual volunteers worldwide indexing records online during a 24-hour period. More than 5.7 million records became digitally searchable by name as a result of the event.

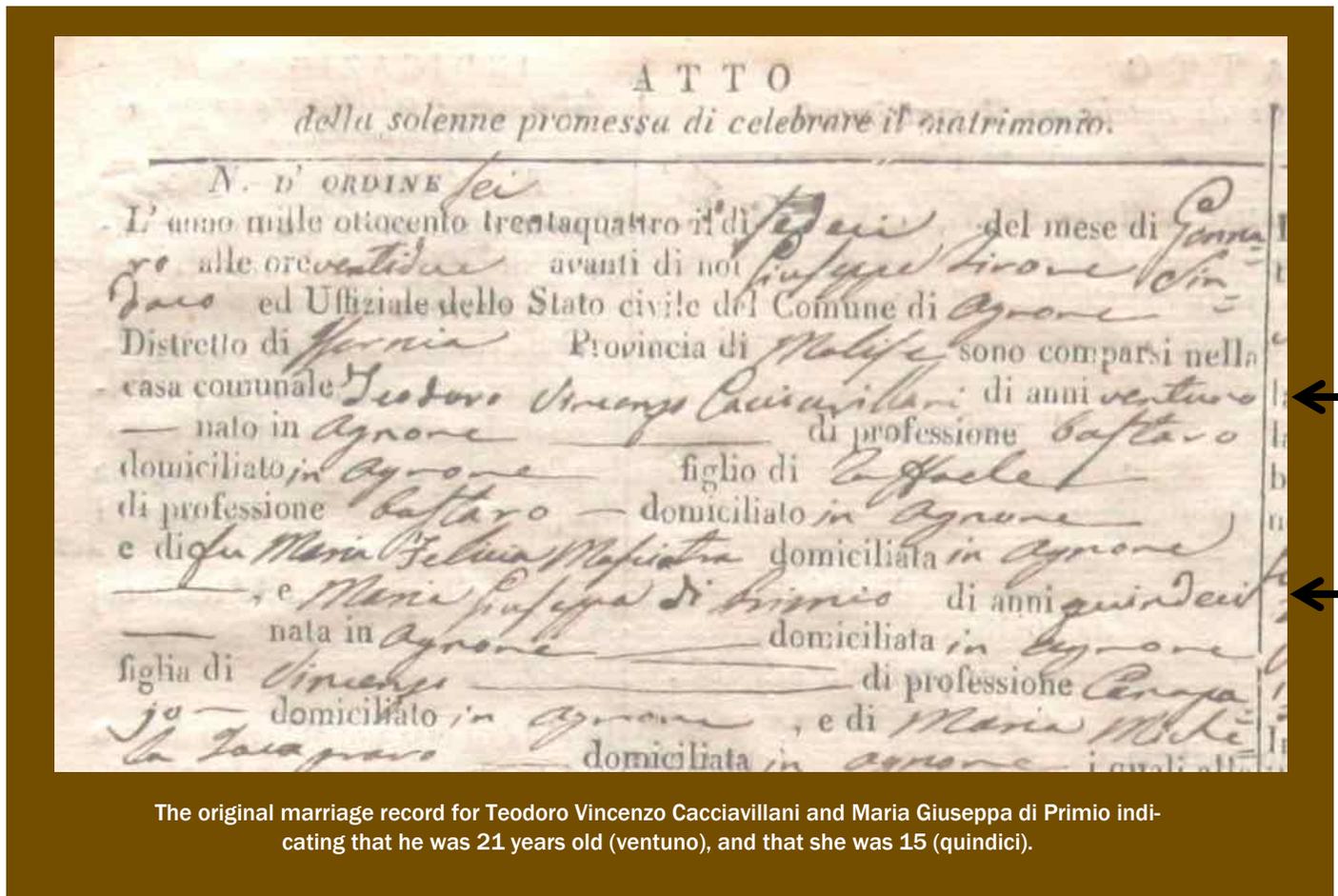
It is difficult to comprehend the hours of genealogy research that may be saved because we will now be able to use an online search engine to locate these millions of new records that may pertain to our family histories. The Indexing project is an amazing contribution that is made possible because we live in the era of the search engine. Everyone should join in and

do some indexing.

Yet there is a drawback to the indexes that are such a boon for our research. I have seen over and over again that a researcher will find an entry in an index that fits the criteria for what the researcher is seeking, enter the details from the index into the family history records, and then leave it at that. Some researchers even document their work using the index entry as the source.

Indexes are marvelous tools to help speed up our research, but they can be stumbling blocks if we don't make the effort to check that the original record is exactly what we are looking for. As a rule, we must consider the index entry as a way to narrow

(Continued on page 5)



The original marriage record for Teodoro Vincenzo Cacciavillani and Maria Giuseppa di Primio indicating that he was 21 years old (ventuno), and that she was 15 (quindici).

How I found it *(continued)*

Principali			Nascita			Battesimo		Padre		Madre	
Surname	Christian Name	Sex	Date y/m/d	Date y/m/d	Location	Date y/m/d	Location	Surname	Christian Name	Surname	Christian Name
di Primio	Maria Giuseppe	F	1818/09/28	1818/09/28	Agnone	1818/09/30		di Primio	Vincenzo	Iacapraro	Maria Michele

Knowing Maria Giuseppa's correct age, her index record was easy to locate.

(Continued from page 4)

down the possible record of a record for our research problem, but they are still someone's interpretation and transcription of the original data.

Recently I encountered a critical example of how the use of an index entry without checking further led to linking an incorrect individual as the wife in a family. The example comes from a project I am working on that involves the transcriptions of hundreds of thousands of original birth, baptismal, marriage, death, and census records from a small village in the highlands above Naples, Italy.

The transcribed records, which cover a time period from the 17th century up to the early part of the 20th century, were created by a small team of local native Italians who sent them to me to create a searchable index.

Each of the index records includes a reference to the original record that has been digitized, making it possible to refer back to digital copies of the original documents for each index entry. Think of this as a private indexing project similar to what FamilySearch.org is doing on a much broader scale.

Using the index entries, a researcher determined that a couple whose names were Teodoro Vincenzo Cacciavillani and Maria Giuseppa di Primio had six children whose births occurred between 1838 and 1859. It seemed clear that the children were all from the same couple, because the names of the parents in the index entries were all the same, and the children's ages were in a reasonable sequence over the 20-year period in question. Furthermore, the index contained no other children for that village with the same combination of parents.

Because the father of the family, Teodoro Vincenzo,

was known to be in the direct line of the family this project pertains to, we already knew enough of his details, including his birth and marriage dates, to locate him in the index. His parents' names in the index entries matched what was already known from family records. I reviewed the digital copy of Teodoro's original baptismal record to verify that his parents' names had been transcribed accurately into the index record. So far, everything seemed to be on solid ground.

The next task was to pin down the mother's details. This is where the index caused a problem. A search of the index records turned up the birth for one entry, a Maria Giuseppa di Primio. The researcher concluded that she must be the mother. Her birth date

was two years before that of Teodoro, but the researcher concluded that since hers was the only listing that contained the correct name, she must be the mother. A situation leading to this kind of conclusion was that although the index entries for each child contained the parents' names, they did not in-

clude the ages of the parents.

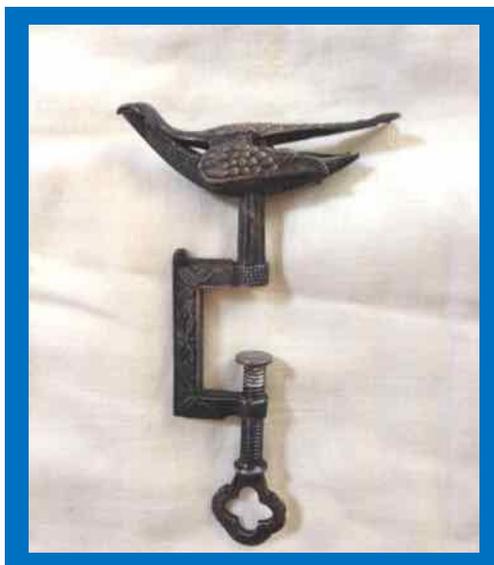
If the mother were two years older than the father, the parents' ages in the children's birth records must be consistently about two years apart with the mother being the older of the two. The index records did not show this level of detail.

My skepticism caused me to use the marriage index to locate the image of the original marriage record. There I discovered that when this couple was married in 1834, Teodoro Vincenzo was 21 and Maria Giuseppa was 15. The Maria Giuseppa who had turned up in the index search was the wrong Maria Giuseppa de Primio. The researcher had used a search criterion that was too narrow, and as a result he missed spouses with a six-year age difference.

(Continued on page 6)

My skepticism caused me to use the marriage index to locate the image of the original marriage record.

Whadya think this is?



This item belonged to the second-great aunt of SVC GG's own Fred Struve. Whadya think it is? (Answer is on page 8.)

- A. A weather vane.
- B. A woodworking C clamp
- C. A yarn winder to transfer yarn from a skein into a ball.
- D. A nineteenth-century surgical clamp.
- E. A sewing clamp for a home sewing setup.
- F. A pheasant-hunter's clamp to secure a gun to a hunter's blind.

How I found it (*continued*)

(Continued from page 5)

Knowing that the couple had a six-year age difference, I needed but a few minutes to help him turn up the birth record for the correct Maria Giuseppa de Primio.

You may have noticed that most genealogy search engines give users the option of making a search with plus or minus 1 year, 2 years, 5 years, and 10 years. In this case, only the ± 10 -year option would have picked up the correct mother.

The next step to straighten out the family required that I dig up the original birth records for each of the six children to verify that the ages of their parents corresponded to the correct ages. When I did this check, it became clear that

the last two children did not belong to the family, because the parent's ages recorded in the birth records were significantly different from those Teodoro Vincenzo and Maria Giuseppa would have had.

The bottom line is that an index entry is the beginning – not the end – of your research. 

 **Theodore Abener**
Washington, Death Certificates, 1907-1960

[Attach to Family Tree](#)

 COPY |  PRINT |  SOURCE BOX |  SHARE

Name:	Theodore Abener
Event Date:	29 Sep 1960
Event Place:	Seattle, King, Washington
Gender:	Male
Race (Original):	white
Age (Formatted):	50 years 2 days
Birth Date:	27 Sep 1910
Birthplace:	Seattle, Washington
Father's Name:	John A. Abener
Mother's Name:	Hulda Amussa

GS Film number: **2034037**, Digital Folder Number: **4224600**, Image Number: **2294**, Reference ID: **18904**

 No image available

[Search collection](#)
[About this collection](#)

An example of an unrelated record collection mislabeled Death Certificates; the actual information is an index entry with no image available. The original certificates are on Family History Library microfilm 2034037. Because the image is indexed but not available digitally online, the researcher should access the film, locate the image, and copy the information. After creating a digital image of the microfilm image, the researcher can attach it to a personal database as a source document.

Review: *Mastering Genealogical Proof*

Thomas W. Jones. (2013). *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, Special Topics Series Publication 107.178 pages. ISBN 978-1-935815-07-5.

See also: Board for Certification of Genealogists,(2014). "The Genealogist's Code," *Genealogy Standards*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Washington, DC: Board for Certification of Genealogists), www.bcgcertification.org/aboutbcg/code.html

This is an abridged version, used by permission, of a review in the Spring 2014 issue of *Rodziny*, the quarterly publication of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, Spring 2014.

Reviewed by Leonard F. Jakubczak

I was awed by the book and its contents: just what I wanted to master. A master genealogist who helped write the evolving standards of genealogical proof and who teaches them is the author.

I liked the approach; the book is written more like a math book than a cookbook. Each chapter has a set of problems relevant to its content and their solutions, so that we can immediately apply its contents and begin to acquire skills. I worked through it, and "worked" is the operative term. I learned new approaches and skills that I didn't have even after 20

years of genealogical research and writing articles. Proof isn't just use of a single source to support a grandfather's birth date—that's a start, but more is involved. The book tells us what, how, and why.

What is the Genealogical Proof Standard? (See "The Genealogical Proof Standard Explained," *PastFinder*, August 2013, 24(8), p. 3.) The GPS is the genealogy field's standard for determining whether a conclusion is acceptable or not. Jones lists the standard's interdependent components (below).

According to Jones, failure to meet even one of these criteria indicates that more work remains to be done. Likewise, when assessing another's work, such failure indicates caution, so as not to introduce error needlessly into one's own work or that of others

using one's work.

To immediately apply and reinforce the knowledge or skill presented, each chapter poses appropriate questions, and a back section of the book provides answers. To answer some questions, however, readers must painstakingly analyze real-life cases in Appendices A and B. I felt challenged by the length

(Continued on page 8)

I will not publish or publicize anything I know to be false, doubtful, or unproved.
—The Genealogist's Code

Element of the GPS	Contribution to Credibility
Reasonably exhaustive search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes examination of a wide range of high quality sources Minimizes the probability that undiscovered evidence will overturn a too-hasty conclusion
Complete and accurate citation of sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates the extent of the search and the quality of the sources Allows others to replicate the steps taken to reach the conclusion. (Inability to replicate the research casts doubt on the conclusion.)
Analysis and correlation of the collected information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates sound interpretation of the data contributed by each source Ensures that the conclusion reflects all the evidence
Resolution of conflicting evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantiates the conclusion's credibility. (If conflicting evidence is not resolved, a credible conclusion is not possible.)
Soundly reasoned, coherently written conclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates the possibility that the conclusion is based on bias, preconception, or inadequate appreciation of the evidence Explains how the evidence led to the conclusion

Proof standard details, from www.bcgcertification.org. (From *PastFinder*, August 2013, p. 3.)

What didja think it was? And were ya right?

ANSWER to question posed on page 6: E. Sewing clamp. 

Review: *Genealogical Proof Standard*

(Continued from page 7)

(10 pages each) and complexity of these cases, and would have preferred shorter, simpler cases.

In the concluding chapter, Jones urges us to continue learning by consulting works listed in the book's "Reading and Source List." Pick a research problem and apply the GPS criteria to the phases of the research and write-up. Thus, we find ourselves more and more proficient as we apply the discipline of focused and sys-

Upcoming meetings

The Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy 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 any church or other organization.

9 August 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Ohio research
- Evernote for genealogy research
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Getting started in genealogy

13 September 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Genealogy research, Bulgarian style, by Gail Chaid
- New genealogy search sites, part 2
- Research with Lesly
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Getting started, Q & A 

tematic research, documentation, reasoning, and writing. The payoff: A work of value for future generations, not only of one's family, but also for other genealogists to appreciate and build on.

I recommend this book for serious intermediate and advanced genealogists. For beginners, a simpler introduction to the Genealogical Proof Standard may be found in Christine Rose's *Genealogical Proof Standard: Building a Solid Case* (2009; 3rd ed. [San Jose, California: CR Publications]).

Once the tenderfoot genealogist gets the overall view of the forest, he or she may want to investigate the individual "trees" in Jones's book.

Although an index would have facilitated finding specific "leaves" on those trees, I highly recommend Jones's *Mastering Genealogical Proof* for the reference shelf in every genealogical library.

Thomas W. Jones, Ph.D., C. G., is co-editor of *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* and a fellow of several genealogical societies. He teaches at Boston University. 

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. We are based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California; members live all over the world.

SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family his-

PastFinder

First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013-14
First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012
National Genealogical Society

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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

torians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

PastFinder is published monthly except December. It is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter digitally by emailed link. 