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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

Genealogy for love, money, or both

By Janet Brigham

My mother's aunts used to spend many hours each week working through microfilm of their family's Danish and British ancestry. They had no computers (nor did anyone else), but they were fortunate to have access to wide-carriage typewriters for filling in family group sheets and pedigree charts.

Those sheets and charts have long since been entered into personal genealogy software — my husband first did this for me before we were married, and he joked that eventually he would do a "match-merge" on our data files. It sounded endlessly romantic.

My great-aunts were the genealogy pioneers in my mother's family. Their sister, my grandmother, kept many historically relevant and precious bits of information and even family secrets too volatile to tell the family. She stashed these bits and pieces in cardboard boxes in a daughter's basement storage room — a dry, dark room, fortunately.

Now we live in a brave new world of genealogy information. We no longer get typewriter envy over a wide carriage, and microfilm is becoming digital. Although much still remains tucked away in shoeboxes and closets, much is available and accessible.

Two huge genealogy search sites that bring the shoeboxes to our computers are Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org. Ancestry, a subscription site, is available free at Family History Centers and many libraries. FamilySearch, on the other hand, offers free online access to anyone. Because these two sites are so ubiquitous in coverage, access, and usage, SVCGG often includes them in classes and articles. They are the two most frequently mentioned sites that SVCGG members report wanting to learn about (p. 2). Other sites are trying to be as popular. The best way to see if any of these websites will meet your search needs is to take them for a test drive, if you can.

A caveat

Some people find it troublesome to go to a search site, start a trial search, and immediately be asked for billing information before being able to continue with the trial. Some companies consider that an accepted practice. Some consumers do not.

SVCGG has heard no small number of complaints about this business practice. What often happens is that the company begins billing for services as soon as the trial period ends, without further notification, unless the customer proactively cancels. Not all companies do this. Most personal database software has no-strings free trials.

One reason we are so blessed with good choices among personal genealogy

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Outside and Inside

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Genealogy for love, money, or both *(continued)*

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database programs (see p. 7) appears to be the involvement and dedication of talented developers and programmers who care about family history. Several of them who have spoken at SVCGG meetings have made their software their life's work. Since creating useful genealogy software is their life's work, their full products and support services are not free, but neither are they overpriced.

Differences in business approaches can reflect differences in passion for genealogy, which can be a vocation as well as an avocation. As we learned at the RootsTech 2014 meeting earlier this year, the nickname for genealogy-related businesses is now *the industry*. Or, more properly, *The Industry* (March 2014, vol. 25, no. 3, *PastFinder*, p. 1)

The term *genealogy industry* is one of the tags that *Family Tree Magazine* Editor Diane Haddad uses to categorize content on her Genealogy Insider blog (blog.familytreemagazine.com/insider/default.aspx) — almost as if the magazine weren't part of the industry. Since it is a for-profit organization with paid employees, *Family Tree Magazine* does appear to be part of The Industry. As part of providing considerable help for genealogy hobbyists, it publishes many reviews and recommendations.

What genealogy search sites do SVCGG members want to learn about?

FamilySearch.org	89%
Ancestry.com	88%
MyHeritage.com	46%
FindMyPast.com	40%
FindMyPast for British research	34%
Scotland's People	25%

Being part of The Industry is not evil, nor is the term an indictment of genealogical products. That said, an important line divides companies that generate products many of us find useful from those companies that are merely trying to cash in on the apparent popularity of family history.

Buying online subscriptions to all new search sites would push the financial limits of most of us. Nearly every day we hear of new sites and software that promise to burst through our genealogical brick walls and use new technologies to find previously unknown relatives and ancestors. Some new tools work; some do not. When they do not, let the developers know, so they can fix the bugs. An example: The first time I used a site featuring facial recognition software to match relatives, the software told me it could not detect a face in my picture. I told them, and used the site's many other features. It no longer focuses as strongly on facial recognition.

Use free trials, but be sure to note if and when paid subscriptions kick in. Read reviews, go to classes, and ask around. It's a new world.

Managing free LDS-only invitations to subscription genealogy sites

Several websites are now available in free editions to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), as part of a collaboration with FamilySearch.org, which is sponsored by the LDS Church. Offers of free membership to Ancestry.com, FindMyPast.com, and MyHeritage.com are being emailed to church members.

SVCGG members have tried the free memberships and found two limitations, both easily resolved.

First, if you already have an Ancestry.com subscription, we recommend against adding the new free subscription to it. This is an option at sign-up. We have received reports that adding the free subscription to an existing subscription can cause problems with existing online Ancestry trees. We have inquired about this with Ancestry without an answer.

Second, with a free LDS subscription you may encounter a *paywall,* or point beyond which access is limited to paying subscribers. Paying is your choice. We generally prefer noting what we were searching for and then finding the information in the free versions at the Family History Center, or through an individual's paid subscription.

Since only a small minority of SVCGG members are in the LDS Church, these issues do not affect the entire group. We provide these recommendations for those SVCGG LDS members who have not yet signed up. If you should have received an invitation but haven't, notify FamilySearch through its Feedback link (see bottom of FamilySearch screen).

Ask the Doctor *What's missing?*

Q I have been reluctant to use any of the popular genealogy personal database programs because they all have a serious flaw that I consider critical: They do not provide a method for creating and tracking hypothetical or unproven relationships for individuals I am working on.

The circumstances lead me to believe I likely will someday uncover the precise relationship, but for the time being, there is no place to enter them in a database. My spreadsheet program allows me that capability, but I lose all the other nice features of a genealogy program. What do you recommend I do?

This is not a new issue. In fact, a professional genealogist named Peter Clifford (of Forefathers Ltd.) wrote a brilliant blog about this in July 2012, "Genealogy software – the next generation" (www.forefathers.co.uk/blog/16-genealogy-software-the-benefits-and-the-dangers). Peter was right on the mark when he pointed out that the genealogy programs we are familiar with limit us to recording *facts*, such as names, dates, places, and relationships that we have pretty well substantiated.

He wrote that most of us don't have *facts* when we start our research on an individual. We have a variety of details that over time add up to facts. And the software should allow us to record and track the diverse details that we sift through to establish a fact. *The Doctor recommends reading Peter's blog*.

Since you have brought up this insightful question again, here are some of the Doctor's thoughts. I shudder to imagine what many genealogy databases would look like if users were allowed to enter lots and lots of unproven data, and then feel their work is done, never to go back and resolve the discrepancies. We already have enough junk genealogy as it is, without software that encourages it.

But since you have made the effort to learn the features of a spreadsheet program that allows you to build a genealogy database, plus you have figured out how to represent all the possible relationships for individuals, here are a few suggestions for how to solve your objections to using personal genealogy database software and how to avail yourself of its great features at the same time.

Whenever I discover an individual or a family who appears to belong in my database, I create a record or records for them and include what I have uncovered about them. However, I insert a question mark at the beginning of the surname(s). Other special characters could be used. The question mark causes all of these individuals' records to sort together at the beginning of the Individual List screen, where I can easily track them.

To keep family members together, I include a common digit after the question mark for everyone in the family. As I research the possible relationships between this family and my existing entries, I enter my hypotheses in the Notes. Once I resolve the relationship(s), I create the link and remove the question mark (and any additional digit) from the surname field.

This methodology does not allow me to print out a hypothetical pedigree chart, but the use of a unique identifier in the surname field allows me to readily recognize their existence in the database, or to generate custom reports to keep them on my mind.

Here is another suggestion for circumstances in which you have identified an individual, but you have several possible families he or she might belong to. Enter the individual into your database, and then link the individual to each of the potential parents with a nonbiological relationship. Some of the software programs allow an "unknown" parental relationship; others allow a "challenged" relationship.

This method will identify these individuals in the family charts, clearly identifying the relationship as non-standard, and reminding you to not forget the issue. Once the issue is resolved, it is a simple matter to update, putting in the correct relationship and removing the others. In all of these suggestions, it is always easy to delete the individual if he or she turns out to be unrelated.

Then, of course, there is the ever-popular technique of entering the information on paper (or papyrus, vellum, lipstick on a mirror, or marker on a whiteboard . . . you pick). The Doctor prefers a spiral-bound notebook with pages of lined paper. Each potentially related individual can be listed on a separate page, along with handwritten entries as your research progresses.

If necessary, you can use a ringed binder that allows you to insert pages whenever necessary. For sure, a word processor, spreadsheet, or database Research Notes also can accomplish this same thing.

How I found it Eastern European family box

By Gail Chaid

The box was from my mother's closet. You know the type — the cardboard box with all the stuff from decades ago that no one knew what to do with. I inherited it. In it were letters from my grandparents during the World War I era, from 1914 to 1919. Back and forth they wrote. She was in Bulgaria. He was in the United States. The letters were written in Cyrillic, an alphabet common to Slavic languages.

I began the quest in 2010 to uncover family history through the letters. Along the way, I met those on a similar quest for their eastern European ancestors.

I used recommended research techniques, joined genealogy groups, attended classes and seminars, and searched websites in search of my elusive family history in Bulgaria.

Finding records in the United States was comparatively easy. Also, I had original documents my mother had saved. However, the details of their story in Bulgaria was a challenge. A country like Bulgaria, which was overrun for centuries by other governments, and where boundaries changed from war to war, made the quest harder.

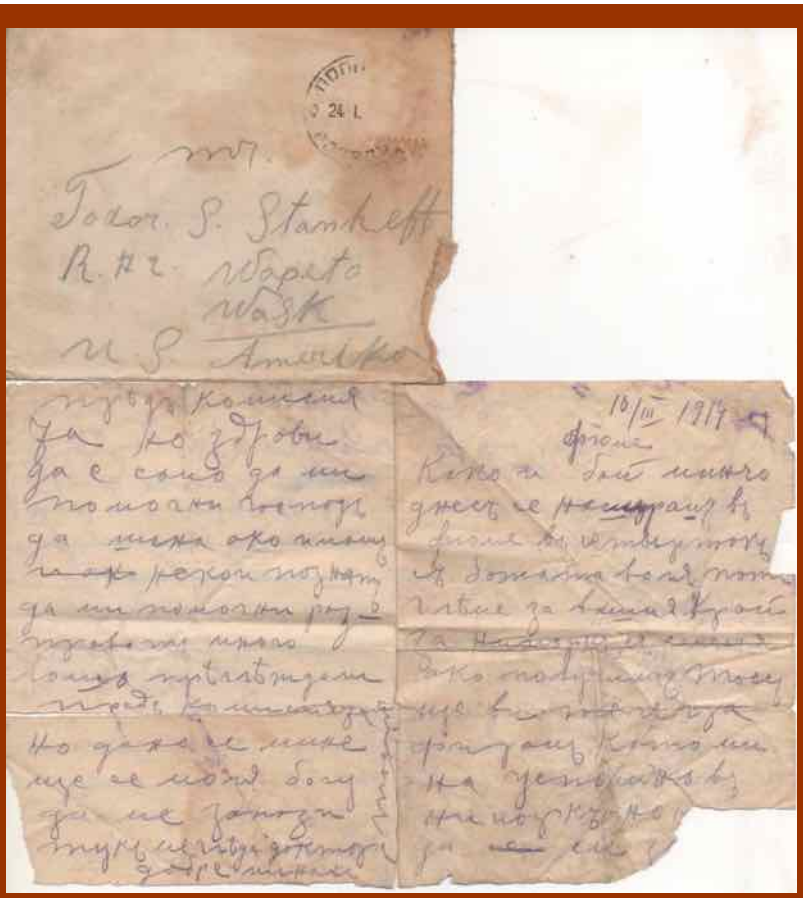
In addition, women's names are different than men's, and the algorithm used in online genealogy search routines wasn't adequate.

The more help I sought, the more I felt that I was running headlong into a genealogical black hole. Some experts either gave me a blank stare or just shrugged their shoulders. An expert at Ancestry Day suggested I go to the Berkeley campus. "They have nine libraries," he said. "You might find something there."

He was right in one sense. Universities have lots of information, and it is beneficial to learn what is being taught and which faculty members might help me make connections.

My quest turned to finding someone who could translate the letters my grandparents wrote in Cyril-

(Continued on page 5)



Shown is the first page of a letter from the author's grandfather, Theodore. In a letter home, he wrote: "April,1914: I passed joyfully through Romania, Serbia, the whole of Austria, from there on the steamboat on the water from Italy, Spain, Portugal, part of England. The great Atlantic Ocean came and we traveled on it 22 days.

"New York showed up. I got off and entered without problems. I got on a nice and joyful American train. I crossed many states and came all the way to here, Yakima, Washington. They met us very well. Ah, how joyful it was the whole first week. I was so excited, I did not sleep. One of our neighbors had been here first and came back to Bulgaria, and at the wedding of a friend, told me how great America was.

"Do not miss this chance. Go to America now. So I did. I am not sorry." (Translated from Bulgarian.)

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 4)

lic. I had been providing genealogical updates to a friend who happened to attend a play, read the program, and noticed that the costume designer was Bulgarian and was on the faculty of San Diego State University.

I emailed the professor and asked if she could translate the letters. She replied that she could not, but she referred me to someone who could. He, in turn, found me a translator. The translator found a genealogist/historian (through Facebook) who was in the Bulgarian town of my grandparents.

Remarkably, the genealogist in Bulgaria was instrumental in preserving the Eastern Orthodox church records that included my grandfather's records of birth and baptism from 1889. During a church renovation, the genealogist walked two blocks to the church to ask for any materials he could use in the town's historical museums, which he managed. Persons at the church gave him all the church records from the 1800s. If the genealogist had not asked, the workers might have thrown out all those books.

I learned my great-grandfather's name and occupation from those saved books. He was a blacksmith.

When visiting Bulgaria in May 2014, we went to Varna, a Bulgarian port on the Black Sea from which many emigrants left. They could not just take a train to a city in Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece, France, or Germany to then come to the United States; they may have left from Varna.

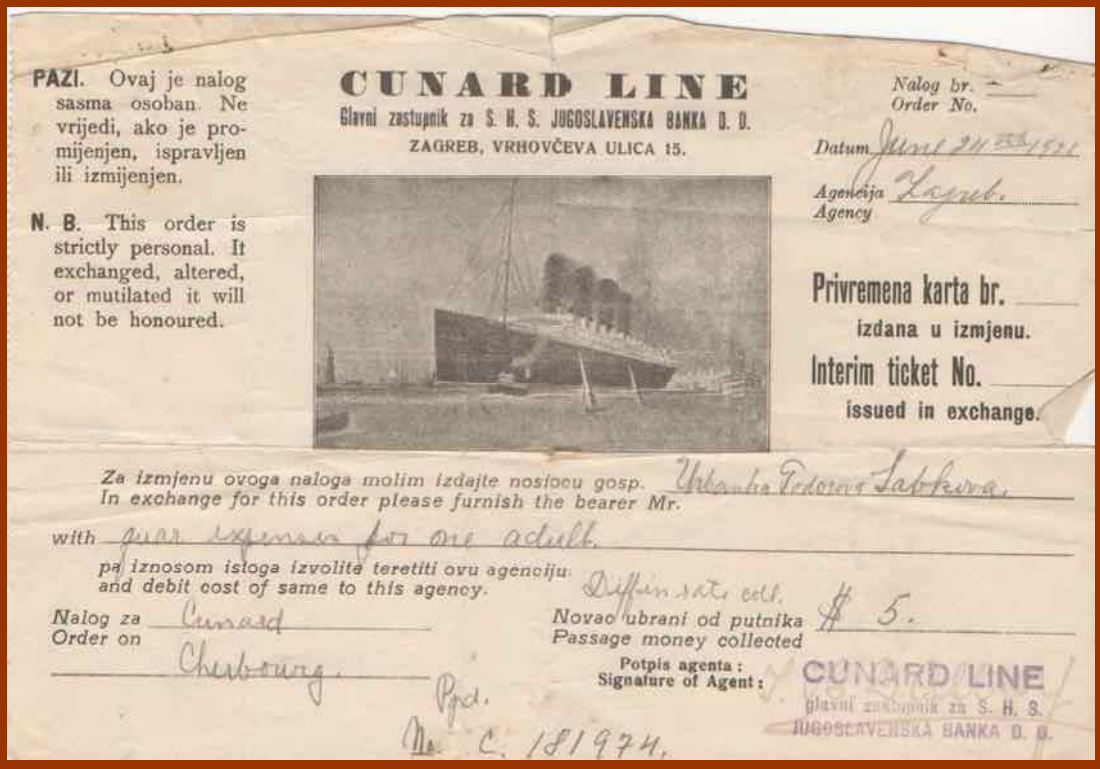
Also, countries needing immigrant workers advertised in Bulgaria. When Argentina needed workers, many eastern Europeans moved to Argentina. I learned to research where workers were needed.

A third-class steerage ticket to America was less than US$5. Immigrants came through Ellis Island and learned where jobs were available. Some went to work in the steel industry in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a city that now has some 75 ethnic groups

Railroad jobs were available in many locations, including Montana and Illinois. I read of one immigrant who found a job in Hammond, Indiana, where he made $1.60 a day. He and three other men pooled their resources and bought beef liver, brains, and hearts for pennies. They cooked the meat with onions and found that four men could eat for 25 cents a day.

Friends in genealogy classes suggested I look for contacts at cultural centers. Although I found no cultural centers when I started looking in 2010, advances in technology have made it easier to find and connect with cultural centers, churches, schools, universities, and places where records are archived.

For example, the Bulgarian-Macedonian National Educational and Educational Cultural Center in



PAZI. Ovaj je nalog sasma osoban. Ne vrijedi, ako je promijenjen, ispravljen ili izmijenjen.

N. B. This order is strictly personal. It exchanged, altered, or mutilated it will not be honoured.

CUNARD LINE
Glavni zastupnik za S. H. S. JUGOSLAVENSKA BANKA D. D.
ZAGREB, VRHOVČEVA ULICA 15.

Nalog br. / Order No.
Datum June 24th 1921
Agencija / Agency Zagreb.

Privremena karta br. izdana u izmjenu.
Interim ticket No. issued in exchange.

Za izmjenu ovoga naloga molim izdajte nosiocu gosp. Urbanka Todorova Labkova.
In exchange for this order please furnish the bearer Mr.
with quar expenses for one adult.
pa iznosom istoga izvolite teretiti ovu agenciju.
and debit cost of same to this agency.

Nalog za / Order on Cunard Cherbourg.

Novac ubrani od putnika / Passage money collected $ 5.
Diffin sat. coll.

Potpis agenta: / Signature of Agent: CUNARD LINE glavni zastupnik za S. H. S. JUGOSLAVENSKA BANKA D. D.

Ppd.
No. C. 181974.

This was a ticket to America for the author's grandmother, on the Cunard Line.

Whadya think this is?

Whadya think this vintage item is? (Answer is on page 8.)

A. An arrow fletching jig

B. A horseshoe nail hole drilling jig

C. Wire cutting machine

D. Skeet launching machine

E. A fruit pitter

F. An apple corer

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 5)

Pittsburgh (bmnecc.org/) now has an improved website that makes information easier to access. The center's board maintains contact with the other ethnic and community groups in the area.

In Balboa Park, San Diego, the International Cottages each represent a country, with 33 represented (sdhpr.org/guide.html). All of the houses have contacts who may be able to help move your search forward. The houses offer classes in languages and writing, and they support cultural events. Look for similar opportunities in your area (such as the Nationality Rooms at the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, with digital materials (nationalityrooms.pitt.edu/archive-resources).

Check for film seminars in your area that feature cinema from your country of interest. It is another way to learn and to meet people who may further your research.

When I was doing general searches on the web, I found eastern European university classes and other learning opportunities throughout the United States. Look for history, culture, and linguistics resources. Keep asking, updating, and moving forward.

Also, search again for terms you searched for previously. The web is constantly changing and expanding. Recently I looked again for Bulgarian cultural connections in the Bay Area. In 2010 I found nothing. Recently I found Eastern Orthodox churches nearby and a Bulgarian school that opened in 2012 in Sunnyvale, California. Both offer potential connections and cultural activities to enhance my knowledge and genealogy research.

Search again for terms you searched for previously. The web is constantly changing and expanding.

If your research involves European ancestors, one of the best things you can do is to get the *Family Tree Guidebook to Europe: Your Essential Guide to Trace Your Genealogy in Europe,* by Allison Dolan and the editors of *Family Tree Magazine*.

It is packed with helpful maps, history, timelines and resources from 35 countries and areas including Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, Scandinavia, France, the Benelux region, Germanic regions, Poland, eastern Europe, Russia and the Baltic, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and areas known for European Jewish ancestry. Published in 2013, this book is invaluable for finding hard-to-find European ancestors. You will still have a search, but at least this book points to a trail.

Keep searching, have fun, and learn history and culture along the way. Насладете се на пътуването! (Enjoy the ride!)

Personal database software, going and coming

The website GenReviews includes user-reviews of up to 834 genealogy software products. Paramount among these products is *personal genealogy database software*, which allows you to organize, document, and share the full details of your research.

If you do not yet use such software — if, perhaps, your genealogy information is only in an online tree — it's time to rethink that choice. You can use both an online tree and personal database software.

In this issue, we list some popular PC programs, including one that is being discontinued. In the October 2014 issue, we will mention popular and promising Macintosh programs.

The Master Genealogist. Wholly Genes, Inc., announced at the end of July 2014 that it would be discontinuing its personal genealogy database software, The Master Genealogist (TMG), as of September 2014. Technical support will continue through 31 December 2014, and the user-to-user discussion board will remain hosted online through the whollygenes.com website. The full product and upgrades will be sold through September.

Personal Ancestral File (PAF). This software, created initially by Gaylon Findlay of Incline Software, was distributed free to millions of users around the world. The sponsor, now known as FamilySearch, discontinued support of PAF in 2013. However, it is available (parowansoftware.com) and has active online support groups (scroll down at www.cyndislist.com/familysearch/paf/).

Ancestral Quest. This software, which has evolved well beyond its much-used PAF roots, is now in version 14. Like most genealogy personal database software, it has numerous features that make research easier to organize and publish.

One feature that particularly sets it apart is its collaboration capability. This allows multiple collaborators — for example, you and a cousin — to "check out" the latest version of your genealogy file from an online collaboration site, make updates to the file, and "check in" the modified file. In this system, all collaborators can access a read-only version of the latest file at any time, but only one person can make changes at a time. This is easier than having one person re-enter others' changes into a master file.

What personal database software programs do SVCGG members use?

Personal Ancestral File	30%
RootsMagic	25%
Family Tree Maker	24%
Reunion	24%
Legacy	14%
Ancestral Quest	13%

Ancestral Quest, a product of Incline Software, is downloadable in a free trial version, and in full version at www.ancquest.com/AQBasics.htm . The page also links to a comparison of the Basics and full versions.

Legacy Family Tree. Legacy is notable not only because of its many features and its interface, but also because the company sponsors webinars on topics not necessarily tied to Legacy products. Thus, Millennia Software's Legacy Family Tree is part of the group that we consider the friendly landscape of genealogy software providers.

As do Ancestral Quest and RootsMagic (below), Legacy provides responsive support. Its representatives (as well as its creator) attend genealogy conferences, answer questions, include wish-list items in new versions of software, and thus build a loyal following among genealogy enthusiasts. With a loyal following come online user support sites and local or regional support groups. All of these programs provide assistance in source documentation that was still evolving a decade ago.

RootsMagic. Now well into version 6, RootsMagic continues to provide a comfortable home for users who appreciate its straightforward interface and its many features. The RootsMagic website (rootsmagic.com) has numerous tutorials on using the software. Innovations such as RootsMagic-to-Go enhance the flexibility and utility of RootsMagic.

A September 5 announcement indicated that a new MacBridge program will run a version of RootsMagic 6 on a Mac. A few PC RootsMagic 6 features will not work with this approach; in the meantime, RootsMagic is continuing to work on a native Mac-based RootsMagic product. Running the MacBridge program (at a download cost of $10 to $15) allows a Mac to run a purchased version of RootsMagic 6. More about this in the next issue.

Family Tree Maker. In recent years, SVCGG has held only one or two Family Tree Maker classes. Our surveys (the latest was in June 2014) indicate that about one-fourth of our members use FTM,

(Continued on page 8)

What didja think it was? And were ya right?

Answer: A. A vintage arrow fletching machine.

The accuracy of an arrow's flight depends heavily on the precise placement of the fletch, or feathers attached at the rear of an arrow's shaft. The feathers must be perpendicular to the shaft to create stability, yet slightly curved to add spin, in the same way that rifling causes a bullet to travel straight.

This jig holds the shaft of an arrow to allow the user to apply the fletching and secure it with fine thread or glue.

PC genealogy software, going and coming

(Continued from page 7)

which is prompting the SVCGG board to plan class tutorials and articles for coming months. These choices are driven by the members' needs and requests.

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.

13 September 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Eastern European research
- Genealogy search sites, part 2
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Reunion 10 basics
- Research with Richard

11 October 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Indentured servants have genealogies, too
- Comparison of online trees
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Reunion 10 basics
- Research with Lesly
- Getting started Q&A

FTM is marketed and used widely, largely because it is inextricably linked to and integrated with Ancestry.com. Its features have expanded and changed over the years. Its users have formed support groups, which are listed in the "Ancestry.com - Message Boards - Family Tree Maker Software" link on Cyndi's List at cyndislist.com/software/ftm .

Where to start? If you are starting from the beginning with personal database software or if you are migrating from one program to another, you can start by downloading the free trial version.

Import a GEDCOM file. Enter some names, dates, and other information. Enter a source. Attach a digital file. Print out a report or a chart. Look through the user guide and the online resources. Soon you'll know what you prefer. Then try a full version.

PastFinder

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

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Email: siliconvalleygroup@earthlink.net

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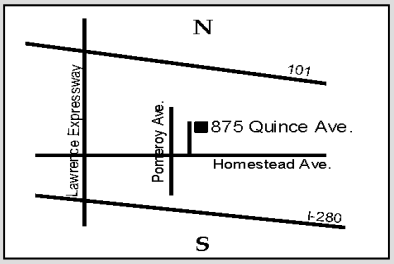

Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG, the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, is a nonprofit group of more than 500 genealogy users. 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 historians 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.