



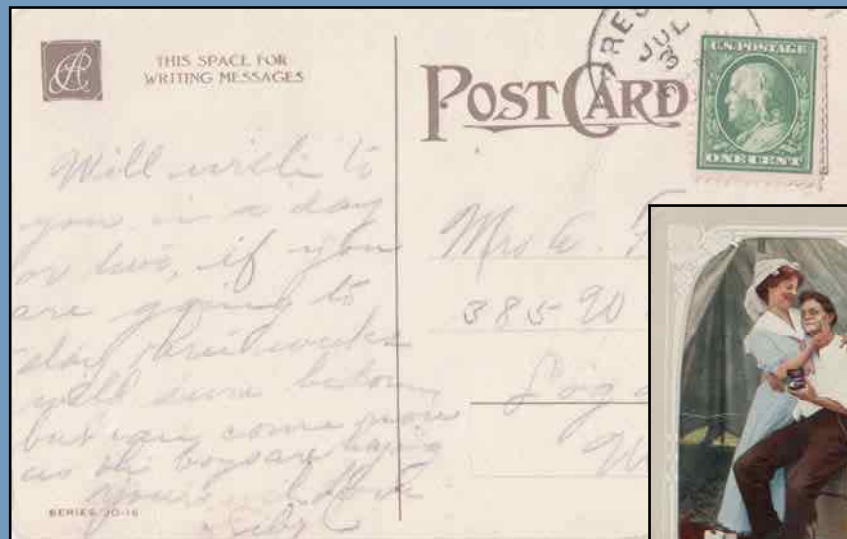
Seeing families in context

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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder



The postcard, probably from the 1920s

By Janet Brigham

The postcard was nestled among the other belongings of a relative who died this summer at age 95. The relative's family sent it to me because it appeared to be written by my maternal grandmother, Sibyl (1886-1960).

I have known Sibyl's handwriting since I was about five years old, and I knew this was not Sibyl's handwriting. I thought the handwriting might be that of her husband, my grandfather Clement, whom I met only once.

I quickly pulled up a digital copy of a letter Clement had written to Sibyl and saw that the handwriting was unmistakably his.

Why, I wondered, had Sibyl not written the postcard herself? She was a self-sufficient woman who rarely asked anyone to do things for her.

The postcard's date of July 3, no year visible, raised the possibility that her hands were occupied because she was preparing or preserving food. Southeastern Idaho's crops from early July can include apricots, beets, beans, berries, cherries, and cucumbers.

Baking bread also can be a consuming and messy project, along with laundry and other household unavoids.

Whatever Sibyl might have been doing, the certainty is that my grandfather, who otherwise was "haying" (according to the postcard), wrote out the message and addressed the postcard as if it were from Sibyl.

What makes that interesting is that, like many families, theirs was battered by poverty and lack of available work. Whenever this postcard was written, it was before Clement left home to find work during rugged economic times.

(Continued on page 2)

Outside and Inside

- **Genealogy in context (above)**
- **How I found it (page 4)**
- **Whadya think this is? (page 6)**
- **Ask the Doctor: PAF trick (page 7)**
- **What didja think it was? (page 8)**
- **About the group, classes (page 8)**
- **SVCGG board, contact info (page 8)**

Seeing families in context (*continued*)

(Continued from page 1)

The lore and the facts

I heard several stories from family about life during that period of time preceding and during the Great Depression. I was able to substantiate some of the stories.

- *For lack of just a few hundred dollars, the family lost their farm in eastern Idaho, where they grew apples. I substantiated this by locating bank files documenting the situation, starting from a banker's business card found in Sibyl's papers. The Idaho State Historical Society tracked down the bank records.*
- *Clement ventured away from home — as far away as the southwestern United States — to look for work when he could find none in southeastern Idaho. An indication of this is that in 1937 their eldest son married a woman who was born in Texas and, in the 1930 U.S. Census, was living in New Mexico.*
- *The Depression and the years preceding it were exceedingly difficult economically, and many families struggled to survive. Sibyl bartered her nursing and midwife skills for food, services, and goods.*

When my mother was an adult, Sibyl told her that in exchange for a doctor's help as she gave birth to my mother, the doctor asked her to wet-nurse an infant whose mother could not nurse. That was the economy of those early decades of the 1900s.

Sibyl often said that her most salient memory from that time involved sitting at the sewing machine with "a naked child standing at the other end." She sewed things that these days we would only buy; after she died in 1960, my mother inherited her numerous unfinished sewing projects, some of which were passed on to me. When, in graduate school, I needed a new bathrobe, I finished a corduroy one that Sibyl had started sewing decades earlier.

- *A great-aunt told me that when Clement left to go find work, he had \$2, gave \$1 of it to Sibyl and the six children, and took the other \$1 to find work, along with their eldest son. I haven't been able to substantiate that with family documents and will have to rely on the great-*

aunt, a matter-of-fact woman who, as Sibyl's younger sister, was one of Sibyl's confidantes.

- *After a few years, when Clement tried to return home without having found long-term work, Sibyl would not take him back. Letters between the two of them, much later given to me, documented the end of their marriage.*

Information I have helped others research about their families has indicated that this was not an isolated case — similar circumstances split at least two other families I've studied.

I have searched for research substantiating this phenomenon. Author Stephanie Coontz, in her recent book *Marriage, a History*, describes the effects of economic problems on family cohesion.

- *My mother said that her father left the family when she was about six years old (about 1925) and never returned. My great-aunt told me in the 1970s that Clement wanted to return, but Sibyl was so weary from raising and supporting the children without him, she would not let him come back to the family.*

Some years later, I was given family letters indicating that he had wanted to return but was not welcomed back. I told my mother what I had learned. She had not known he had wanted to return. She had only known he left and never returned. When he died in 1956, she did not travel to Southern California for the funeral.

What important information emerges from this one postcard? Without context, little. It is a postcard that promises a letter in the near future, says "the boys" are "haying," and plans for a future visit. On the surface, it indicates little more than the fact that they had a field of hay. July in southern Idaho would have been an appropriate time to cut, dry, and bale hay, since the hot, arid climate enabled drying hay.

We don't know just what equipment they had to accomplish this. Farmers in some communities shared equipment and helped with each other's harvests. It would not be impossible to learn some of this information from local and county sources, but this might not be the focus of the research.

What did concern the family — and in some ways

(Continued on page 3)

Seeing families in context (*continued*)

still does — was the relationship between the two parents. It seems likely that they were in the same location when Sibyl dictated the postcard and Clement wrote it out. Perhaps when she was in the midst of a messy project, he came in from haying, cleaned up for lunch, and took her dictation so the postcard could go out in the day's post. That's only a guess, of course.

By the 1930 U.S. Census, they were spending at least part of the year apart. By the 1940 census, they were separated and perhaps divorced. Letters he wrote her in 1945 indicate that he was trying to reconcile. They divorced, and he remarried in 1949.

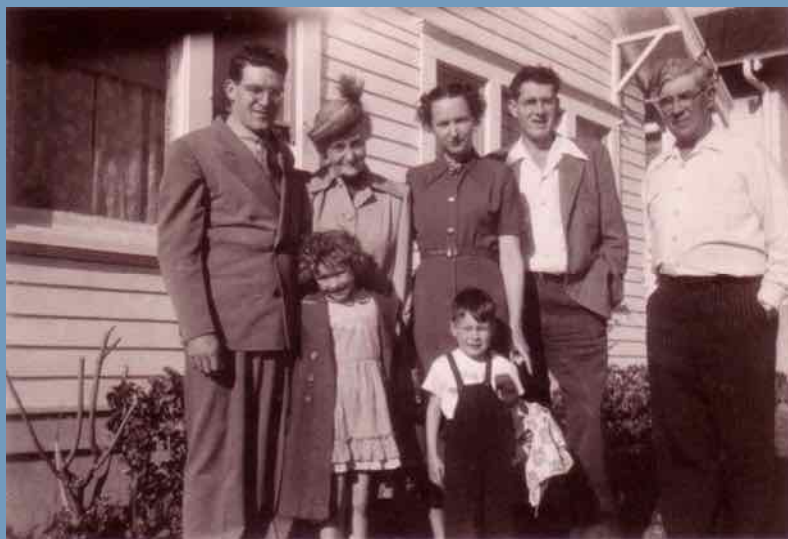
The facts that help us bracket a time period for the postcard are that “the boys” (in other words, not just Clement) were haying. Sibyl referred to “the boys” in other correspondence as those who were doing early-morning farm work outside. If the term refers to her husband and older son(s), that would date the postcard to some time between 1925 and 1935.

Family historians long have been advised to learn the historical context of their ancestors' lives as a way to gain understanding. Library advocate Kevin Arme explains:

What is historical context? Historical context is the elements that permeate the lives of every living person; the local history of where they were born, the events that may have shaped their lives, and the living conditions that often can provide some measure of explanation about who they were as people. (<http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2014/06/historical-context-for-genealogy-research-what-your-ancestors-surroundings-say-about-them/>)

Much of the genealogical value of this postcard is in its *context*, not its manifest content. Learning that July was haying time in southeastern Idaho is not a discovery. Seeing that people communicated by postcard in the early twentieth century also is not a revelation; only recently has long-distance voice communication been affordable.

Instead, what we learn is that this couple, who had six children but later divorced, was together enough to cooperatively connect with a relative. It may show




Clement is at far right in this post-separation photo of two of his sons (the two younger men; the one on the left just turned 93 years old this month), Sibyl (second from left), a daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren (both still living).

a level of comfort, not a level of tension. It also may reinforce a statement by Sibyl in her later life that even though she didn't want to be married to Clement for the rest of her mortality, she wanted to be with him in the afterlife.

Understanding the context of family content can be accomplished through a systematic approach. One such approach — and many exist — is a “world cultures model,” which suggests interpreting information through several aspects:

- Historical
- Economic
- Social
- Beliefs
- Politics
- Aesthetics

(Details developed at Stanford University are at <https://studiesofasia.wikispaces.com/file/view/World+Culture+Model.ppt>)

Looking at families in context can enrich our understanding and help us see people and events through their eyes. That's particularly helpful when our lives, cultures, and obstacles differ considerably from theirs. 

How I found it A mis-enumerated entry

By Richard Rands

It is often the case that searching for one piece of information leads to uncovering something totally unexpected that solves a different problem.

A recent project in my family was aimed at looking for a missing child in the family of John Edward Montelius and his wife, Catherine Agnes. They were enumerated in the 1900 U.S. Census living in a township called Brenton in Ford County, Illinois, with three sons aged 12, 10, and 7.

John Edward was a blacksmith. Catherine was listed as having given birth to four children, only three of whom were still alive – hence our project to identify the unknown child who would have been born sometime before 1900.

The Illinois Marriage Index collection online at

FamilySearch.org showed that the marriage of John Edward Montelius and Catherine Agnes took place in Piper City, Illinois, on 4 October 1887. This Piper City was a village within the Brenton township. By 1910 the family had moved to the state of Washington, where they were listed in the 1910 U.S. Census in Spokane. The eldest of the three children was no longer living at home. Catherine again was listed as having given birth to four children, three of whom were still alive.

A thorough, painstaking search in the 1920 U.S. census and its index proved fruitless. Every variation of surnames, given names, and permutations of both resulted in nothing. Widening the scope of the search turned up nothing. It appeared that the family was not identified with that name in that census.

(Continued on page 5)

Catherine	<input type="checkbox"/>	View Record	Name	Parent or spouse names	Home in 1920 (City, County, State)	Birth Year	Birthplace
BORN: 1869	<input type="checkbox"/>	View Record	Catherine Edwood [Catherine Edward]	John	Seattle, King, Washington	abt 1870	New York
L IN: New York, USA	<input type="checkbox"/>	View Record	Kitty Regan	John	Fairview, Grays Harbor, Washington	abt 1868	New York
LIVED IN: Washing...	<input type="checkbox"/>	View Record	Kathryn C Welch	John M	Seattle, King, Washington	abt 1870	New York
Hide additional fields ▲							
GENDER: Female							
SPOUSE(S): John							

15										
16			Campbell, Agnes	Wife			F	W	15	
17	2646	198	223	Maschmatt, Henry	Head		M	M	W	58
18				Galacci, Habbell	Lodger		M	W	18	
19	2612	199	233	Edwood, John	Head		M	W	53	
20				Catherine	Wife		F	W	50	

The Ancestry.com search results for John and Catherine “Edwood” in the 1920 U.S. Census (top), and the actual enumeration (below). Note that the substitution of her husband’s middle name for a surname in the search results had been annotated, even though the annotation incorrectly listed *Edward* as her surname. The mistaken indexing probably can be attributed partially to difficulty reading the enumerator’s handwriting. The compounded effects of incorrect enumeration and mistaken indexing make the record difficult to identify.

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 4)

In 1930, John Edward and Catherine A. were found residing with their eldest son, Ralph, who was living with his family in Spokane. By the 1940 U.S. Census, John Edward and Catherine had left Washington and showed up in Los Angeles, California, with John Edward then 77 years old. Their youngest son, William, was living with them.

A search for any variation of the surname *Montelius* in the FamilySearch.org Illinois Births and Christening collection that covers 1824 through 1940 resulted in zero hits.

However, I'm so driven by curiosity that I could not let the missing 1920 U.S. Census entry remain blank on my census analysis chart. I began browsing the 1920 U.S. Census records for Washington state. John Edward and Catherine were listed as living in Spokane in 1910 and again in 1930, but a page-by-page search of all the men named *John* in the Spokane records, filtered to those born about 1864 in Illinois, turned up nothing.

My presumption was that an enumerator probably could get the names *John* and *Catherine* correct (or close) but could easily get *Montelius* wrong. So I left the surname out of my search criteria. Thinking that John could have been absent when the enumerator came to the household, I made the same painstaking search using the names *Catherine* and *Kate*, which was a name she had used in the 1910 U.S. Census.

Still nothing came up. I was stymied!

An obvious next step in this type of research is to broaden the scope of the area. Since I still had Catherine's details in my search screen, I simply removed *Spokane* from the place criteria, leaving the entire

state of Washington as my scope. The results gave me 21 hits for the typical variations of Catherine, born in New York between 1868 and 1870 and residing in Washington. That was a manageable list of people to examine more closely, but none of the records listed a surname that was close to *Montelius*.

As I sat there staring at my screen and pondering what to explore next, the first entry in the results list caught my eye. It listed a Catherine, surname Edwood, born in New York about 1870, living with a husband named John, residing in Seattle. Everything matched my criteria except for the surname – *Edwood*, which sounded curiously like it might have been a mis-indexing of *Edward*.

Knowing that John's middle name was Edward, I opened the image of the census record and enlarged it so I could see the actual surname better. Sure

enough, it was really Edward, but the indexer had transcribed it as *Edwood*. Furthermore, John's details in the entry matched his criteria exactly.

This was certainly an exciting find, but I needed to find a way to confirm that John's middle name had been put in the surname field on the census form.

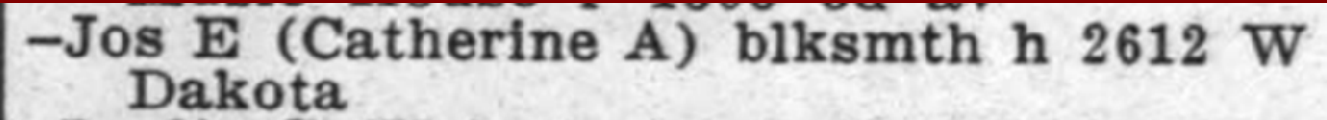
I now understood why my searches for variations of the *Montelius* surname had been futile.

The street address on the census form for the family of John Edwood was 2612 W. Dakota. An excellent way to confirm that the Edwood family was really a Montelius family would be to locate them in a city directory and compare the addresses.

Fortunately, Ancestry.com has city directories for Seattle that cover the period around 1920. In the 1920 directory were a half-dozen entries for the sur-

(Continued on page 6)

I'm so driven by curiosity that I could not let the missing census entry remain blank on my census analysis chart.



-Jos E (Catherine A) blksmth h 2612 W
Dakota

The Montelius entry in the 1919 Seattle city directory.

Whadya think this is?



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

- A. An early chemistry student laboratory kit
- B. A Civil War doctor's medicine case
- C. Benjamin Franklin's snuff collection
- D. Martha Jefferson's spice collection
- E. The first commercial children's chemistry set

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 5)

name *Montelius*, including a William who was a blacksmith. But not even one named John.

Just to be sure, I checked the directory for an entry for a John Edwood or a John Edward but found none. Knowing that city directories usually were prepared months before the year they were published, I checked the 1921 Seattle directory but still found no John Montelius. Finally, when I checked the 1919 Seattle directory, I found an entry among the Montelius listings for: "Jos E (Catherine A) blksmth h 2612 W Dakota."

Aside from the *Jos* abbreviation (usually referring to the names *Joseph* or *Joshua*), every detail of the entry matched: The middle initial *E* for Edward, and *Catherine A* for Catherine Agnes, his wife; blacksmith for his occupation; and residence at 2612 W Dakota.

I now had proof that around 1920 a family named Montelius lived at the address on the census form. The preponderance of evidence was there — and it was an unusual discovery that was satisfying. My family members most closely related to the Montelius line quickly shared the information with each other.

This discovery did not help to identify the missing child, but we did discover the previously unknown fact that John and Catherine had spent some time in Seattle, quite possibly with their youngest son, Wil-

liam, who also was a blacksmith.


The FamilySearch.org catalog identifies microfilm sets of church records that partially cover the time period that the missing child would have been born. My family with close Montelius lines will continue their search for the missing child, probably starting with the microfilm church records.

This new information about the whereabouts of John and Catherine Montelius might help them search more successfully. 

Census Analysis Worksheets

You can download and use a census analysis worksheet, mentioned in this article, from the SVCGG website: http://www.svpafug.org/documents/census_analysis_forms.pdf

To use either of the first two forms, for censuses listing all household members, fill in the years of the censuses you'll be including in the blanks on the top line. Then fill in names, birthdates, ages, death dates, and other information as you obtain it. This allows you to track persons and families across time. Use a new sheet for each head of household.

The second two forms are for prenominal censuses, those that list only the head of household. Other household members are listed only with counts, separated into age and gender categories. 

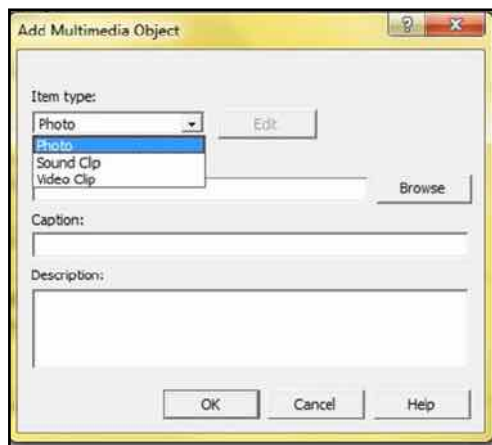


Ask the Doctor *Getting attached*

A In a recent issue of *PastFinder*, the Doctor pointed out that older genealogy software such as Personal Ancestral File (PAF) does not allow PDF files to be linked as source documentation for a single event. Indeed, in PAF a PDF file cannot be attached as a Document, as is the case in some personal database software.

One of our readers quickly responded that this is incorrect and provided us with a technique he uses to link PDF files as source documentation for individual events in his own PAF database. The following answer is intended to demonstrate how this reader is able to trick PAF into allowing a user to attach images in the popular PDF file format to source citations. The Doctor believes that this technique is very workable, particularly when users are familiar with the PDF format and how to manipulate it. This method is especially useful when the citation consists of more than one page or image.

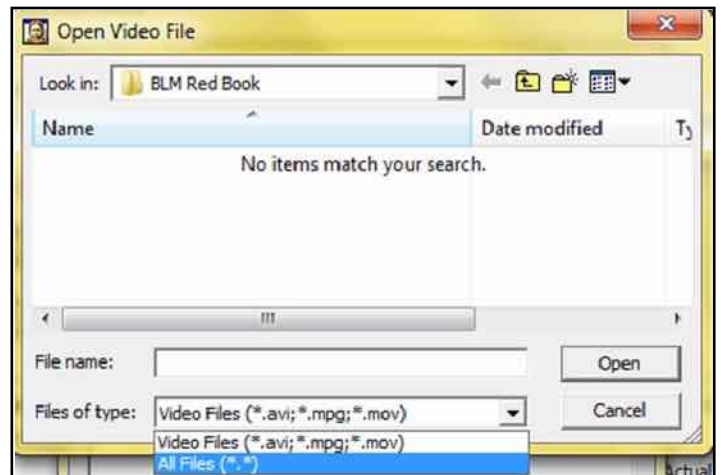
When the image of a source that you wish to attach to a citation is in the ubiquitous Adobe PDF file format, PAF will not accept it when you specify it as a Photo (Document is not an option). However, when you are asked to select the item type in the Add Multimedia Object box, you will see two additional types to choose from: Sound Clip and Video Clip. Either of the two alternative types will allow you to attach a PDF file to your citation.



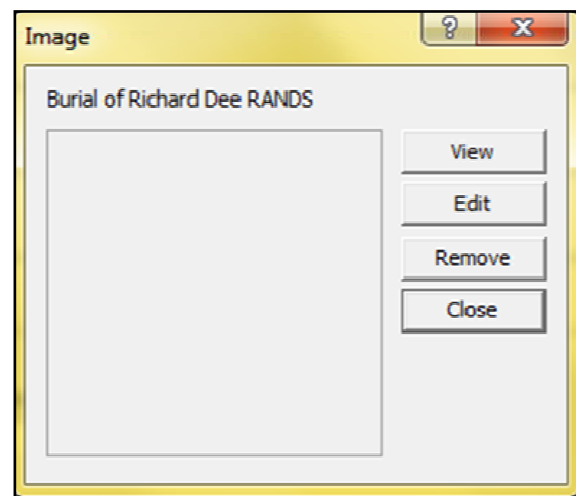
Once you have selected the Item type as sound or video, it is possible to use the Browse feature to locate the file to be attached.

Here is where the “trick” comes into play. Unfortunately, when you use PAF’s Browse feature, the only file formats that appear are those associated with either sound files or video files. You will not see any PDF files, even though you may know they exist within the folder you are browsing.

At this point you will need to use a Windows trick to make PAF provide you with visibility of the PDF files.




At the bottom of the Open Video File (or Sound File) screen is a box to specify the types of files to be displayed on the screen. By default, PAF limits the file types to the common video or sound file types, which prevents being able to see all the other file types (including the PDF files) in the folder. To get around this limitation, click on the pull-down arrow at the right end of the box and select All files (*.*) .



(Continued on page 8)

What didja think it was? And were ya right?

Answer: B. A Civil War doctor's medicine case.

In an effort to improve the survival rate on the battlefield, the Union Army established the office of Medical Director of the Army, who was responsible for the creation of field kits to help doctors act quickly with the latest developments in medicine. 

Ask the Doctor *(continued)*

(Continued from page 7)

You will now see a list of all the files in the folder regardless of the file type, making it possible to select the PDF file you wish to attach to your citation. Once you double click (or Open) the file you wish to attach, it will appear in the Add


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.

8 November 2014, 9–11 A.M.

- Virginia research
- Comparison of online trees
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Reunion 10 basics
- Research with Lesly
- Getting started Q&A


10 January 2015, 9–11 A.M.

- Irish research, part 1 (*Ed Keelen*)
- Legacy Family Tree software (*Diane George*)
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Reunion 10 basics
- Research with Lesly (*Klippel*)
- Getting started Q&A 

Multimedia Object screen, and you can include a caption and description as you would for any attachment.

When you click OK to return to the Image screen, it will appear as though you have nothing attached because, unfortunately, the box where a thumbnail image would normally appear will be blank. If you click on the View option, the image of the PDF file will appear as expected.

The links for PDF files are handled appropriately in GEDCOM files, so they will be passed on when sharing your database. The drawbacks that concern the Doctor are the need to remember the trick to get PAF to accept a PDF file and the missing thumbnail image that will likely be confusing to future users of your source information.

The Doctor notes that when the Doctor tried to include a PDF file in the slideshow or scrapbook features of PAF, PAF crashed. 

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 his-

PastFinder

First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013-14

First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012

National Genealogical Society

Website: www.svcgg.org

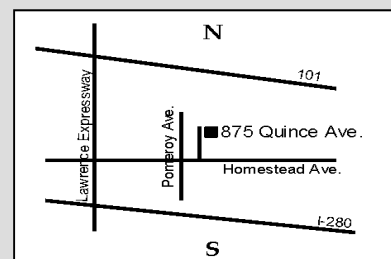
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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

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. 