Online newspapers

Digital time machines

By Janet Brigham

A stranger stopped me in the dairy section of the grocery store the other day. He had read the back of my 1940 U.S. Census indexing T-shirt.

"What's the deal with 1940?" he asked. I explained last year's massive 1940 census indexing project and bragged briefly about how I earned my T-shirt by indexing census entries.

"You don't actually believe what's in the census, do you?" he insisted. No, I said, I've used censuses too much to believe they're always accurate. "And you don't really believe what you read in the newspapers, either, do you?" he pressed.

Newspapers strike closer to my heart. I've read newspapers from the time I could read about Dick and Jane. I worked for newspapers from the age of 15 until I lost my way and changed careers. Journalism was the most fun I've ever had. Did I believe everything published? No. Journalists know how subjective reporting can be.

The stranger marched away with his skepticism intact. I, on the other hand, retreated mentally to those lovely, turbulent years when I was a reporter. Could any work ever compare to being assigned to interview a camel one winter and legendary coach John Wooden a few winters later?

Given a time machine, I would gladly relive the assignments I wrote, even the obituaries and the wedding articles. Were they accurate? Did the bride wear tulle? Did the prisoners set fire to a mattress to start a riot?

We have few filters or translators as we interpret old newspapers. The writing sometimes seem florid. Harsh events, reflecting the bigotry and se-

verity of the times, are presented as everyday occurrences. We need historical and cultural context to make sense of historical content. Even so, few genealogical resources can take us back to our ancestors' times as thoroughly as the newspapers that were contemporary to their lives.

Family researchers still can access old newspapers either by leafing through crumbly volumes in libraries or newspaper offices or by scrolling page by page through those that have been microfilmed. Accessing old newspapers often means a cross-country trip to a distant library or a long day at a state historical society or university archive. However, as increasing numbers of newspapers are being digitized and posted for electronic searching, the task has changed.

We now can take the time to read not

Outside and inside

Newspapers (continued)

only those articles that relate to our ancestors, but also the surrounding articles and advertisements. We usually can save the images easily and attach them to our ancestors' entries in a genealogy database.

Numerous websites, both free and subscription, offer access to the thousands of old newspapers that have been digitized and, in many cases, indexed. These can be invaluable in your research, both because of information they provide about our ancestors specifically and because they reflect the culture, history, and times in which our ancestors lived. It's difficult to overstate the potential richness of their information.

One important thing to remember is that thousands of small newspapers have been published, some for years and others for only a few issues. Key information pertaining to our ancestors may be in obscure newspapers that have not been digitized. Some of those may have been microfilmed and may be available at historical societies, state and university archives, and university and local libraries.

In some cases, volunteers will search those newspaper microfilms and archives for you, perhaps for a donation to the library. Some libraries, such as the state historical societies and remote libraries, offer research services for a fee. In most cases, these donations and fees will be considerably less expensive than traveling to the library. You can email or telephone libraries or archives to determine what research support services are available.

A comprehensive listing of national and state newspaper archives is available through the University of Pennsylvania library website, including a link to Google's digital newspaper archive and an online catalog of newspapers. The Penn site is: guides.library.upenn.edu/content.php?pid=338800 &id=2770243 (or search for *penn library historical newspapers*).

Before you subscribe to newspaper archive sites, check out those that are available at no cost. Addi-

"Ever since I started reading the newspaper online, he's been bringing my computer to me."

tionally, commercial sites may offer a trial membership, which gives you time to determine whether a subscription is useful.

Commercial sites to consider include **Newspapers.com**, **NewspaperArchive.com**, **GenealogyBank.com**, and **Ancestry.com**.

A premier listing of online newspapers is at the U.S. site **Chronicling America.loc.gov** provided by the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities. With a collection exceeding 6 million pages from at least 600 newspapers published between the mid-1800s and the 1920s, Chronicling America is an excellent starting place. The newspapers listed in Chronicling America are available free of charge. The site enables simultaneous searching of all newspapers.

And who knew that when **Google** was digitizing some of the world's information, it digitized newspapers? An alphabetical listing of newspapers in Google's archive is at news.google.com/newspapers. The collection has international and U.S. papers.

More international newspapers are linked at the site of the **International Coalition on Newspapers**, icon.crl.edu/digitization.htm. Listings include U.S. newspapers, which are considered international everywhere except in the United States.

From online historical newspapers I have learned such diverse information as —

- Multiple, conflicting accounts of the death of my grandfather's cousin; information at a later trial was no less conflicting.

- A second-great-grandfather, who had emigrated from England to Nevada, charged two nearly frozen miners in 20-minute increments to come into his house and warm up by his fire. I trust they all had a sense of humor.

- His daughter, held against her will in a state asylum, was liberated by her brothers.

Truthfully, now, who needs reality TV when you have a time machine?

How I found it   In Germany, thanks to extraction

By Lesly Klippel

For several years, I have helped a friend trace her husband's German family who came to Iowa in the 1850s. We had found the family in census and other records in Iowa, but were unable to find immigration records for them.

The surname is Schader; it appeared that the family came from Baden with four children and that they had at least one more child born in Iowa. One record had spelled the name *Schieder,* so on a hunch, I entered *Jacob Friedrich Schieder* into the search field of the FamilySearch.org Historical Records, with 1846 as the birth year.

The results list included two Jacob Friedrich Scheeders, one born in 1843 and one in 1847 in Ittlingen, Heidelberg, Baden, Germany. We knew that Jacob's parents were Lewis and Louise. The 1847 entry for Jacob Friedrich Scheeder had Georg Ludwig Scheeder as the father and Louise Vogel as the mother.

To double-check that we had the right person, I next entered Scheeder in the surname field, chose parents in the relationship filter, and entered Georg Ludwig Scheeder in the father's field. Several children came up in the results list, each having Louise Vogel as the mother.

We compared Jacob's known siblings from the U.S. census records, and the names and birth dates matched perfectly with the names and birth dates in the Ittlingen records.

After many years of searching, we had successfully crossed the Atlantic, thanks to the extracted records at FamilySearch. My friends are already making travel plans to walk in the footsteps of my friend's husband Fred's ancestors in Germany.

Lutheran Church in Ittlingen, Germany. Below, search screen and extracted results from FamilySearch.org. Ittlingen coat of arms (left column).

Refine your search

First Names
Jacob Friedrich

Last Names
Scheider

Restrict records by:
Location
Type
Batch Number

Search with a life event:
Birthplace
Germany
1846   1847

Jakob Friedrich Scheeder, "Germany, Births

Name:	Jakob Friedrich Scheeder
Gender:	Male
Christening Date:	04 Mar 1847
Christening Place:	EVANGELISCH, ITTLINGEN, HEIDELBERG, BADEN
Birth Date:	25 Feb 1847
Birthplace:	
Death Date:	
Name Note:	
Race:	
Father's Name:	Georg Ludwig Scheeder
Father's Birthplace:	
Father's Age:	
Mother's Name:	Louise Vogel
Mother's Birthplace:	
Mother's Age:	
Indexing Project (Batch) Number:	C92530-3
System Origin:	Germany-VR
GS Film number:	1272377
Reference ID:	2:DW0TMO

Blogging for ancestors and modern-day cousins

By Pamela Erickson

We can honor our ancestors by blogging about them, telling their stories so that others can learn about them and possibly connect with us because they share those same roots. What fun to finally connect with cousins we never knew, hear their stories, and see their photos to more fully round out our understanding of these unique ancestors.

Do you have a brick wall in your line? Most of us do, and what better way to chip away at that wall than to create a blog about what we know and what we want to know about this family member. Or, perhaps you recently have broken through your brick wall. What a great way to celebrate your discovery, to share your joy, than to tell the world about your find.

Creating a blog is not difficult. In fact, if you use Google's Blogger (www.Blogger.com), it's as simple as 1-2-3. Many of us have created a Gmail email account at Google.com. The Gmail account is free and easy to use and is required to use Blogger. Once you have a Gmail account with a user name and password, go to *More* and select *Blogger*. Once there, select the *New Blog* button.

- Create Title.
- Create Address.
- Select Template.
- Click the *Create Blog* button, and you can make your first post.

Blogger is not the only resource for creating a blog. Wordpress (www.Wordpress.com) has been around longer, but this article will focus on Blogger.

Once you create your blog, you have options to help schedule entries for later publication, include membership subscriptions, and other features. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Let's look at the steps to create the blog and determine what works best for you.

Go to Blogger.com and select *New Blog*. Before you fill in the information, give it some thought. For example, before you create a title, think about the audience you hope to attract. Know the goals you have for your blog, and make a list of at least ten keywords that will attract search engine optimization. Develop a short online biography that positions your brand (your focus for your blog). The title can reflect the family surname you want to honor, but will that narrow your focus and not allow other family surnames to be included? Consider looking at genealogy blogs that already exist and see if any offer ideas for you.

- Blogs List —› Create a new blog
- Title
- Address.blogspot.com
- You can add a custom domain later.
- Template (Select one template to get started.)

I chose a long title to show the four surnames of the immediate family: Family Searches for Erickson Thornton Broberg Baker and More. You may want to find tips for names from previous bloggers, but you also need to understand any limits for naming conventions. For example, do not use the character *&* (ampersand) in your Blogger title. It will not translate correctly in the various search engine formats.

To create an address, you must use a unique one not used by someone else. You may need to try several before you find one you can use. Since my website is www.FamilyScribe.us, I chose to try FamilyScribe for the address, and it was available. Therefore, my blog is now at "FamilyScribe.blogspot.com. I also created another blog for a specific family group that presents some unique problems, so that's why the following example shows two blogs.

Pamela Erickson's blogs

New Blog

Family searches for Erickson Thornton Broberg Baker and more
No posts. Start blogging!

View blog

Dearing Millsap Family
 0 pageviews - 1 post, last published on Apr 8, 2013

View blog

For Format, I chose the *Simple* format to start, knowing that I can change the format anytime I want.

Now you can click *Create Blog*, and you are ready to begin your first post.

The first thing you will see on your new blog is a column down the left side of the page. I don't have room in this article to go through all the tabs, but let me mention a few to get you started. At the end of the list is *Settings*. If you want people to find you, keep your blog public. The default is *Anybody*. To control permissions, check out the article: support.google.com/blogger/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=42673&ctx=go

However, if you want to invite just a few select people, choose *Private*. One reason to keep it private would be that this is preliminary research, not yet proven, and that you don't want to mislead people. Another reason is that you mention people who are still alive. For respecting privacy, I suggest that you not write about living people unless your blog is private.
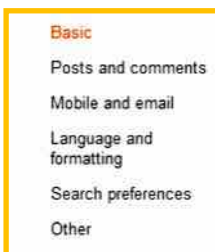
Under *Permissions*, you will see a spot to have two or more authors for your site. I agree with genealogy blogger "Dear Myrtle" and others who suggest that you have a second person, even if that person doesn't often or ever add a blog post. The reason for this is that if you can no longer manage the blog, someone can step in and handle your account.

One last item under Settings is *Other*. You want people to read your full post, so make sure it's marked *Full* under Allow Blog Feed. Otherwise, people will have to click again to see the full entry and they may decide to pass it up.

Near the top of this list is *Comments*. You want to have control over who can comment so that spammers don't impact your work. I suggest marking *Registered User*.

Overview provides additional tips for managing your blog. Note the hot links at the right of this page.

When you click on *Layout*, the image below pops up. You should consider adding a gadget if you want readers to be able to follow you in their Circles.
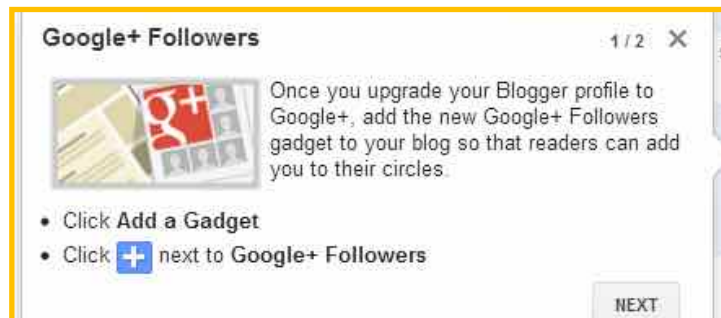
It goes on to page 2 to share that selecting the *+1* allows visitors to endorse your blog and pass it along to others.

Within *Layout*, turn off the *Navbar*. This removes the blogger navigation bar, another suggestion by Dear Myrtle.

When you are ready to enhance your blog, you have many options. I suggest going to the website www.Geneabloggers.com/blog-resources for more help.

With this as a start, I hope you will accept the challenge of creating a blog to attract family and others to share and help with your research.

Q I'm no genius when it comes to navigating websites, but when FamilySearch.org recently redid its website, I got lost. I can't seem to find anything there anymore, including things I relied on a lot. Where did the wiki go? Where's the catalog? Why is it such a hassle to reach the search function?

I've used FamilySearch for years. What's happened? Why did they do this?

We feel your pain. We can only surmise why they chose to put three-second rotating graphics on their home page (thus prompting The Doctor to grab motion sickness medicine), and why they chose to make us click multiple times to reach a search screen. And, for that matter, why they changed the search screen itself. They had been making steady progress in usability, then, boom, the chandelier fell out of the ceiling and landed on our birthday cake. And the plumbing broke loose and rained on our ancestral parade.

It's possible that FamilySearch is trying to appeal to younger users and new users, and that its gurus have determined that these people will want to post photos of ancestors, enter ancestors' stories, and print fan charts. (Fan charts, we should add, that truncate the surname of some ancestors. Not that we expect customized charts, because the charts are, after all, *free*. If we want fan charts that show all of our ancestors' surnames, we can print them or use a commercial service.)

Nor do we know why FamilySearch changed its logo from a leafy tree (below, top) to stylized words (below, bottom). The old and new logos both are on the website, presumably because not all the pages have been assimilated yet. (Did you know that those famous assimilators *Star Trek*'s Borgs recently were listed by *TV Guide* as the fourth nastiest villains of all time?)

So, no, we don't know what's going on. FamilySearch has brought us many genealogical blessings, and we rely on it. But we understand how you can feel lost in its site restructuring, because we also get lost. To make your research easier, we've put together a list of how to find a few familiar things. We suggest you bookmark them, to reduce the temptation to print out a fan chart several times a day.

All modern browsers have a bookmark feature. If you can't figure out how use it, click on the blue question mark icon in Internet Explorer and search for *bookmark*; click on the three little lines near the top line in Chrome; or click Bookmarks in Firefox.

Bookmarking the pages you use makes it easier to get to the good stuff. And, we assure you, FamilySearch still has lots of good stuff.

The wiki. The day the new FamilySearch site appeared, the FamilySearch research wiki was accessible only by clicking on *Blog* at the bottom of the page. Do not try this at home, because that connection now is as extinct as a Caribbean ground sloth. And for good reason. We complained loudly with multiple voices about the hidden wiki, and soon it resurfaced, sort of. Now you can reach the wiki by clicking the *Search* link above the home page graphics, then clicking *Wiki*. Also you can bookmark it: www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Main_Page

Learning Center. This has become as hard to find as a Himalayan yeti. This wealth of instructive, helpful videos can be reached by accessing the home page —> Search —> Wiki —> Learn —> Learning Center (link at top of page). Got that? Bookmark it: familysearch.org/learningcenter/home.html

Search. This one ought to be simple, right? From the FamilySearch home page, *do not* click on the Search icon (at right). If you do, you also will have to click on the green *Search Historical Records* button to reach the search page. (This double-clicking is required for any icon you click in the icon row — avoid them unless you want to make your repetitive stress injuries even worse.) Instead, simply click on the *Search* link above the rotating graphics. It will take you directly to the search page. You can bookmark it: familysearch.org/search

Catalog. The new, beta catalog is reached this way: home page —> Search —> Catalog. You can bookmark: familysearch.org/catalog-search. To reach the older, reliable online catalog, use the *previous version* link from the new catalog. Bookmark: familysearch.org/eng/Library/FHLC/frameset_fhlc.asp

Feedback. What FamilySearch.org desperately needs is a Site Map, a clickable list of all the pages and features on the website. At the bottom of the home page is a *Feedback* link; click on it and tell them that. They do seem to be listening.

Preserve the Pensions: War of 1812 digitizing

National genealogical and records organizations recently launched an effort to raise $3.7 million to digitize the 7.2 million images in the War of 1812 pension files.

The Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and the commercial and nonprofit genealogical communities have launched a timely project to digitize the War of 1812 pension files. Last year marked the bicentennial of the war, known to some as a second War of Independence.

The images will be available to the public free of charge, indexed by pensioners' names. Fully indexed versions will be available at Fold3.com, a subscription site.

Contributions to this project — including an initial $500 donated in April by SVCGG members and supporters — have made hundreds of thousands of images available already.

NARA approached FGS several years ago with a problem: the pension files existed only in the original paper form. FGS garnered support from Ancestry.com and other groups, including FamilySearch. Ancestry offered to pay half the cost of the digitizing project, assuming the remaining funds could be generated by the genealogical community.

FGS supports projects that preserve records and make them more accessible to the public. FGS is leading the national fundraising effort by seeking donations from genealogical and historical societies, patriotic and military heritage societies, other interested groups, and individuals. Ancestry.com and Fold3 are providing a dollar-for-dollar match of each donation through providing services.

The coalition is digitizing the 180,000 pension applications, comprising an estimated 7.2 million pages of War of 1812 Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files. Completed images are available free on Fold3's website: go.fold3.com/1812pensions/.

Files often include the following information:

Veteran's name, age, place of residence, widow name, service data and dates, organization and rank, widow's maiden name, acres granted, marriage date,

This illustration from PreservethePensions.org will be difficult to keep current; the number of available images already is more than 618,000.

soldier death date, widow death date, year of Bureau of Land Management act, warrant number, and additional names. Files also could include correspondence, legal papers, and unpredictable information.

Clearly, a pension file might contain considerable information of genealogical value, independent of any information about military service.

"The multi-year project consists of scanning the pension files at the National Archives in Washington D.C. and creating a searchable index to the digital images," reports the FGS website. "FGS has targeted the War of 1812 Pension Applications as a high priority project based on the value of the content for genealogists as well as the importance of preserving the fragile records."

A $500 donation pays for digitizing 1,111 images; with matching funds, that becomes 2,222 images.

Donations to the project can be made with debit or credit card to the Preserve the Pensions fund site: www.fgs.org/cstm_PreserveThePensions.php

SVCGG also will continue to collect and submit donations. Checks in any amount can be made out to SVCGG with a notation that the funds are for the Preserve the Pensions fund. Cash donations can be made at SVCGG meetings.

PastFinder wins top NGS award

PastFinder, the newsletter of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group, has received national recognition again.

The National Genealogical Society awarded the newsletter its top award for a major genealogical society at the annual NGS conference May 8-11 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Last year, the newsletter won first place for a local society newsletter. Because of size of SVCGG, NGS moved the newsletter to its major society category in 2013.

The two consecutive 2012 issues of the newsletter submitted to the contest were June and July. Articles were about online digital photo editing, researching a Chinese emigrant ancestor, Danish research, genealogy software file conversions, the War of 1812, using GEDCOM, and updates on indexing the 1940 U.S. Census.

Upcoming 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 any church or other group.

11 May 2013, 9–11 A.M.
- Germans from Russia 2: Cemetery markers (video and discussion)
- New search sites (Janet Brigham)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Mark Moore)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Pat Solomon)
- Getting started in genealogy (Lesly Klippel)

8 June 2013, 9–11 A.M.
- Best practices for documentation (Richard Rands)
- Life in the Trees (Janet Brigham)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Mark Moore)
- Reunion 10 for Mac (Pat Solomon)
- Getting started in genealogy (Carleen Foster)

Articles in the two submitted issues were by Lesly Klippel, Allin Kingsbury, Richard Rands, and Janet Brigham, with editing by Betsy Shafer and Pamela Erickson.

The year 2012 brought a change in the editorship of *PastFinder*, with the position transitioning from longtime editor and former SVCGG president Allin Kingsbury to Janet Brigham.

In a letter to SVCGG President Richard Rands, the NGS award committee commended the newsletter for its professional appearance, writing, and editing. They also noted that the SVCGG editors had been responsive to comments from the 2012 reviewers.

PastFinder, a fixture of the society for 24 years, is the work of an all-volunteer team; all writing and editing tasks are carried out by volunteers. The newsletter is mailed and distributed by email.

NGS, which has existed for 110 years, is a genealogical group bringing together genealogy enthusiasts and experts with diverse interests. It publishes the journal *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* and the *NGS Magazine* quarterly.

Previous winner of the major society award was *Ohio Genealogy News*.

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

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.

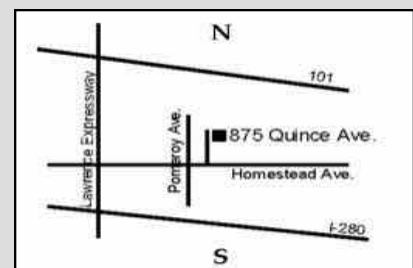SVCGG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family historians improve their skills in using technology for genealogy research.

PastFinder, the official publication of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group, is published monthly except December. *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to members and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter electronically by emailed download link.