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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

Get the stories right



By Janet Brigham

We heard the stories from our grandparents and parents so long ago that we can't remember when we first heard the stories or who first told us:

- One of our ancestors was a miner in the California gold rush.
- Hordes of crickets attacked Great-grandpa's crops, but he beat them off with brooms and shovels.
- Grandma once went underwater in a diving bell.

The family stories become part of our family narrative, part of how we perceive ourselves and how far back we connect to family. And what family we connect to.

Passing along family stories is actually serious business. Online services anxious to collect our stories, such as FamilySearch.org, seem less interested in the veracity of the account than in the fact that we record it. One problem with that approach, however, is that often we don't know the story until we do some research.

Case in point: A young mother named Nellie (headstone pictured above) lost her husband in a hunting accident. Her descendants heard about the incident over the years but did not know that she and her husband already had buried an infant daughter in 1904. They also were not aware of the

extent to which Nellie's family stepped in to help care for her and her children.

Note on the headstone that the mother and father are in the center, and the buried infant is at the left.

Who's that at the right? That would be Nellie's devoted younger brother George, who, we learn from censuses and other documents, moved in with Nellie after her husband died and stayed with her for decades, supporting the family and stepping up as surrogate father to his nieces and nephews.

Some of Nellie's descendants remember their Uncle George, who died in 1958, as a kind man. Few realize the depth of his personal sacrifice for the sake of his sister and her offspring.

Just passing along the family story about Nellie's husband's accident didn't tell the whole story. Only by looking up records about Uncle George, including finding his shared headstone on Find-aGrave.com and his vital and census

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Get the stories right *(continued)*

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records, do we begin to see how huge his contribution to his sister and her family was.

The family accounts add considerably — particularly accounts from those who knew George. One of Nellie's descendants recalls that after George died in 1958, no one knew if he had any money, or where it might be. They knew of no bank accounts, but they knew he had worked many years. They did find his money eventually, rolled up inside his socks in his bedroom closet. They hadn't known that he didn't trust banks.

Such fully told family stories can become part of a rich family narrative that helps children develop resilience, self-esteem, and a belief in their ability to cope with life events, as they perceive themselves as belonging to an intergenerational family that has

faced adversity together and survived it together.

To help children learn important details about their families, parents and grandparents can introduce them to the topics in the "Do You Know?" scale, below. Not only might you be surprised what information they have absorbed, but you'll have a starting place for helping them learn more.

Sources

Feiler, Bruce. (2013, March 15). The family stories that bind us. *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html>

Duke, Marshall P. (2009, March 23). The stories that bind us: What are the twenty questions?

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marshall-p-duke/the-stories-that-bind-us_b_2918975.html

Note that the end of the article explains the utility of question 20, below. 

The 'Do You Know?' scale

Children who know the answers to the following 20 questions tend to be more resilient — showing the value of family history in their lives.

A *Y* answer means *yes*, and *N* means *no*. You can circle or say your answers. Even if you know the information, you don't need to say it or write it down. What's interesting is whether you know the information.

1. Do you know how your parents met? Y N
2. Do you know where your mother grew up? Y N
3. Do you know where your father grew up? Y N
4. Do you know where some of your grandparents grew up? Y N
5. Do you know where some of your grandparents met? Y N
6. Do you know where your parents were married? Y N
7. Do you know what went on when you were being born? Y N
8. Do you know the source of your name? Y N
9. Do you know some things about what happened when your brothers or sisters were being born? Y N
10. Do you know which person in your family you look most like? Y N
11. Do you know which person in the family you act most like? Y N
12. Do you know some of the illnesses and injuries that your parents experienced when they were younger? Y N
13. Do you know some of the lessons that your parents learned from good or bad experiences? Y N
14. Do you know some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were in school? Y N
15. Do you know the national background of your family (e.g., English, German, Russian)? Y N
16. Do you know some of the jobs that your parents had when they were young? Y N
17. Do you know some awards that your parents received when they were young? Y N
18. Do you know the names of the schools that your mom went to? Y N
19. Do you know the names of the schools that your dad went to? Y N
20. Do you know about a relative whose face "froze" in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough? Y N

Score: Count the number of Y responses. 



Ask the Doctor

Plan ahead to make the most of a research trip

Q I am going on a family history research trip this summer. I've planned every aspect of this trip — where to stay, when libraries will be open, what is located in various libraries, and so forth. The one thing I haven't resolved yet is what kind of scanner or digital camera to take, along with my laptop. It's critically important that I get that right.

The trip will be expensive enough that I won't have much money to spend on expensive equipment. I have an older digital camera with a good lens, but no portable scanner. Also, I have an Android smartphone.

The Doctor will be delighted to accompany you on this trip in spirit, if not in person. The Doctor has taken dozens of research trips and has learned both what works and what doesn't. The Doctor has had masterful successes and a few miserable failures, equipmentwise. *Lesson:* make a packing checklist.

First, the Doctor doesn't recommend taking extremely expensive equipment on research trips, because you will spend your time worrying about the

equipment rather than using it. An inexpensive scanner should suit your needs. For travel, an inexpensive USB-powered flatbed scanner (which draws power from your laptop) makes an excellent traveling companion. A flatbed remains the best type of scanner for most documents. Those documents that cannot be digitally captured with a flatbed scanner can be photographed with your digital camera.

Many people like to use small, handheld scanners. We have used these, but none works as well for us as a flatbed in providing consistent, high-quality results. Whatever scanner you take, be sure you set it up before you set out on your trip — make sure you install the right driver (if needed) before you depart (*voice of experience speaking*) and practice with the scanner before the trip. Evaluate your output.

If you travel with a flatbed, be sure you lock it (usually on the underside) so that its innards don't flop around while you travel. That can ruin a flatbed (*voice of experience*).

Chances are that if you travel with a computer bag, you'll have room in it for both your laptop and a

(Continued on page 4)



What you put in your carry-on luggage can determine the success of your research trip. These items (not shown to scale) might help: A lightweight USB-powered flatbed scanner (left) draws power from your laptop computer — most laptops are compatible with both 110v and 220v outlets. You can safely recharge most of your small devices by plugging them into laptop USB ports. A memory card (center) can provide sufficient storage for lots of digital camera photos, but be sure to back it up. For international travel, research what adapters you will need (right) so that you can plug a laptop into a wall outlet. Also, be sure you pack your cables and cords.

Ask the Doctor *(continued)*

(Continued from page 3)

small USB-powered flatbed scanner. If you can't come up with a padded container for the scanner, you can wrap it in bubble wrap and put it in your carry-on luggage. If you're flying, ask airport security staff if you should take out your scanner (you can call it a "photo scanner") at security checkpoints. It is likely to stay in your luggage, but it's always good to ask.

One time the Doctor and the Doctor's sidekick visited a distant cousin in a distant land. We didn't know what documents this cousin might have, but we brought along a small, lightweight, USB-powered flatbed scanner in a computer bag, just in case. When we arrived, the cousin told us that she did have some old letters and an old Bible.

She brought out an old Dr. Scholl's shoebox and a collection of small wallets and coin purses. A family Bible going back more than 100 years was in the shoebox; the purses contained old folded letters from ancestors who had traveled to other continents.

Working as fast as we could, even with a flatbed scanner, it still took us a full seven hours to scan the pertinent, inscribed pages of the Bible and the numerous old documents. We scanned until late evening and came back the next day to finish scanning.

With less efficient scanning equipment, we would not have been able to complete the scanning. As with many genealogy finds, we had no clue that we would have such an opportunity. This also is the case at some libraries and archives — we don't know what genealogy treasures await until we find them. All we can do is be prepared (*voice of experience*).

Some materials, such as large maps, wall hangings, and large books, do not lend themselves well to scanning. For these, a digital camera often is the best approach. While it may be helpful to take a camera with multiple lenses, that might not work for some trips.

If you'll be making tight connections on flights or trains, for example, extra equipment can be annoying. Balance your research needs with the physical reality of your travel experience. As you consider

equipment, imagine schlepping it (without wheels) around airports or up hotel stairs.

A camera built into a mobile device (tablet computer or cell phone) may be a sufficient option. Tablets and smartphones can be loaded with an inexpensive or free scanning app that allows you to create scanned images.

Will the quality match that of a flatbed scanner or a high-quality digital camera? No. Will it weigh as much or take up as much space? No.

Also important when you practice your imaging setup is figuring out how to maximize the quality of your images. Make sure you know how to scan and shoot at sufficient resolution to get high-quality images that you will be able to zoom and to edit if needed. Work with your camera equipment, even if it's just a cell phone camera, to make sure you know how to take photos and scans at high resolution. To learn more about image resolution, see the article on page 5 of this issue and look online for tutorials.

Your images are likely to be saved as JPG files by default. Don't edit these files. When you can, perhaps at home, use photo-editing software to save them as TIFF or PNG files. This is important, because JPG files can irretrievably lose fine detail.

Be sure you have sufficient memory storage on the laptop or on removable devices such as flash drives. You may need extra memory card(s) for a camera. Buy them before you leave. (Yes, the Doctor has had to buy a memory card in such diverse locations as Vienna, Austria, and London, England, where a card was not a bargain. *Voice of experience*.)

Whatever images you collect, back them up. If you have cloud storage, upload them. Back up camera images to a laptop or a flash drive. A card reader is an inexpensive, handy device to transfer files easily to your laptop. Store the flash drive somewhere other than your camera bag. (Think: *What if . . .?*)

Assume that anything can be lost. Your laptop can be stolen. Your flash drive can break. Your camera bag can disappear in a blink. You are taking a research trip not only for the experiences, but for the documents and photos. Keep them safe. 

You are taking a research trip not only for the experiences, but for the documents and photos. Keep them safe.

A few words about image resolution

Few things are more disappointing than realizing that your digital images look blurry or full of little squares when you zoom in on the details. This is particularly disastrous when you traveled a long distance to get the images, or when they cannot be re-taken (think: a wedding, a funeral, a soccer match).

With memory storage being so affordable and easy to access these days, it makes sense to use as much digital memory as you need to take images that you will be able to enlarge and edit.

The word *resolution* relates to how much information is packed into a square inch of image. The phrase *pixels per inch* (ppi) indicates how sharp the image will be. The higher the ppi, the sharper the image.

A photo you are planning to email to friends or post on a blog might work at 100 ppi or less. A photo you want to print and frame will look much better if you scan it or shoot it at 600 ppi or higher. The higher the resolution, the larger the file — but that's OK, since digital storage is inexpensive these days. 

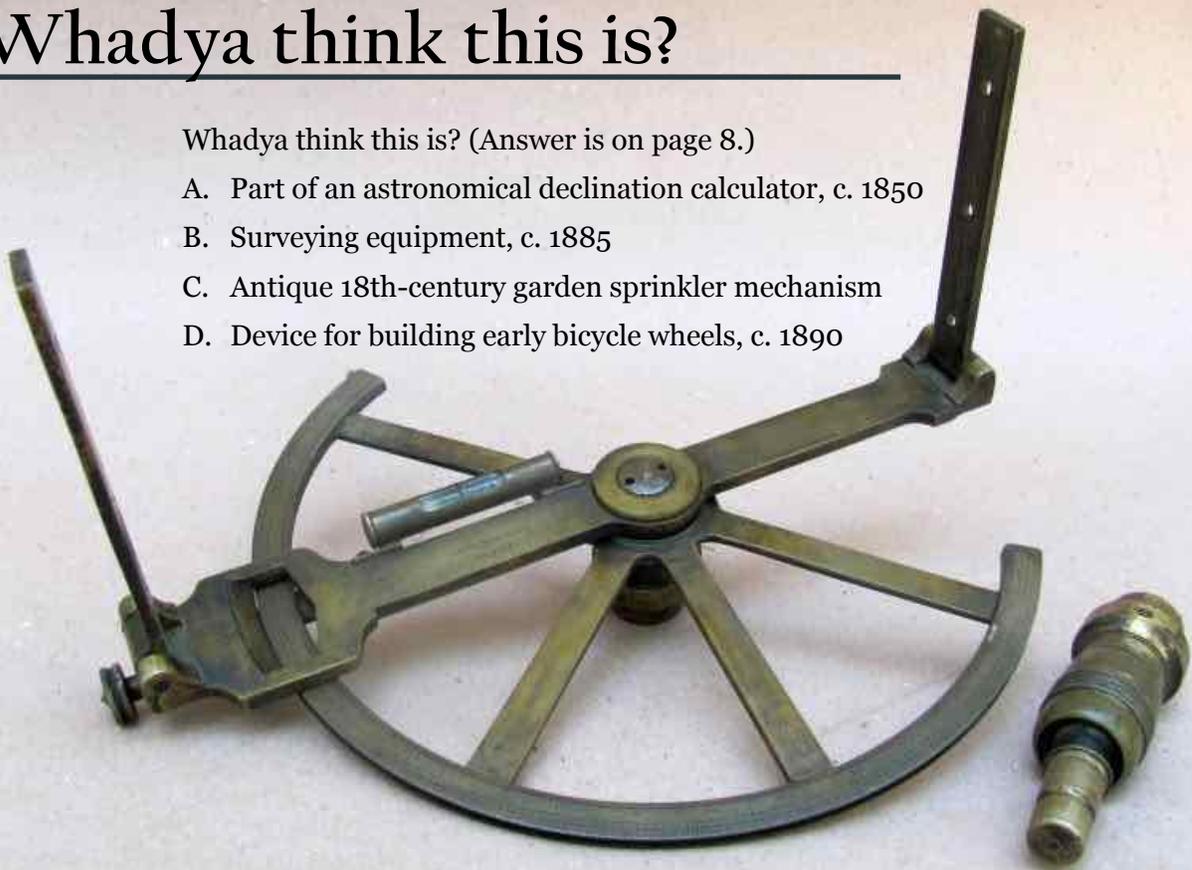


This photo looks smooth when zoomed out, but zooming in on a small portion of it shows the pixels, or digital building blocks, of the image. Creating digital images with sufficiently high resolution allows you to resize and edit a photo without worrying about "pixilation." (Illustration courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Whadya think this is?

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

- A. Part of an astronomical declination calculator, c. 1850
- B. Surveying equipment, c. 1885
- C. Antique 18th-century garden sprinkler mechanism
- D. Device for building early bicycle wheels, c. 1890



How I found it

Two children, double entries

By Richard Rands

As I work with census records over the years, one anomaly generates mixed reactions—sometimes I am frustrated, and other times I am delighted.

This happens when I discover that someone seems to have been double-counted in a census. The duplication can range from exactly duplicated records in different locations to similar entries appearing in families who could be close relatives.

And it can be a major pain or a wonderful breakthrough.

This became an even stranger case recently where I found two grandchildren in a family but could not identify anyone who could have been a parent of the grandchildren.

My task was to trace the ancestry of Edwin Spencer, an emigrant ancestor who arrived in America at Philadelphia on 5 May 1855 aboard the ship *Juventa* at age 30. A respectable paper trail of sources pointed to his activities in America, starting about fifteen years later, but he seemed to elude my efforts to find him in U.S. census records.

I even found him in the 1861 city directory for Philadelphia, as a weaver living at 1536 Bodine Ave.

I looked up Bodine Avenue on a current map of Philadelphia but found both a North and a South Bodine, so it wasn't helpful.

Then I ran across the diary of a man named Francis Astle, who had arrived in Philadelphia in 1860 and who mentioned having visited the Philadelphia home of Edwin Spencer of Arnold, Nottinghamshire, England, who "lived on Bodine Avenue about two doors down from Oxford Street."

I recalled that it was North Bodine that crossed Oxford Street on a current map of Philadelphia. (Never mind that today it is a vacant lot!) Then I discovered that the 1851 England Census entry for Edwin Spencer showed him residing in Arnold, Nottinghamshire. Also, according to a civil registration marriage record I ordered from the General Register Office in England, Edwin married Hannah Wardle.

These details were fitting nicely together, and I was feeling comfortable about my progress.

The next step was to trace the parents of Edwin Spencer and his wife, Hannah Wardle. On the civil marriage certificate, the name of Edwin's father looked like *Wm Spencer*. I foresaw a challenge because the family records had Edwin's father listed as

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53	Tolly Road	Joseph Wardle	Head	Mar	26
		Nancy Do	Wife	Mar	21
		Emma Do	Daughter		13
		Mary Do	Daughter		✓
54	Tolly Road	Edwin Spencer	Head	Mar	26
		Nancy Do	Wife	Mar	21
		Emma Do	Daughter		✓
		William Do	Son		3
		John Do	Son		8 Mo
		Edwin Spencer	Brother	26	22

1851 England Census entry showing the children living with their parents

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 6)

John Spencer, not William Spencer. Hannah's father was listed as Joseph Wardle.

Since it was late at night, I opted to work first on the Wardle family. I knew where the Wardle family was from: Arnold, Nottinghamshire. On the other hand, I wasn't certain where to start looking for the Spencer family.

Since Edwin and Hannah were married in 1845, I reasoned that Hannah might show up living with her parents in the 1841 England Census. Sure enough, in 1841, Joseph Wardle, 50, and his wife, Mary, 40, were living in Arnold, Nottinghamshire, with five children: Joseph, 14, Hannah, 12, Elizabeth, 9, Charles, 5, and William 2.

It is important to remember that in the 1841 England Census, the age for those aged 15 and older was supposed to be *rounded down* to the nearest five years. In this case, that meant that Joseph could have been anywhere from age 54 to 50, and Mary could have been between 44 and 40. Fortunately, England abandoned that goofy practice by the 1851 census. (Some 1841 census enumerators ignored the rule and listed actual ages.)

This entry gave me a good hit for Hannah, age 12, born about 1829 in Arnold, with no conflicting hits.

Shifting next to the 1851 England Census, I located the entry for Joseph and Mary Wardle, still residing in Arnold. As expected, the two older children, Joseph and Hannah, had left the family. The fourth child, Charles, was gone as well, leaving only Elizabeth and William still at home.

Hannah's absence fit well with her marriage to Edwin Spencer in 1845. But I would need to find a way

to validate that detail—a link between the Hannah married to Edwin Spencer and Hannah, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Wardle.

Then I noticed at the bottom of the 1851 census entry for Joseph and Mary Wardle were two grandchildren, Emma and William, aged 5 and 3. Their surname was difficult to decipher. The initial letter looked sort of like the letter *M*, and indeed, when I checked the index at Ancestry.com, the surname had been indexed as *Mencer*.

The 1841 England census listing for the Wardle family had listed two daughters, Hannah and Elizabeth. My working theory was that Hannah had married Edwin Spencer, and Elizabeth was still living at home as a single woman in 1851.

As I stared at my worksheets and studied the handwriting of the census enumerator, the similarity between *Mencer* and *Spencer* drifted into my thoughts. I pulled out my worksheet for Edwin and Hannah.

To my delight, I saw that the first two children for Edwin and Hannah were Emma and William, both listed in the same 1851 census, aged 5 and 3.

What looked like the letter *M* on the Wardle 1851 record was actually a poorly written *Sp*, making the children Emma and William Spencer—enumerated not only with their Spencer parents, but also in the home of their Wardle grandparents. Who knows what led to that anomaly of being enumerated twice?

I am a believer in genealogical synchronicity. I needed a link between the Hannah who married Edwin Spencer and the family of her likely parents, Joseph and Mary Wardle. I had ended up with the first two children of Edwin and Hannah enumerated twice in the same town in the same census, giving me just the link I needed. *Voilà!* 📄

Joseph Wardle	Head	Mar	61	Francis Ward Mencer	Mafford Grindon
Mary Do	Wife	Mar	40	Spencer of Home	Roll Arnold
Elizabeth Do	Daughter	12	12	Do	Do
William Do	Son	3	3	F. W. M	Do
Emma Spencer	Granddaughter			Scholier	Do
William Do	G. Son		3	Do	Do

1851 England Census entry showing the Spencer children living with their grandparents

What didja think it was? Were ya right?

(Answer to question on page 3:)

B. Surveying equipment, c. 1885. Although wooden surveying equipment was common until about 1800, brass instruments were common in America from about 1775 to 1975, replaced by aluminum. American instrument makers began finishing brass instruments with dark finishes to reduce glare and eyestrain and to promote even heating in sunlight to manage calibration. 

Smartphone adoption increases

How mobile are we? According to the Pew Research Center, nearly two-thirds (64%) of U.S. adults now own a smartphone (the type of cell phone that uses apps).

Because smartphones are the primary route of accessing the Internet for 7% of all smartphone users and for larger percentages among those in low-income rang-

es, almost half (46%) of all U.S. smartphone users say they “couldn’t live without” their smartphones.

Smartphone owners from all socioeconomic levels report using their phones for varied purposes, including education (which would include genealogy) and health; those with lower incomes also use it for finding job resources and submitting job applications.

“Nearly half (48%) of smartphone-dependent Americans have had to cancel or shut off their cell phone service for a period of time because the cost of maintaining that service was a financial hardship. About one-third report that they ‘frequently’ reach the maximum amount of data that they are allowed to consume as part of their cell phone plan.

The full report is online: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/> 

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 meetinghouse of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right). SVC GG is not affiliated with any church or other organization.

11 April 2015, 9–11 A.M.

- Azores/Portuguese research
- Data backup strategies
- Using Ancestral Quest
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Reunion 10 basics
- Getting started in genealogy

9 May 2015, 9–11 A.M.

- History of marriage for genealogy
- Bringing your family history to life
- Reunion 10 for the Mac
- Reunion 10 basics
- Getting started in genealogy 

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVC GG, 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.

SVC GG offers classes, seminars, and publications to help family his-

PastFinder

First place, Major Society Newsletter, 2013-14
First place, Local Society Newsletter, 2012
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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. 