

What we learned in October

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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

By Richard Rands

It was all about discovering our ancestors' records, but our October seminar afforded far more information about family history research than we could have imagined.

I personally came away with a significantly deeper respect for the focus and direction that FamilySearch's Executive Vice-President Rodney DeGiulio portrayed during his keynote presentations and his Q&A session.

For example, one of the startling announcements DeGiulio made was that FamilySearch is now expecting to complete the digitization of all the microfilms in the Granite Mountain Records Vault in about 3.5 years. The vault is a massive records storage site inside a mountain on the rim of the Salt Lake Valley in Utah.

I recall not many years ago when representatives of FamilySearch were talking about needing 220 years to finish the digitization of those same 2.4 million reels of microfilm.

What's fascinating about this startling reduction of time is the innovative way FamilySearch has brought together a multiplicity of resources to optimize the process. In addition to the group internal to FamilySearch that is constantly digitizing a considerable number of reels of microfilm, Ancestry.com has helped with scanning microfilm from the vault. Other partners of FamilySearch, including FindMyPast.com, MyHeritage.com, and AmericanAncestors.com, help in ways such as paying for indexing or new image acquisition.

Recently, subscription-based Ancestry.com released a U.S. Wills and Pro-

bate collection containing more than **170 million records** (See "How I Found It," page 8). Ancestry made the announcement with fanfare, emphasizing the exclusive nature of the indexed collection; the truth of the matter is that these records have been available on microfilm through the FamilySearch catalog for many years but previously

have not been indexed and thus searchable by name or keywords.

Ancestry.com used its own resources to make these films searchable online. DeGiulio indicated that more and more of the FamilySearch microfilms will become searchable ini-

tially at the partners' sites through this process.

Unfortunately for nonsubscribers, the contractual agreements for this process at a partner site can limit access to a **partner's own subscribers until the company has earned back the value of its investment in the collection**. After a specified time period has elapsed, generally just a few years, FamilySearch will be able to make the collection available for free at FamilySearch.org.

The time for this to happen varies

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About 300 participants attended the October 10 seminar, Discovering Our Ancestors' Records, sponsored by SVCGG and two local Family History Centers.

Outside and inside

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from collection to collection. The good news is that **the partners' websites are available for free use at local Family History Centers (FHCs)** through the FHC Portal (which links to premium websites through computers in FHCs). These agreements will play a big part in speeding up searchable online access to the millions of reels currently available only by using a microfilm reader in Salt Lake City or at a local FHC.

A second revelation that DeGiulio shared with us is that FamilySearch has 319 digital camera teams currently at work around the world capturing collections that are not among the 2.4 million reels already on hand.

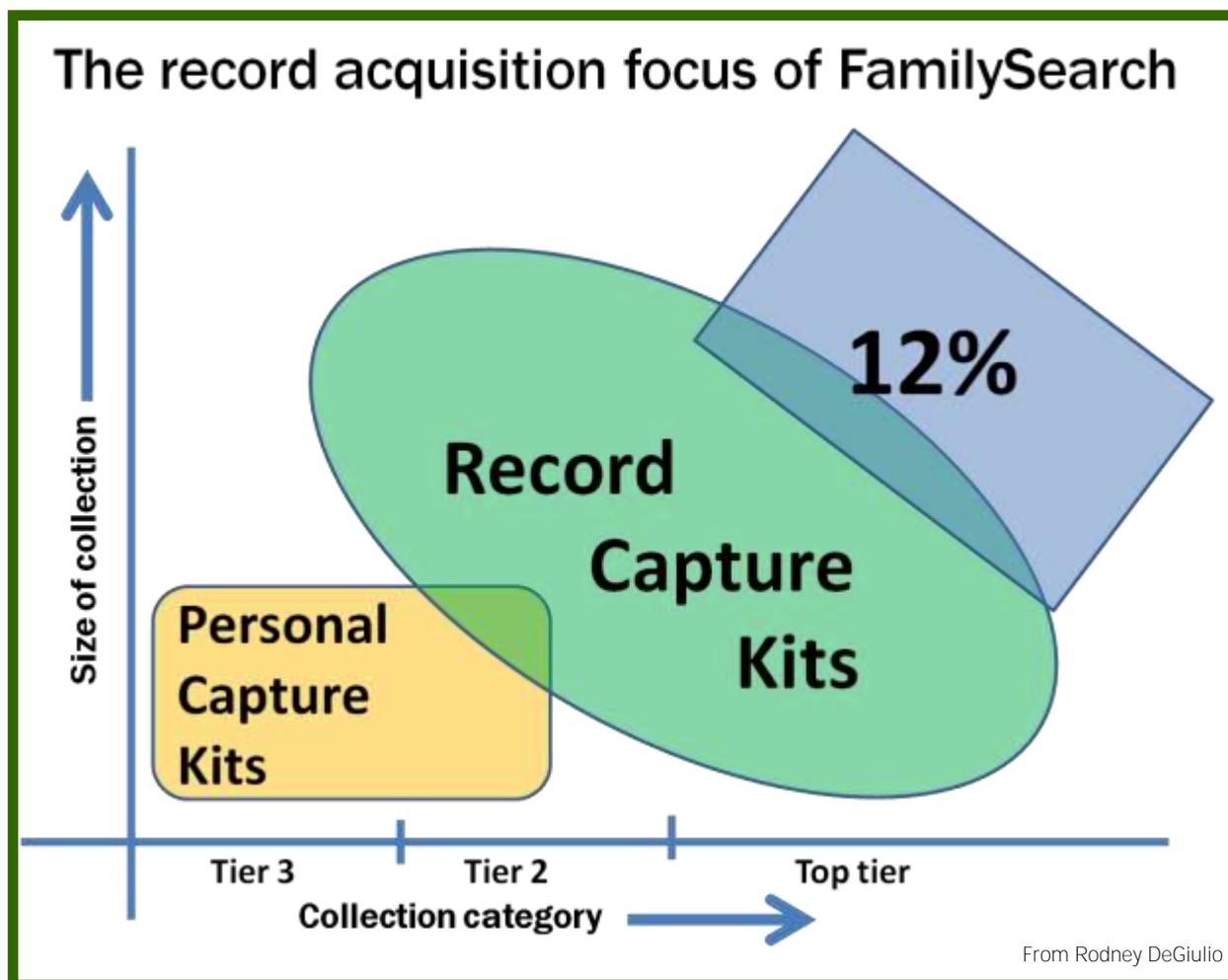
Furthermore, the rate at which owners of archives throughout the world are asking FamilySearch to help them preserve their collections is so rapid that camera teams have a 2.5-year backlog of projects

around the world to be digitized. If contracts currently in process are completed, the backlog will increase by 6 years to a total of 8.5 years.

FamilySearch plans to increase the number of digital cameras to 500 by the end of 2016, to keep the backlog as short as possible. More cameras mean more records will be preserved and more records we can access. But, of course, that increases the backlog of indexing that citizens of the genealogy community need to do.

Another useful item of information that DeGiulio shared is the way FamilySearch classifies types of record collections (see illustration, below). They use a three-tier concept that determines how they **allocate their resources**. **At the high end the "top-tier"** collections are those records that contain information about individuals that allows us to build family trees. This might include birth, christening, marriage, and death or burial dates and places —

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What we learned in October *(continued)*

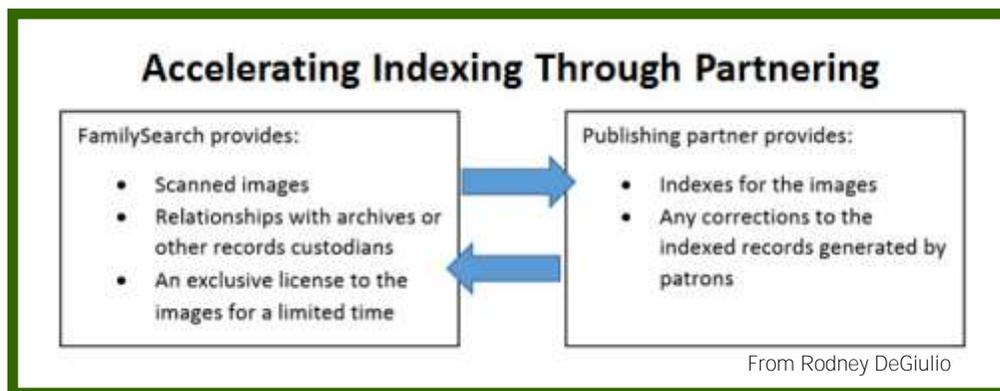
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vital records. These often are the original documents we all prefer to see.

The second-tier record collections consist of records from which we can deduce information to support the information we can get from top-tier collections. These might include obituaries, journals, Bibles, military service records, land records, and many other types that are not original records.

The third-tier collections are the records that provide the details and stories about our ancestors that help us build a family history. It is in these third-tier records that we find out who our ancestors were: occupations, religion, and life struggles and successes.

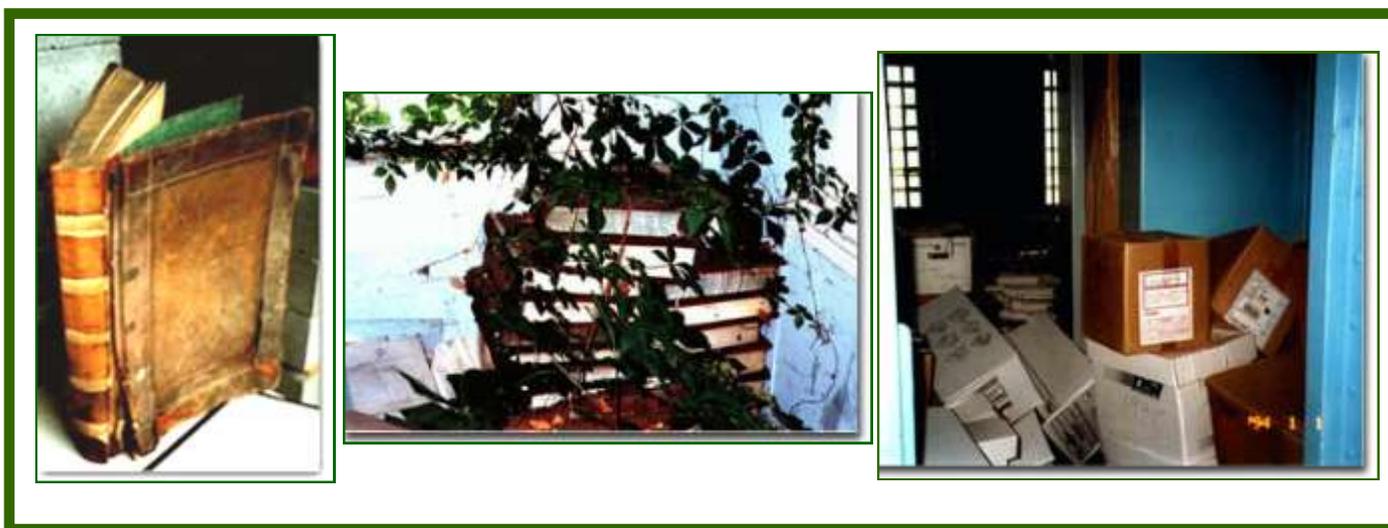
Whenever FamilySearch is asked to digitize a collection of records, their experts determine where it fits in the three tiers, and they focus on those in the top tier. In addition, the volume of records in the collection is considered: the bigger the collection, the more resources are put in place as quickly as possible.



DeGiulio indicated that their experts estimate that **about 12% of the world's top-tier** collections are in the FamilySearch-accessible collections. Although this percentage is respectable, it also makes it clear that FamilySearch has a lot of work ahead.

Those collections that are not top-tier are handled in a different way. FamilySearch is piloting a Record Capture Kit program in which a digitizing station is made available free of charge to local historical or genealogical societies that have volunteers who are willing to undertake digitizing record collections that are smaller, lower-tier collections. The current pilot of eight current sites could increase to hundreds of sites within the next few years, depending on pilot results and the level of engineering invest-

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These at-risk records in the state of Alabama are damaged, encased in foliage, or improperly stored. FamilySearch, through the Genealogical Society of Utah, has arranged to digitize some of them. Following the creation of digital images, volunteer and paid partner indexers can make the records searchable online ([images from www.archives.alabama.gov/oI_pubs/savrec.html](http://www.archives.alabama.gov/oI_pubs/savrec.html)).

What we learned in October *(continued)*

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ment required to scale the software and processes.

All the equipment and software to digitize a collection would be provided by FamilySearch, and the society would be responsible for managing its volunteers to use the equipment to capture records digitally.;

To cover the smaller, lowest-tier collections, FamilySearch is conceptually testing a possible Personal Digital Capture app that would allow smartphone users to capture images of a record collection and provide them for the FamilySearch archive.

This could be a significant method for covering the vast number of documents in private collections, in local society archives, or in small-town public libraries, that likely otherwise will never come to the attention of FamilySearch. Smartphone cameras have become sufficiently high resolution to be workable. The app will provide the technology to pass the images and their sources into the FamilySearch digital archive.

It isn't difficult to come away from all this with a strong sense of confidence and excitement in the long-term efforts at FamilySearch.

At the final session of the seminar, DeGiulio gave us an update on FamilySearch Indexing. He indicated that the more than 350,000 registered indexing volunteers have completed at least one batch in the previous 12 months. In any given month, a core of active indexers spend on average about 19 hours per month indexing. The average per month per person for all indexers is about 9 hours.

The result is that more than 6 billion names of individuals can be accessed using the free search engine at FamilySearch, with about 2 million new names being added every day. FamilySearch leaders — clearly not satisfied with even this amazing progress — have several activities in place to improve the efficiency of indexing efforts.

Part of the effort to recruit more indexers involves setting up computers in detention facilities and giving inmates an opportunity to learn valuable computer skills and to contribute to genealogy research at the same time. Another project that is increasing

the efficiency of indexing obituary records is to have some volunteers search newspapers for articles that contain anything about a death and tag them for others to actually index. Often such articles and obituaries are long and difficult to sort out, so having a two-step process makes the indexing go faster.

We have been hearing about a new release of the indexing software for several years. Some of us have been beta testers of the new browser-based program. Even so, we are still using the old Java-based program. The new program will give indexers a much larger selection of projects. DeGiulio gave us a hint that may explain the delay in releasing the new version. Most of us are aware that the FamilySearch indexing method involves a double-blind technique that requires two different individuals to index every image. Any discrepancy between the two indexers requires that the indexing be arbitrated by a third, more experienced person.

Analysis of this technique reveals that an unnecessarily high percentage of images requires arbitration, reducing the process's efficiency. **When a less experienced indexer submits a batch that also has been indexed by a highly experienced indexer, the batch almost always goes to arbitration, even though the more experienced indexer usually is correct.**

Consequently, the software is being enhanced with added intelligence to assign batches to similarly experienced indexers, so that fewer batches result in arbitration. **Some indexers' accuracy is so high that their results could be accepted without arbitration.**

Finally, FamilySearch has revived work on an old effort to use optical character recognition (OCR) to electronically scan documents and newspapers to extract names and details for automatic indexing. Improvements in OCR could make this feasible.

The enormous leap in computer speed and the sophistication of today's software make natural language processing a viable solution for automated indexing of billions of digitized records. When the images can be accurately deciphered electronically, we will see a major leap forward in our ability to research our ancestry. What an amazing era we are moving into! 



Ask The Doctor Digital image questions

Q I have a lot of questions about scanning and hundreds of old family photos to scan. Can you help me with some of the questions?

The Doctor lives to answer questions. In fact, The Doctor sometimes answers questions in *The Doctor's sleep. It never ends. Engage.*

I have heard that JPG is a “lossy” file format, and I want to be sure not to lose anything. If I make copies of a JPG file, do the files lose data? If I copy the file from cloud storage back onto my computer, do I lose data?

What causes loss in JPG files is opening them, editing them, resizing them, and saving/closing them again, so that the original has been changed. This doesn't always result in loss (depending on what you've done to change the image), but can involve substantial loss of digital information. Without making changes, you can copy the file digitally innumerable times without loss. Moving the file around does not cause loss.

I've heard I should always “preview” before scanning an image. Was that so that I could check resolution and size before saving it?

The Preview feature in scanning is to make sure you have the image, as well as to give you a chance to check the scanner settings. It's not unusual to get a photo too close to an edge of the scanner glass, for instance, there by cutting off part of the image. It's also annoying to have to correct. Previewing (at low resolution) allows you to correct such things before waiting for the scanner to chug its way across the image at 600 dpi.

Things change. I save a lot of newspaper articles and letters in PDF. Will PDF still open in 10 years? What else that I should know about might change?

The lifespan of PDF as a file type is anyone's guess. It's been around for at least a couple of dec-

ades, so it probably has as much chance of long-term survival as any other file type. New (and expensive) technology changes come along all the time, so we never know what to expect. Remember that you **won't be able to edit a PDF as readily as you can edit a JPG or other less-lossy file format. To edit a PDF, you'll find that you need to convert it into an editable image format.** You may need a Photoshop program (Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements).

Standard photo file types that we expect to last a long time include TIFF, PNG, and JPG. TIFF or PNG are good for an archival copy that you duplicate to create an editable file. JPG is good for lower-resolution files that you can email or post online. Photo enthusiasts often are enthused about RAW format photos, but beginners generally do well to deal with precooked photo formats.

Another question — is there a limit to the Kb (kilobytes) or Gb (gigabytes) that can be sent as attachments to an email?

The limitations on the size of files that can be sent through email depend on your email provider. **The Doctor's provider had a 10-Gb limit on attachment file size until last year, when the provider increased the limit to 20 Gb.**

You have to check with your email company to determine your limit. Also, not everyone's email can receive massive files. Generally, it's better to send only small files as attachments unless the recipient says it's OK to send a big one.

Once when The Doctor was jaunting abroad, a friend sent The Doctor a huge file of a dancing hamster or something — The Doctor was able to connect only by dial-up, and after wasting about an hour of dial-up time on a hotel phone at high long-distance rates, The Doctor called the email company in the United States and had them delete the file. The Doctor didn't even care what it contained — it was taking forever to download on dial-up, and it was preventing access to work-related email that might be important.



(Continued on page 6)

Ask The Doctor *(continued)*

(Continued from page 5)

Of course, not everyone is jaunting abroad, but many people retrieve their email through a mobile device, so remember that sending big files chews up **the allowance on the recipient's data plan. The long and short of it: it's best to post big photos online somewhere and just send people a link.** A site like Picasa works for this. Another approach is to email a large file to someone by uploading the file to a service like SendBigFiles.com, which allows you to upload a large file and notifies the recipient by email that a big file awaits to be downloaded at the recipient's convenience.

I'm sure you and your companion have computers that have been put together by you or for you. My desktop computer is now approaching the end of year 5, and I'm concerned each day about when it is going to crash. This was my first PC. I'd always had Apple computers, but then I had trouble finding a genealogy program that worked with Apple. I don't want a laptop, because I don't want to damage my neck by looking down so much. And I want a larger monitor.

We don't have any custom computers. My desktop computer (which I bought refurbished) is now 5+ years old. When the hard drive threatened to fail a few years ago, I took the computer to a repair shop and had them install a new, bigger hard drive. **My companion's desktop has been through that as well.**

You can use a laptop in place of a desktop computer and attach a separate keyboard and separate monitor to it so that it is more like working with a desktop computer.

For your comfort, get yourself a good ergonomic keyboard. I've outlived three ergonomic keyboards — they aren't necessarily expensive, and once you spend a few minutes getting used to one, you may find it pleasant to use. Same deal with an ergonomic mouse, an ergonomic chair, and (for different reasons) ergonomic shoes. I also like having a backlit keyboard so that I can work in a semi-dark room.

Check out various sizes of monitors before you decide on a size. At home, put it on phone books or a stand of some kind to get it to a height suitable for comfortable viewing. This reduces the likelihood of damaging your neck by peering down at a laptop.

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Document Holders

Document holders keep printed materials needed during computer tasks close to the user and the monitor. Appropriate placement of the holder may reduce or eliminate risk factors such as awkward head and neck postures, fatigue, headaches, and eye strain.



Keyboards

Proper selection and arrangement of the computer keyboard helps reduce exposure to awkward postures, repetition, and contact stress.



Monitors

Choosing a suitable monitor and placing it in an appropriate position helps reduce exposure to forceful exertions, awkward postures, and overhead glare. This helps prevent possible health effects such as excessive fatigue, eye strain, and neck and back pain.



Pointer/Mouse

In addition to the conventional mouse, there are trackballs, touch pads, finger tip joysticks, and pucks, to name a few. Selection and placement of a pointer/mouse is an important factor in creating a safe computer workstation.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has advice on equipment to computer work.

Whadya think this is?

Whadya think this is? (Answer is on page 16.)

- A. Artificial crocodile nose
- B. Musical instrument for children
- C. South African soccer fan's noisemaker**
- D. Device for drying mittens
- E. Volleyball whistle



Ask The Doctor *(continued)*

(Continued from page 6)

I also have a smaller back-up monitor in case the big one quits or in case I want to have two computers going at once on my desk. Sometimes that's handy. So far the monitors work fine, but monitors can go out suddenly without warning. Sometimes when they seem dead, it's just a setting that needs adjusting, but sometimes they do simply die. Like goldfish.

Good genealogy software is available for both PC and Mac these days. For Mac, some like Reunion, some like Mac Family Tree, and some like Family Tree Maker for Mac. For PC, options include Personal Ancestral File, Ancestral Quest, RootsMagic, and Legacy Family Tree, among many others. Try free versions of software with features that appeal to you.

Do you have an independent, expensive scanner at home? Do you do important scanning at a Family History Center or library?

We don't do "expensive" anything, by and large. We have different scanners for different purposes. We have an all-purpose flatbed scanner that's about 15 years old now. We may replace it to get one with a larger scanner glass, but it still works great.

I have a travel scanner (Canon and Epson make USB-driven travel-size flatbed scanners) that has **been with us on those jaunts abroad. It's convenient** to have a scanner powered by a laptop.

We don't have any expensive scanners, although we see people with them at archives on occasion. I've never used the scanner at the FHC, although I learned how (it required special settings on the computers) so that I could help patrons who might want to scan. My guess is that even FHCs that have a scan-

ner might not always have staff on duty who know how to use it.

Some people have asked me if they should invest in a stand-alone scanner or should buy a good all-in-one printer/scanner.

While The Doctor does appreciate a good multi-function machine that will scan, print, manage faxes, and wash dishes, the final choice depends on what you want to do, what you need, and what you can afford. If you've already got a good printer, you might not need an all-in-one. If sending and receiving faxes **isn't important to you, you might not need that feature. (It's easy these days to send a fax over the Internet using an online program such as FaxZero.com, or many others.)** If you have neither a good printer nor a good scanner, then an all-in-one might be useful.

People who don't have much to scan or can't afford a scanner might find good support at local libraries — the Santa Clara City Library has multiple scanners available for public use, for example. Also, check with a local Family History Center. And ask your friends at SVC GG, which has many scanner-enabled participants.

So, Doc, tell me what you really think.

Since you asked...

You is the operative word. You can create good scans if you become familiar with the equipment and learn to manage and edit digital images. Rely on tutorial books (try those by Scott Kelby, or *Digital Imaging Essentials* by Geoff Rasmussen). Use digital editing software until (1) you are confident and (2) the results look good.



How I found it Chasing Chancy's will

By Richard Rands

It was exciting to discover that Ancestry.com had recently announced the release of 170 million newly digitized *and* indexed U.S. wills and probate records, largely extracted from the hundreds of reels of microfilm stored at FamilySearch. This highly useful collection is a result of Ancestry's partnership with FamilySearch, discussed in the cover article in this issue.

To be specific, having access to wills and probate records is an effective way to uncover the married names of female ancestors who disappear in our research because we have no clue whom they married. When the married daughters of an ancestor are mentioned in a will, they often are listed by married name, giving us a hard and fast link to their parents.

This new collection has some caveats. First, we are warned that only the testators and testatrices are indexed – that is, the persons who are deceased. None of the heirs, witnesses, or others mentioned have been indexed. The rest will be added as time goes on. Furthermore, records from Nevada, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Montana, and more will be coming soon.

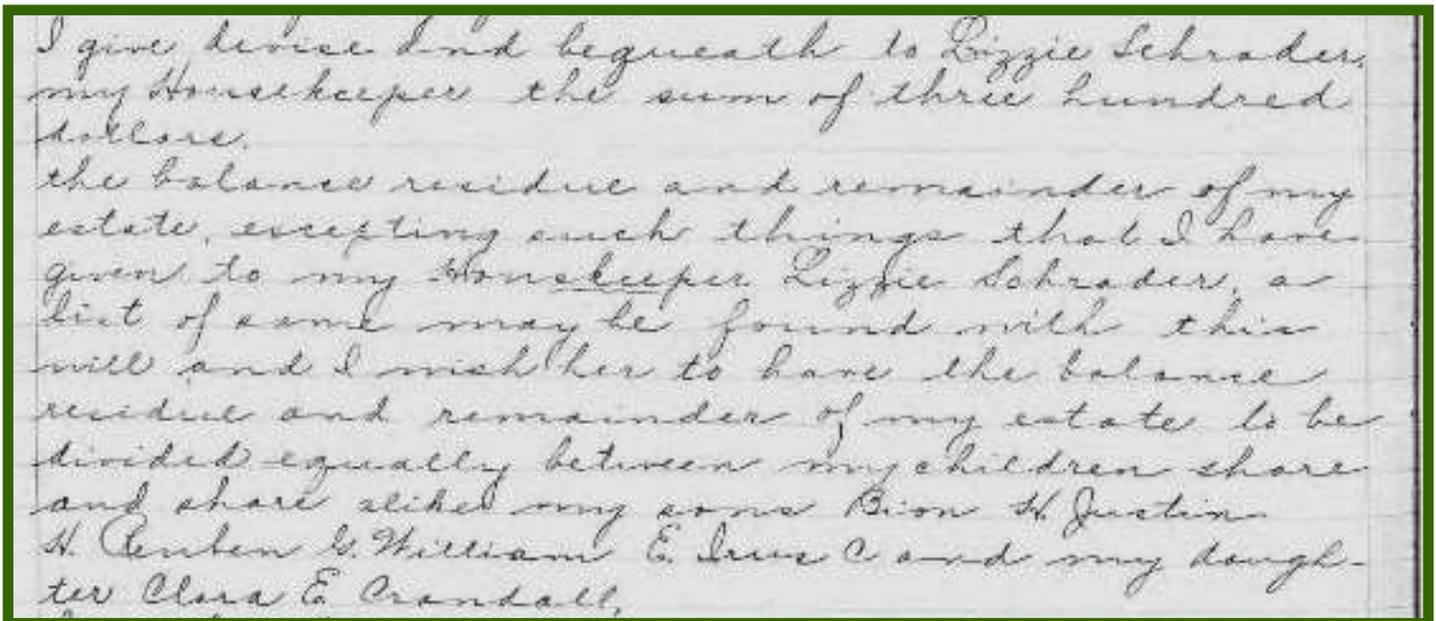
I have been returning to the many cases in my research projects where I could not trace female descendants. One such case concerns the family of Chancy K. Wixom and his wife, Mary, nee Hawk, who resided in LaSalle County, Illinois.

My investigation showed that Chancy and Mary had six children, the oldest being Clara E. Wixom, and the remaining five being sons, who were easily traced via public records. My research had narrowed the possibilities for Clara's married names to several options, but I lacked sufficient evidence to settle on the correct name.

Using Ancestry.com's new U.S. wills and probate collection, I ran a search for all the Wixoms in Illinois, resulting in a list with five hits, Chancy S. Wixom being one of them. I assumed the discrepancy in the middle initial (*K* vs *S*) was probably a transcription error and opened the file for Chancy S. Wixom, linked to the Illinois, Wills and Probate Records, volume L, covering 1902-1904.

According to my records, Chancy died on 24 October 1902 at age 80. The first image was image 23, an

(Continued on page 9)



A segment of the will by Chancy S. Wixom, leaving a bequest to his housekeeper for her years of service, and the balance to his children.

How I found it *(continued)*

(Continued from page 8)

index page indicating that Chancy S. Wixom's file is on page 113. Advancing through the images in the file to page 113, which is located on image 81, I **found the beginning of Chancy's four-page administration letter and his will.**

The first paragraph of the probate court's transcription of Chancy's will states, "On this day of December A.D. 1902 comes Montford Crandall" who was declaring before the court that he was the designated administrator for Chancy's estate.

Crandall was one of the names I suspected to be Clara's married name. Further on in the document, the will stated that Chancy died on 24 October 1902 in LaSalle County, Illinois, matching my research and adding support to the argument that this will was the same Chancy I was researching.

At the beginning of the will, Chancy bequeathed \$300 to his housekeeper, Lizzie Schrader. This curious entry **helped locate Chancy's entry in the 1900 U.S. Census, which I had been unable to locate because Chancy's name was spelled *Calsia S Wixom* but was listed with a servant named Lizzie Schroder.**

Residing next door in the 1900 Census was an **Elmer Wixom, not yet linked to Chancy and Mary's family, and opening up an entirely new avenue of research. Elmer turned out to be Chancy's nephew, a new branch on the Wixom tree.**

Back to Chancy's will: The main portion stated that the estate was to be "divided equally between my children share and share alike [to] my sons Bion H. Hustin H. Reuben G. William E. Irus C. and my daughter Clara E. Crandall." At the end, it appointed his son-in-law, Montford Crandall, to be the executor.

I now had confirmation that Clara married Montford Crandall, and also had an illustration of how the wills and probate collection at Ancestry.com can be invaluable for research efforts. I have used this

collection on numerous additional projects with comparable results. Even if you do not have a subscription to Ancestry.com, it is well worth your time to visit your local Family History Center or a public library where you have free access to Ancestry.com.

Using this collection

Once you are on the Ancestry.com search page, scroll down until you see the category among the Special Collections on the right side of the screen titled *Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills*. Within that category, the first entry is *U.S. Wills and Probates*. Click on that link to go to the search screen where you can begin your search.

I recommend entering only a surname and a broad location. Be careful not to be too specific about the year of death, because often probate did not take place until years or decades after your ancestor's death.

Finally, don't be reluctant to look for a probate file for an ancestor who you believe did not leave an estate worth being probated. I found one for a second-great-grandfather, who

the family had thought was dimly poor and would have left nothing.

Thirteen years after his death the family discovered that, without telling his family, he had sold a small piece of property just before he died and had deposited the money, \$1,000, in a local bank.

Later, when word of the land sale got out, a son-in-law filed a probate, but because he was not a Rands, my previous research had never uncovered it.

Since the Ancestry.com collection is indexed by the name of the testator, the probate filing showed up in this new sweep of old research projects.

As time passes and more names in the files are indexed, your searching has the possibility of becoming more fruitful. Also, eventually this collection will become free to everyone at FamilySearch.org.

Happy searching! Please share with us your successes. 

Finding new collections

FamilySearch finally has assigned one of its staff to post a weekly blog that lists all of the new record collections that have been added to its search site.

In the past, researchers were required to scan through the lengthy list of all digitized and indexed collections to look for recently updated entries. Few did it regularly because it was time-consuming. Now, thanks to a staffer named Logan Steele at FamilySearch, we are able to access a consolidated list of both digitized and indexed collections added since the previous week. These posts seem to have started in mid-August of this year.

The new collections blog is mixed in with all the other blogs posted on the FamilySearch blog page, but it can be singled out using several convenient methods available to anyone:

One method is to perform a search at Google, Bing, Yahoo, or another general search engine with the phrase *new familysearch collections update*. The results may be ranked by the number of hits they have received at the search site. You will need to scan the list to find the latest blog entry.

A second method is to establish a Google Alert using the same search criteria shown above and linked to your personal email address. Every time a new blog entry is posted, Google will send you an email with a link to the new post. You should receive an email once each week shortly after the blog is posted every Monday.

A third method is to take advantage of a system on the Internet called a *blog feed* that taps into the automatic feeds triggered whenever a blog site has a new post. You will need to download a free program called a *feed reader* (or *feedreader*). Perform a Google, Bing, or Yahoo search for *feedreader* and you will see a list of hundreds of free versions of

New FamilySearch Collections Update: October 19, 2015

October 23, 2015 By Logan Steele



Apart from a very significant addition to the Italy Napoli Civil Registration (State Archive) 1809-1865 collection, this week is predominantly about new, free US marriages and passenger lists collections. Search marriage records from 11 states, including Louisiana Parish Marriages 1837-1957, New York County Marriages 1847-1848, 1908-1936, Ohio County Marriages 1789-2013, and Pennsylvania Civil Marriages 1677-1950. Check out all of the new collections below.

COLLECTION	INDEXED RECORDS	DIGITAL RECORDS	COMMENTS
Colorado County Marriages 1864-1995	129,976	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection
Iowa County Marriages 1838-1934	35,637	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection
Italy Napoli Civil Registration (State Archive) 1809-1865	0	1,628,616	Added images to an existing collection
Kentucky County Marriages 1797-1954	331,212	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection
Louisiana New Orleans Passenger Lists 1820-1945	1,340,028	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection
Louisiana Parish Marriages 1837-1957	1,023,241	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection
New Hampshire Marriage Certificates 1848-1959	96,666	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection
New York County Marriages 1847-1848, 1908-1936	474,679	0	Added indexed records to an existing collection

A recent collections update blog from FamilySearch lists new collections, the number of indexed records, the number of digital (unindexed) records, and the position of the records in existing or new collections.

feedreader programs that you can download onto your computer. Once a program is installed, run it and set up a link to the following url:

familysearch.org/blog/en/tag/collections-update/

From that point on, every time you run your feedreader program, you will get a list of the blog posts in descending chronological order. As the list grows longer and longer, you will always know which is the latest entry – the one on the top of the list.

The blog post (see above) consists of the name of each collection, two columns of numbers, and comments. The first of the two numeric columns shows the number of newly indexed records, and the second shows the number of newly digitized records. The comments typically indicate whether the additions are for an existing or a new collection.

Every researcher should be cognizant of new additions to be aware when new avenues open for further research on ancestral lines. This new service at FamilySearch greatly facilitates the process. 

Free genealogy websites

By Lesly Klippel

Lots of free genealogy help is available on the web. Use a search engine (such as Google.com or Bing.com) to search for *free genealogy sites*, and you will come up with many gems to explore, including these:

MyGenealogyHound.com. This site features **biographies from “mug books” published in the late 1800s and early 1900s in U.S. counties.** While the list of states is small (only 10, mostly Midwestern), if the county you want is there, you are likely to find at least a silver nugget of information about your ancestors. You can subscribe to a free newsletter notifying you of additions to the site. The maps show every little community in the county. The site also has a vintage postcard and photo section. Although the site does have some ads, they are not intrusive.



A postcard view of the Cliff House, built in 1896 but destroyed by fire in 1907, at the edge of San Francisco. From the images collection at MyGenealogyHound.com.

DeathIndexes.com. This directory lists links to websites containing death indexes, listed by state and county. Some links are to obscure free listings of deaths from newspapers, compiled obituary indexes, indexes to probate files, cemetery records, and much more. Very impressive. Check it out.

FamilyHistoryDaily.com. This genealogy search engine accesses genealogy-related sites such as regional archives and government record pages. I entered my maiden surname, which is somewhat unusual, and was surprised at the number of hits (115,000 in 0.33 seconds) containing some new things for my research.

FamilyTreeSearcher.com. If you are looking for online trees, this site will search ten of the best of them at the same time. Once you enter the required information in their search template, you can search RootsWeb, Computerized Ancestor, FamilySearch, Ancestry Public Trees, One World Tree, World Vital Records, One Great Family, My Trees, MyHeritage or Geneanet with the click of **a button. It's a big time saver in finding previous research on your family.**

Search screen at FamilyTreeSearcher.com.

(Continued on page 12)

Free genealogy websites *(continued)*

(Continued from page 11)

Findagrave.com. The best collection of grave marker information on the Internet, this site now includes information for 138 million graves, plus a lot of genealogy information, photos, and links to

relatives that have been added by users. Be sure to check the picture of the marker if available, as some transcriptions have errors. Even though there is no grave (death at sea, missing body, etc.), the death may be noted in the site.

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Nancy Hanks Lincoln

Memorial Photos Flowers Share Edit

Birth: Feb. 5, 1784
Campbell County
Virginia, USA

Death: Oct. 5, 1818
Gentryville
Spencer County
Indiana, USA

Nancy was a Virginia native, moving to Kentucky where she met and married her husband Thomas Lincoln. She gave birth to three children. The Lincoln's moved to Spencer County in southern Indiana in 1816 and constructed a cabin on Little Pigeon Creek. She soon took ill and struggled between life and death for a week. She passed away a mere two years after arriving in Indiana. Her husband Thomas constructed a coffin from pine cut from the property. He took the body via a sled to a nearby pioneer hill-top cemetery near the Lincoln farm. There was no religious cleric in the region so with Thomas Lincoln, his children and a few neighbors, Nancy Lincoln was interred without a formal religious service. The grave has endured a perilous trip to the present time. Other graves in the tiny cemetery, as well as that of Nancy's were lost. Finally a family friend, erected a marker in an approximate location. Over the years, the site has been vandalized and allowed to become over grown with trees and brush. Only when the fame of her son President Lincoln was established, was a concerted effort made to preserve the grave location. Life was hard in the wilderness and a man with children could not remain without a wife for long. Thomas Lincoln quickly remarried. Abraham Lincoln was nine at the time of his mother's death.

Family links:
Parents:
Lucy Hanks Sparrow (1767 - 1833)

Spouse:
Thomas Lincoln (1778 - 1851)

Children:
Sarah Lincoln Grigsby (1807 - 1828)*
Abraham Lincoln (1809 - 1865)*
Thomas Lincoln (1811 - 1815)*



Added by: [Warrick L. Barrett](#)



Added by: [Mike Reed](#)



Cemetery Photo
Added by: [Debbie Hovens](#)

This entry at FindaGrave.com for **Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks**, shows her headstone and related scenes from the cemetery where she is buried in Indiana; Lincoln is buried in Illinois. FindaGrave **"memorial" entries are provided** by volunteer contributors; the information often has no documentation, so it should not be treated as the final word. However, it often can provide clues and links that point you toward sources of information.

Free genealogy *websites* (continued)

This is a site to search often for new information about your family.

SteveMorse.org. What began as an easy way to search the Ellis Island website has developed into a one-step search engine for passenger lists on the web.

While some links take the user to Ancestry and a subscription is required, many of the searches are in the National Archives, FamilySearch, and other free databases.

It also has a lot of handy tools such as a Perpetual Calendar, historical calendar conversions, foreign character conversions and much, much more.

Ancientfaces.com. This is a fun site with user-submitted photos and biographies. While much of the site contains biographies of people born in the 1900s, there are some older gems.

Putting in my maiden surname netted me a photo taken in about 1874 of a family in my database and another one taken in 1887 of a relative holding her three-month-old baby, pictures I never even knew about. Try this site and you might get lucky, too! Also, you can upload and share your photos and **possibly make contact with relatives you don't know** you have. 



Step One-Step Webpages by [Stephen P. Morse](#)

This site contains tools for finding immigration records, census records, vital records, and for dealing with calendars, maps, foreign alphabets, and numerous other applications. Some of these tools fetch data from other websites but do so in more versatile ways than the search tools provided on those websites.

[Public Appearances](#) [List of Lectures](#)

[About this Website and how to use it](#)

FINDYOURANCESTORS Search Billions of Records
FIRST NAME LAST NAME LOCALITY Any 

- [Ellis Island Search Forms and Ship Arrivals](#)
- [Castle Garden years \(1855-1891\) plus other New York Arrivals](#)
- [New York Passengers \(1820-1891\): Searching for New York Passengers up to 1891 in One Step](#)
- [All NY Passengers \(1820-1957\): Searching for Ellis Island and Castle Garden Passengers in One Step](#)
- [All NY Manifests \(1820-1957\): Direct Access to Ellis Island and Castle Garden Manifests in One Step](#)
- [All NY Ship Lists \(1820-1957\): Searching for Ships in the Ellis Island and Castle Garden Microfilms in One Step](#)
- [Castle Garden Browser: Browsing the Castle Garden Database in One Step \(castlegarden.org\)](#)
- [Castle Garden Passengers: Searching the Castle Garden Database in One Step \(castlegarden.org\)](#)
- [Castle Garden Destination Codes: List of Destination Codes \(castlegarden.org\)](#)
- [AncestryLibrary.com/AncestryInstitute.com: Using Ancestry from a library or institute in One Step](#)



AncientFaces.com includes photos that, like this one, are unidentified, as well as photos of specified people. Site visitors sometimes are able to help identify a photo — if not by person, perhaps by photo type or setting.

Revisiting Google for genealogy

By Lesly Klippel

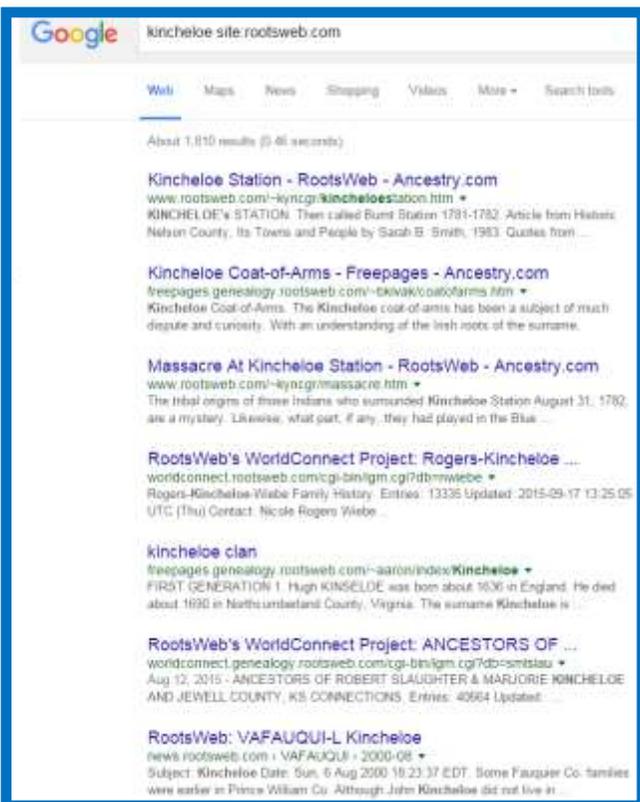
Part 1 of 2

Google is a search engine with the mission of **organizing the world's information and making it universally accessible and useful.**

Started in 1998 as a research project at Stanford University, it has grown to be one of the most valuable companies in the world. Much of its revenue is from advertising, so most of its services are free to users.

While it was not designed specifically for genealogists, many of its tools are particularly useful for researchers. This article will outline some helpful Google services and some tips for using them more effectively.

Google Chrome is its web browser. If you choose to use it as your default browser, you should down-



Google site search for Kincheloe on RootsWeb

load the toolbar so you can use the URL field at the top of the screen as a search field, a click-saver.

Its email service, gmail.com, is free. You can set up as many Gmail accounts as you want. I have one account that I use when ordering products on the Internet which inevitably gets filled with advertising spam, and another private account that I use for family and friends that gets very little spam.

Google's
Vision Statement:
To organize the
world's information
and make it
universally
accessible
and useful.

Site search. Google will search through a website such as Familysearch.org, Rootsweb.com, or Findagrave.com. In the search field, type what you are looking for, such as a surname and the word *site:* plus the name of the site, including its extension. For example: *kincheloe*

site:rootsweb.com brings me 442 results in the various databases and message boards on Rootsweb. It would take some time to search each of those sections of Rootsweb individually. Google did it in less than a second.

The same search on Genealogybank.com returned 66 results, neatly organized by type of article and place — a huge time-saver in your research. A hint for GenealogyBank: sort the results by oldest items to get the earlier years listed first. By the way, GenealogyBank.com gives a 30-day free trial. By using **Google to search the site in addition to the site's** search engine, you could do a lot of research in the free month trial.

Using wording and punctuation. By putting quotation marks around a name in the search field, you dramatically improve the efficiency of the search. For example, **"theodore a klippel"** returns only links to records about my father-in-law. Leaving out the quotation marks returns any results for *theodore* or *klippel*.

If the name you are researching is more common, you can narrow down your results by adding an identifying factor such as the word *genealogy* or **the spouse's surname.**

For example, entering **"peter johnson" eden utah**, brought me some links to enlightening

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Revisiting Google for genealogy *(continued)*

(Continued from page 14)

information about my great-grandfather that I had never seen before. Use a minus sign (-) to exclude **results you don't want such as** *roosevelt -franklin, washington -George, or jackson - michael*. Use a tilde (~) (found to the left of the 1 on the keyboard) **to signify "anything like" such as** *klippel ~ genealogy* to find any mention of that surname in a family history context. You can use *klippel ~death* to find any mention of graves, headstones, cemeteries, or death records.

Google Alerts is a service allowing you to have Google search continually for your search string and send you an email when something new concerning it appears on the Internet. Go to Google Alerts, type your search string, and click the Show Options button next to the Create Alert button. Choose how often you want Google to return the results, such as once a day, once a week, or as it happens. You also have options about what type of web sites to search, in what language to search, and which part of the world to search.

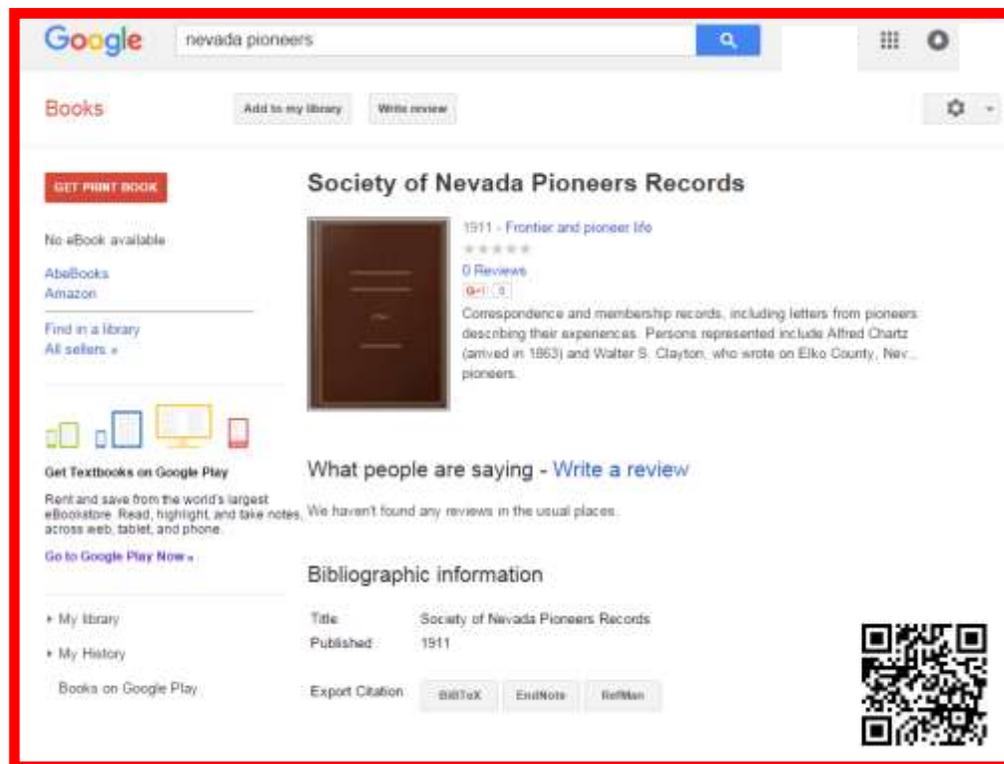
You do not have to have a Gmail account to use this service. Simply enter your email in the *Deliver to* field and Google will send you an email when something new about your search string appears on the Internet. Let Google work while you sleep!

Google Books has thousands of digitized books with genealogy information. If you find a book with information about your family, look at the options. You may be able to read the entire book on your screen. If it is still under copyright, you can learn where to buy the book or you can use Worldcat to see which libraries have the book in their collections (see example below).

Google Docs enables you to create documents and presentations and share them with others. For example, you can create a form with questions to be sent to family and friends that they can answer, such as plans for a family reunion or a request for updated birth, marriage and death information.

Google Maps lets you have a street view of most places in the United States and of many

(Continued on page 16)



What didja think it was? Were ya right?

B. (Answer to question on page 7:) B. Musical instrument for children: Tonette. Lucky for you if you never encountered this device, which was a type of inexpensive, plastic flute. No matter how talented the child, it was nearly impossible to make a tolerable sound with this device. Its role was to serve as a gateway to better instruments. Although it was used to encourage budding musical careers, it may have deterred some, as well. 

Revisiting Google for genealogy (continued)

(Continued from page 15)

places throughout the world. Download Google Earth so that you can view places the way they looked when the Google car with the camera on top cruised around the place taking pictures.

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).

14 November 2015, 9–11 A.M.

- Timelines and research
- Free software utilities for family historians
- Reunion 11 for the Mac
- Reunion 11 basics
- Research with Lesly
- Getting started in genealogy

No meeting in December 2015

9 January 2016, 9–11 A.M.

- Genealogy research skills
- Legacy Family Tree features
- Reunion 11 for the Mac (basics and beyond)
- Getting started with indexing (workshop) 

Just type *maps* in the URL field of Chrome and Google Maps will appear with a search field for locations. You can type an address or city or town name in any country. I tried Azores and Taipei and got street views **for both. However, I couldn't get** street views in Mozambique, but Google knew how to spell it.

Since I am currently researching **my husband's relatives in** Alsace, I typed *tagsdorf*, and Google found it in France. After pulling the little yellow-man icon from a right-hand corner to the main street in town, I was immediately looking at the place **where my husband's ancestors** walked so many years ago, which **hasn't changed much. I "walked"** through the entire town without leaving my comfortable chair.

For further information, see a series of videos on YouTube entitled **"The Google Genealogist"** by Devin Ashby; it demonstrates other tools. 

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

Listed in the Periodical Source Index (PERSI)

Website: www.svcgg.org

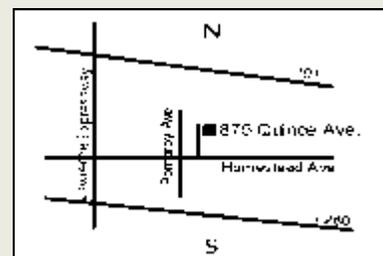
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Meeting site has ample free off-street parking, with a wheelchair-accessible entrance at the front.

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. 