

Breaking Down Brick Walls: Strategies for Success

Family Ties: Using Extended Family to Circumnavigate a Brick Wall

Lindsay Fulton, VP of Research and Library Services lindsay.fulton@nehgs.org

Researching an ancestor's family can help:

1. Determine parents
2. Learn the maiden name of a wife/mother
3. Discover immigrant origins

Locating Potential Family Members in Records-what to note

1. Cemetery Records
 - a. Individuals buried around your ancestor
 - b. Information on burial cards
2. Census Records-what to note
 - a. All people living in a household
 - b. Birthplaces
 - c. Other households with the surname living in the same town/county
 - d. Professions
3. Church Records
 - a. Religious Affiliation
 - b. Admission to Church
 - c. Witnesses of baptisms/marriages
4. City Directories
 - a. How common is the surname?
 - b. Proximity
 - c. Profession
5. Local Histories/Genealogies
 - a. List of early/prominent settlers?
 - i. When they came to the area
 - b. Origins
 - c. Vital Record information
6. Land Records
 - a. Frequent land transactions with individuals
 - b. Frequent use of same witnesses
 - c. Large amount of land sold for little money
 - d. The phrase "in consideration of love and affection"
 - i. Denotes a close familial relationship



7. Naturalization Records
 - a. Birthplace
 - i. Sometimes specific, sometimes not
 - b. birthdate
 - c. Witnesses
8. Newspaper Articles/Obituaries
 - a. Obituaries can provide information on next of kin
 - b. Society section
 - i. Individuals visiting family members
 - ii. Participants in a wedding ceremony
9. Probate Records
 - a. Wills
 - b. Division of Estate may list heirs, though no relationship may be listed
 - c. All records in a probate file are important
10. Town Records
 - a. Pinpoint when an individual/family arrived in an area
 - b. Movement of a family

Case Study: Immigrant Origins

Step 1: Start with the Known

Focus on records within the United States first

Step 2: Locating Potential Family Members

1. Locate extended family in census records (i.e. siblings, nieces, nephews, in-laws)
2. Locate religious ceremonies pertaining to vital records
 - a. If a couple is married in a church, pull the original marriage record for witnesses
3. Search Vital Record databases for individuals with same parents' names

Step 3: Take Siblings Forward

1. Vital Records that may list that list a specific birthplace
2. Naturalization Records
 - a. Hopefully will list a specific place or region in native country

Step 4: Back to Ireland

1. Determine what kind of records exist/where to locate them
 - a. Databases
 - b. Microfilm
 - c. Local Repositories

2. If records are searchable, try searching with parents names
3. Verify origin/family by searching for siblings

Tip: Don't get too attached to ages. For many immigrants, ages can fluctuate based on the record, so look in a range.

Bibliography

Croom, Emily Anne, *The Sleuth Book for Genealogists, Strategies for more successful family history research*, (Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2000).

Web Sites

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