

GEDCOM Files & Tree Consistency Checkers

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Let's Get Started

- Interesting, Useful, Actionable
- Why Should I care about GEDCOM?
- Why should I care about Tree Checkers?



GEDCOM

- A file format for transferring genealogy data between software platforms
- acronym standing for *Genealogical Data Communication*
- Developed by the LDS Church – version 1 in 1984
- Well established and stable standard
- Current version (5.5) specified in 1996
- Used by most genealogy software packages and platforms



GEDCOM

- Text File
- Readable, but not intended for human consumption
- Contains most family tree information and can be used to reproduce your tree
- Can NOT transfer graphics or attached files

```
0 HEAD
1 SOUR The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding
2 VERS 11.1.1
2 NAME The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding (R)
2 CORP Next Generation Software, LLC
3 ADDR Sandy, UT
1 FILE Alford.ged
1 GEDC
2 VERS 5.5
2 FORM LINEAGE-LINKED
1 CHAR ANSI
1 SUBM @SUB1@
0 @SUB1@ SUBM
1 NAME Bob Alford
1 EMAIL rsalford@gmail.com
0 @I1@ INDI
1 NAME David Burton /Alford/
2 GIVN David Burton
2 SURN Alford
1 SEX M
1 BIRT
2 DATE 16 JAN 1909
2 PLAC Lebanon Springs, New York
1 DEAT
2 DATE 10 OCT 1984
2 PLAC Schenectady, New York
1 FAMC @F3@
1 FAMS @F1@
1 FAMS @F2@
1 CHAN
2 DATE 02 Aug 2017
0 @I2@ INDI
1 NAME Alice Mary /Lynes/
2 GIVN Alice Mary
2 SURN Lynes
```



GEDCOM Uses

- Transferring or copying trees between software systems
- Tree Archiving or Backup
- Giving a copy of your tree to family or friends



How I Use GEDCOM

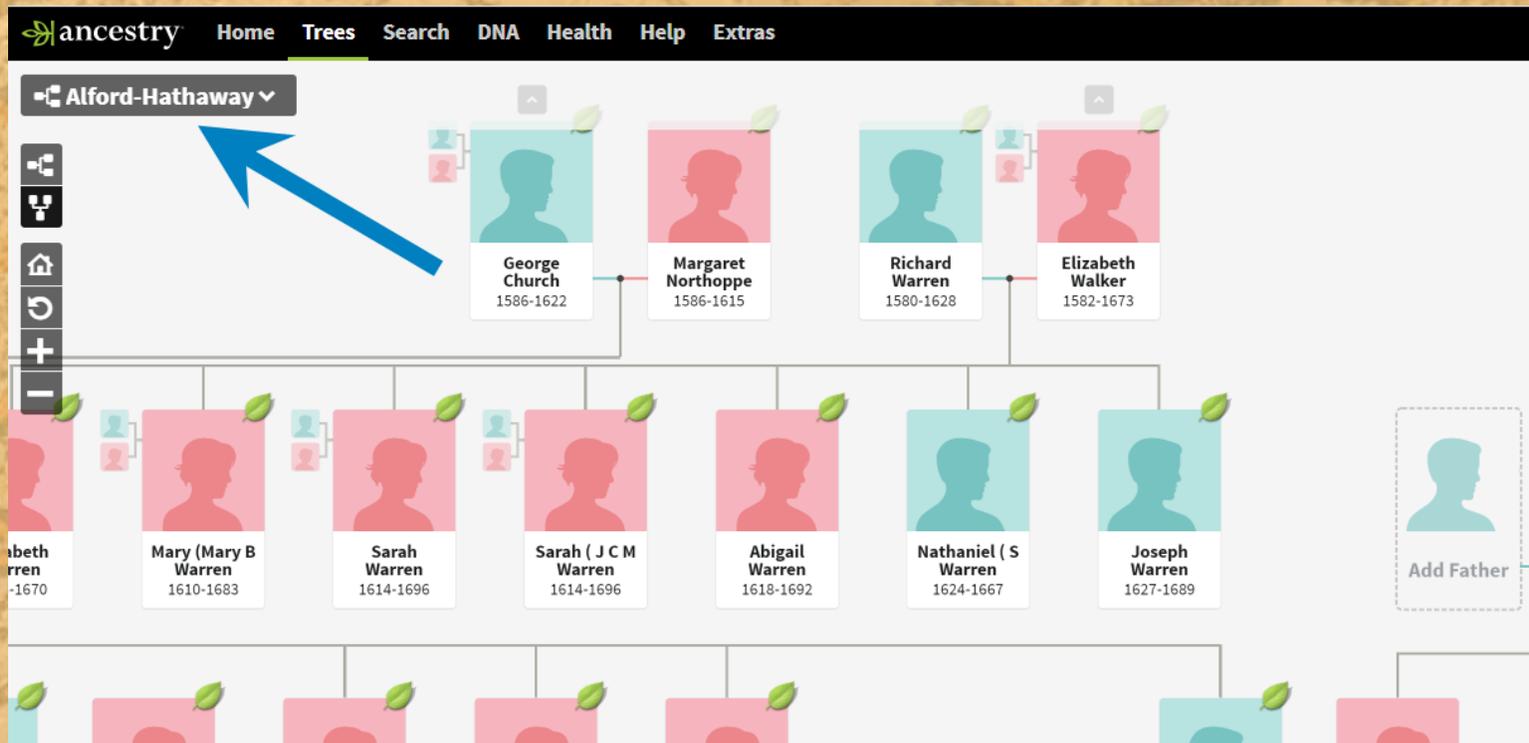
- Periodic Archiving
- To copy data between my research trees on Ancestry and MyHeritage to my own website.



Creating a GEDCOM on

 [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

1. Go to your tree
2. Click on the name of your tree in the upper left corner



The screenshot shows the Ancestry website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Trees, Search, DNA, Health, Help, and Extras. Below this, a dropdown menu shows the selected tree name "Alford-Hathaway" with a blue arrow pointing to it. The main area displays a family tree starting with George Church (1586-1622) and Margaret Northoppe (1586-1615) as the first couple. They are connected to Richard Warren (1580-1628) and Elizabeth Walker (1582-1673). Below them, the children listed are Elizabeth Warren (1610-1670), Mary (Mary B) Warren (1610-1683), Sarah Warren (1614-1696), Sarah (J C M) Warren (1614-1696), Abigail Warren (1618-1692), Nathaniel (S) Warren (1624-1667), and Joseph Warren (1627-1689). There is also an "Add Father" button on the right side of the tree.



Creating a GEDCOM on



ancestry.com

1. Go to your tree
2. Click on the name of your tree in the upper left corner
3. Click on Tree Settings

Tree Name
Alford-Hathaway

Tree Description
Alford-Hathaway ancestry dating back to colonial times

Automatically build stories for this tree
Ancestry will automatically create stories for events shown in a person's LifeStory.

Save Changes

Your home person in this tree
Robert Scott Alford
change set to none

Who you are in this tree
Robert Scott Alford
change set to none

Hint preferences
Manage your hint notifications and member tree hint settings in [site preferences](#).

Manage your tree
Export your family tree data, as a GEDCOM file, to your computer.
Export tree



Creating a GEDCOM on



ancestry.com

1. Click on Export Tree
2. Wait for tree to process, then click on Download your GEDCOM file.

Tree Name

Tree Description

Automatically build stories for this tree
Ancestry will automatically create stories for events shown in a person's LifeStory.

[Save Changes](#)

Your home person in this tree
 **Robert Scott Alford**
[change](#) [set to none](#)

Who you are in this tree
 **Robert Scott Alford**
[change](#) [set to none](#)

Hint preferences
Manage your hint notifications and member tree hint settings in [site preferences](#).

Manage your tree
Export your family tree data, as a GEDCOM file, to your computer.

[Download your GEDCOM file](#)



Creating a GEDCOM on



ancestry.com

1. Go to your tree
2. Click on the name of your tree in the upper left corner
3. Click on Tree Settings
4. Click on Export Tree
5. Wait for tree to process, then click on Download your GEDCOM file.



Uploading a GEDCOM to



ancestry.com

1. Click on Trees in the top menu
2. Select Create and Manage Trees
3. Click on Upload a GEDCOM File
4. Choose a file to upload, give the tree a name, and add any description you wish.
5. Accept the Terms and Conditions
6. Click on Upload



Creating a GEDCOM on



1. Hover over Family tree
2. Click on Manage Trees
3. Select tree to export
4. Click on Export to GEDCOM



Uploading a GEDCOM to



1. Hover over Family Tree
2. Select Import GEDCOM
3. Select the file on your computer that you want to upload
4. Click on Upload



Our Family Trees

- Our Family Trees are the roadmaps to our Family History.
- They don't tell much of a story, but they tell us where to find it.
- The only thing worse than not having a roadmap is to have one with errors in it.



An Example

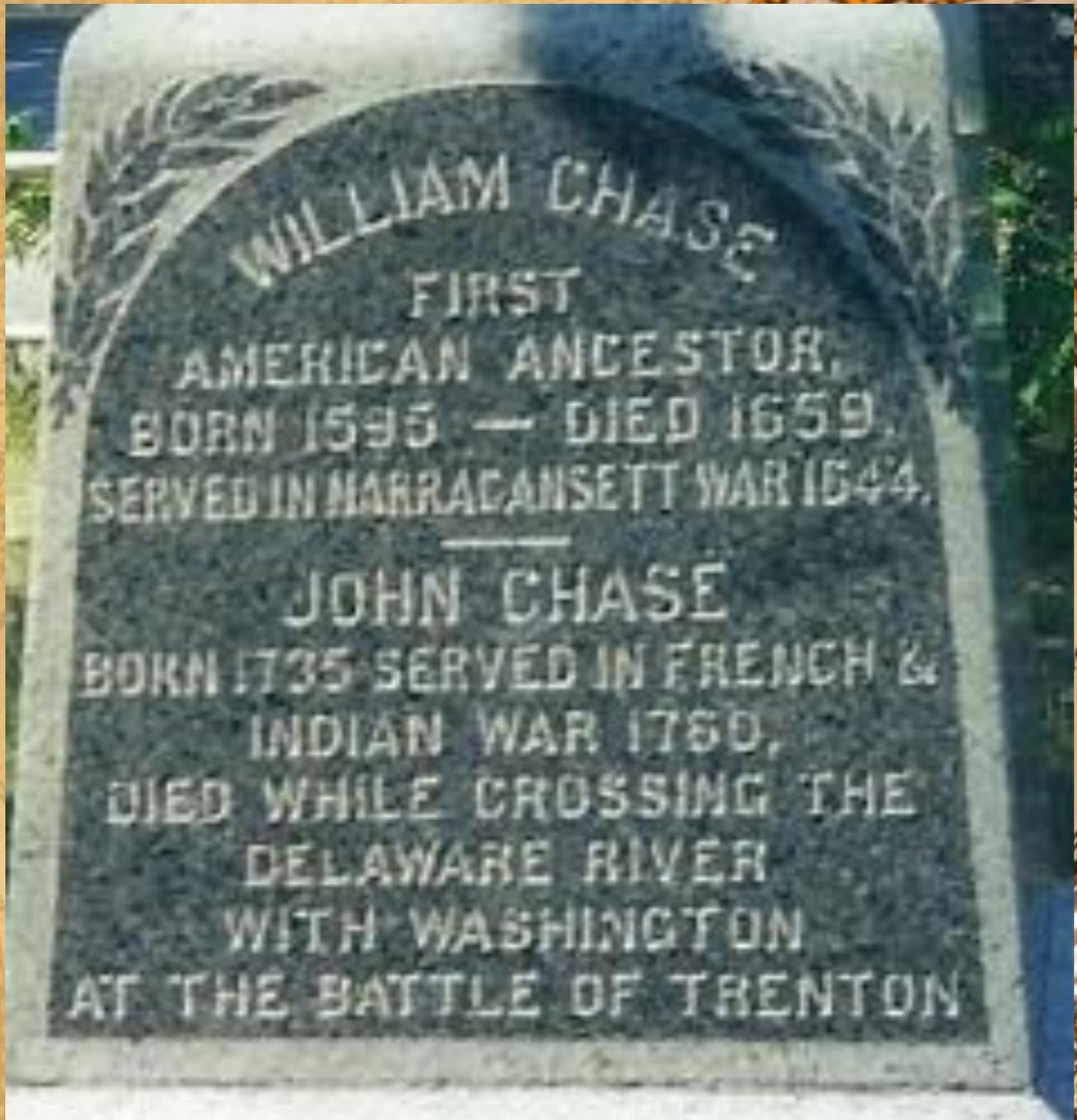
- One of my immigrant ancestors is William Chase who was born in England in 1597 and immigrated to the New World in 1630 with John Winthrop's fleet.
- It is widely reported that he died while crossing the Delaware River with Washington at the Battle of Trenton.
- Anybody see a problem with that?
- The Battle of Trenton took place on December 26, 1776. That would make William 179 years old!





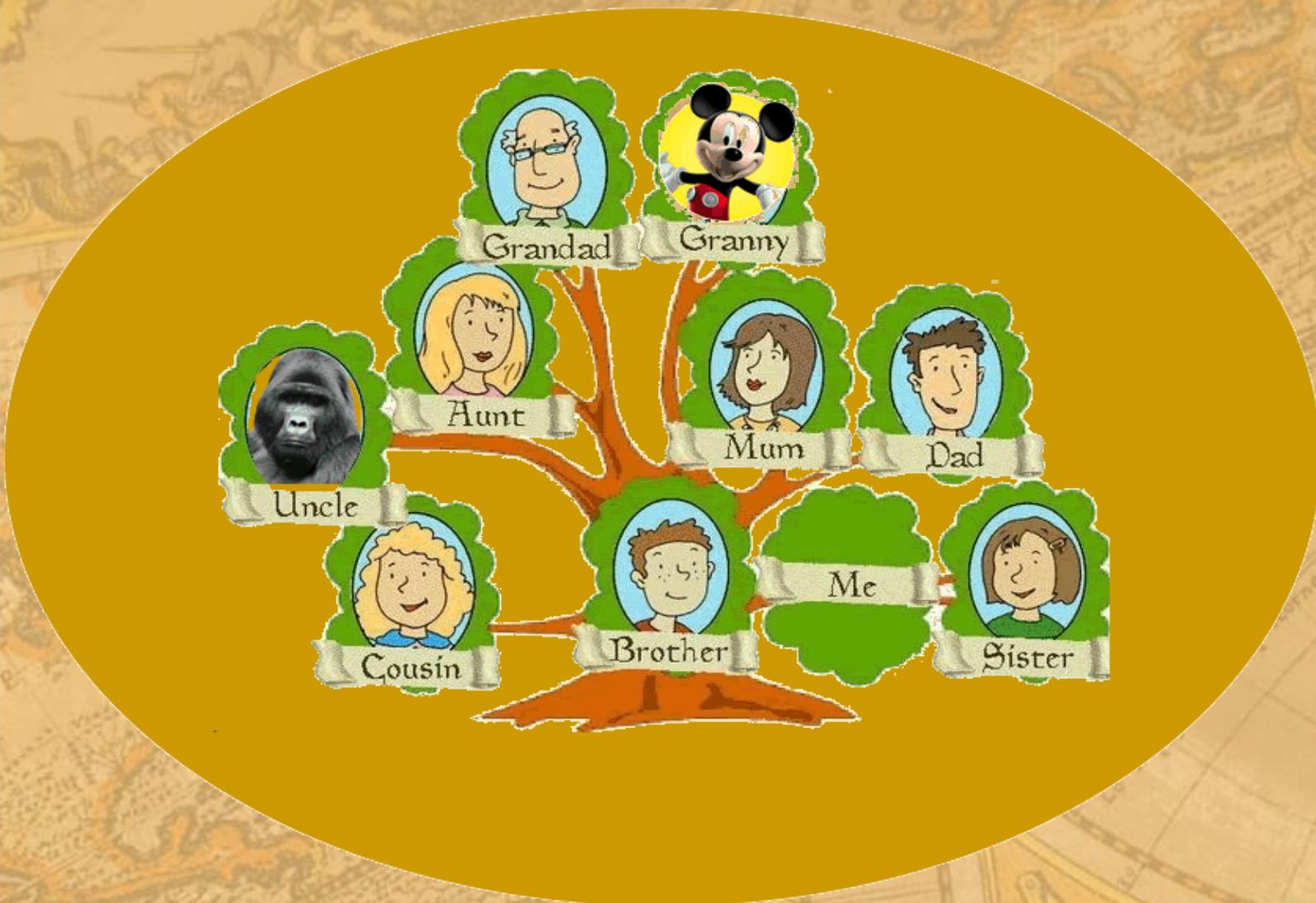
WILLIAM CHASE
FIRST
AMERICAN ANCESTOR,
BORN 1595 — DIED 1659.
SERVED IN NARRACANSETT WAR 1644.

JOHN CHASE
BORN 1735 SERVED IN FRENCH &
INDIAN WAR 1760,
DIED WHILE CROSSING THE
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Source of Errors

- Typos (easy to do, easy to miss)
- Other People's Trees (OPT)
 - Useful as hints, but notoriously full of bad data
 - Myheritage, Ancestry, Geni, Wikitree, and others
 - People copy from each other and bad data spreads like the plague
- Old Books
- Newspapers (obits probably OK, but beware of human-interest articles)
- Genealogy Society papers without proper sources



Common Origins of Errors

- Mistaken Identity: Right Name – Wrong Person
- Multiple Spouses: Children attached to wrong spouse
- Merged Families: Fathers with same name assumed to be same person
- Multiple Generations with same names
- Folklore reported as fact



Consistency Checkers

- MyHeritage Consistency Checker
- Family Tree Maker
- RootsFinder
- Geni's World Family Tree
- Others?
- IMHO should be built into all online genealogy systems to check data for consistency when it is entered. Maybe someday.



MyHeritage Consistency Checker

- Birth after death
- Child older than parent
- Child born after death of parent
- Died too old
- Alive but too old (> 110 years old)



MyHeritage Consistency Checker

- Parent too young when having child (< 16 years old)
- Parent too old when having child (> 64 years old)
- Fact occurring after death
- Fact occurring before birth
- Siblings with close age



MyHeritage Consistency Checker

- Large spouse age difference (> 35 years)
- Married too young (< 15 years old)
- Multiple marriages of same couple
- Married name entered as maiden name
- Multiple birth facts of same person



MyHeritage Consistency Checker

- Multiple death facts of same person
- Incorrect use of uppercase/lowercase
- Person disconnected from tree
- Siblings with same first name
- Same sex spouses
- Double spaces in name



It is a Consistency Checker not an Error Checker

- If there were multiple John Smith's born around the same time as your John Smith and you pick the wrong one, the software can't detect that.
- If you have bad information regarding a non-numerical fact, the software can't detect that
- If you have a broken branch in your tree with multiple people on it, the software does not detect that.
- Things don't always have to be consistent to be true!



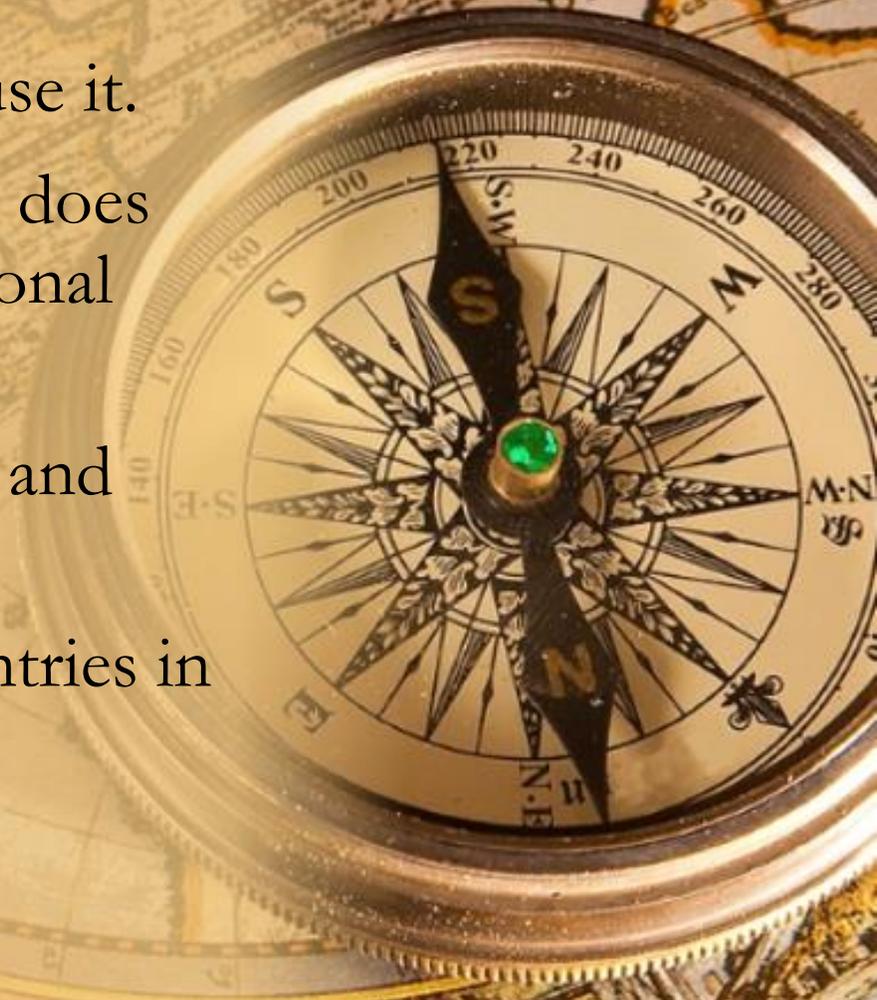
“There’s No Errors in My Tree!”

- Don’t bet too much money on that.
- I thought my tree was pretty clean.
- Two years ago I designed a new website for my family and pulled a GEDCOM to move my tree.
- I have some automated tools to look for certain errors built into the admin interface for the my personal site.
- These tools found many more errors than I expected.
- Now I use both my own tools and MyHeritage.



Check your tree

- If you have access to a tree consistency checker, use it.
- If you don't have access to one, find a friend who does and use GEDCOM to copy your tree to an additional temporary tree on their platform.
- I have checked many people's trees over the years and there are always errors.
- The average seems to be between 10-20% of all entries in unchecked trees have an error.



MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET A DNA KIT TOO. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR GENETIC BACKGROUND?



ALL I KNOW IS THAT MY ANCESTORS WERE FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR HOMELAND FOR THEIR BELIEFS.



REALLY?

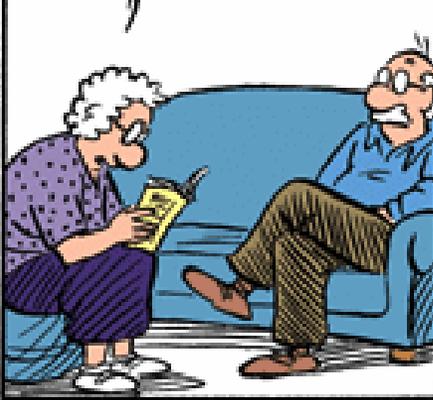


THEY BELIEVED THEIR NEIGHBORS' HORSES WERE THEIR HORSES.



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LISTEN TO THIS QUOTE BY GEORGE ORWELL...



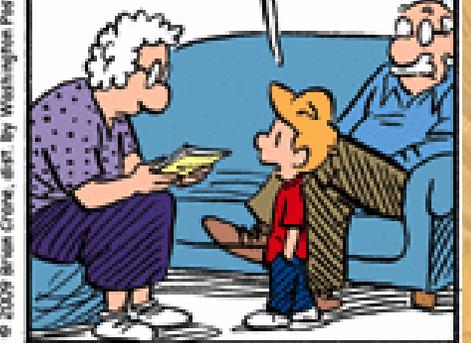
"EVERY GENERATION IMAGINES ITSELF TO BE MORE INTELLIGENT THAN THE ONE THAT WENT BEFORE IT, AND WISER THAN THE ONE THAT COMES AFTER IT."



ISN'T THAT THE TRUTH!



I FIXED YOUR COMPUTER, GRAMMA. YOU DIDN'T HAVE IT PLUGGED IN.



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