Ancestral Mathematics

In order to be born, you needed:

2 parents
4 grandparents
8 great-grandparents
16 second great-grandparents
32 third great-grandparents
64 fourth great-grandparents
128 fifth great-grandparents
256 sixth great-grandparents
512 seventh great-grandparents
1,024 eighth great-grandparents
2,048 ninth great-grandparents

For you to be born today from 12 previous generations, you needed a total of 4,094 ancestors over the last 400 years.

Researching Your Ancestors on the Internet
Bob Alford

Overview

- Organization
- Process
- Key Websites
- Tools
- Examples
- Special Section (optional)

To succeed you need

- A Methodology or Process
- Organization
- Focus
- Perseverance

Today I will show you what I do. If you have a better way or one you are more comfortable, use it.

For Best Results

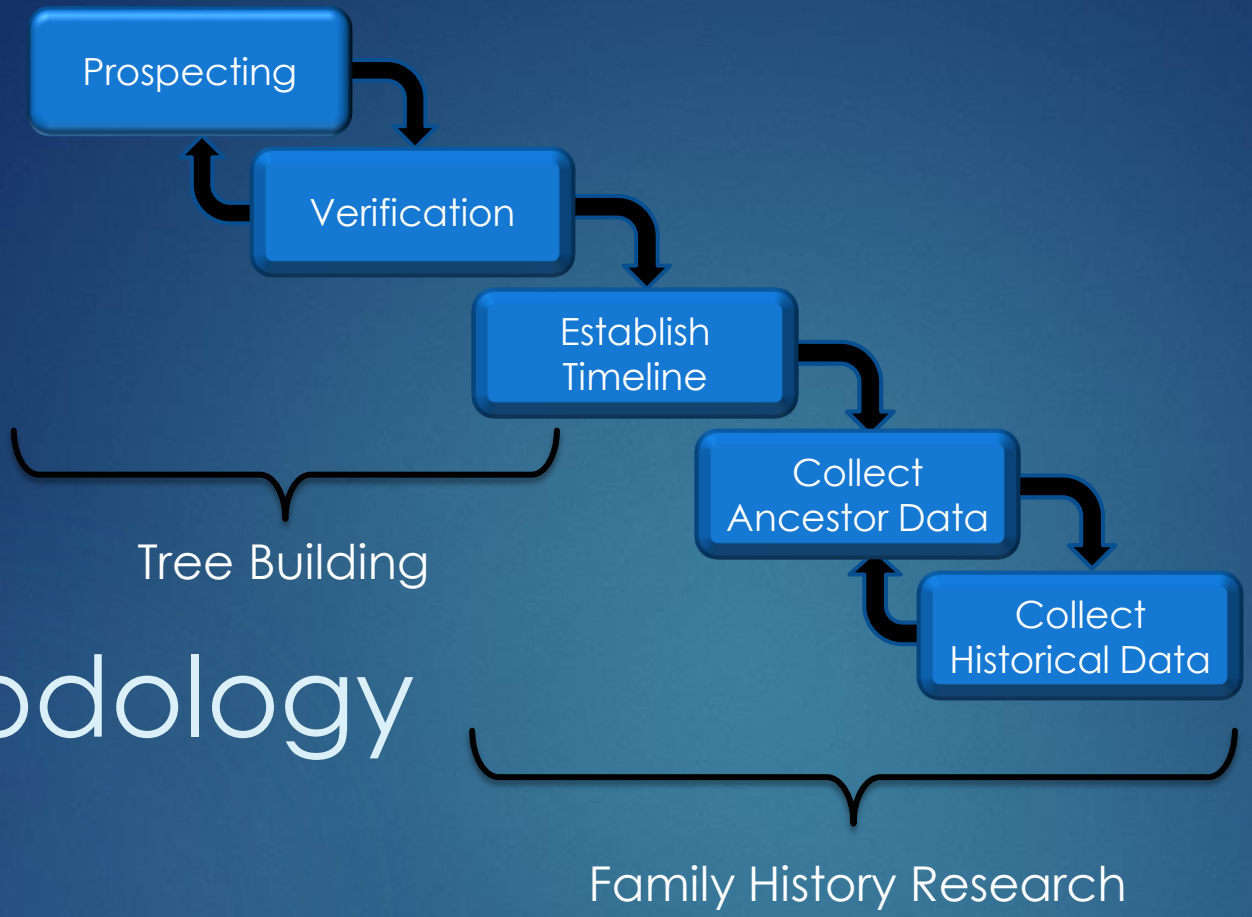
- Establish a Methodology
- Develop a Search Routine
- Stay Focused
- Keep Organized
- Take Great Notes
- Verify Everything

My Methodology

- Three parts
  - Tree Building
  - Family History Research
  - Telling the Family Story

My Methodology

My Methodology

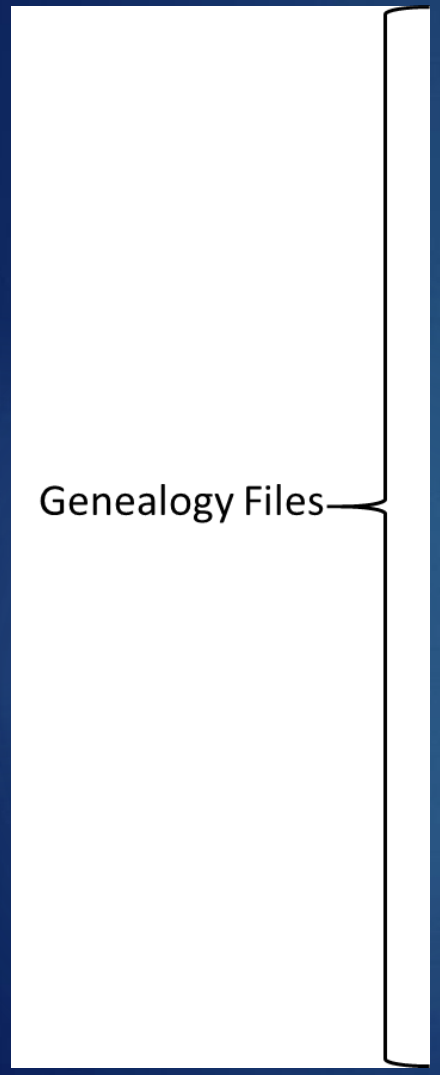


My Methodology

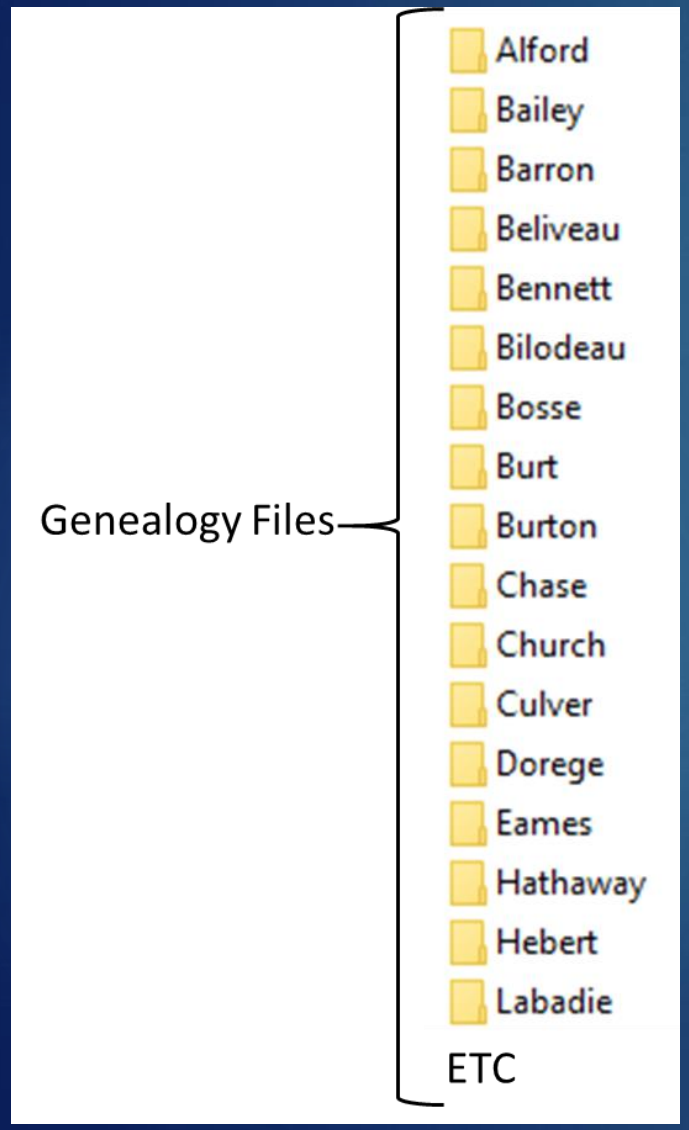
Organization

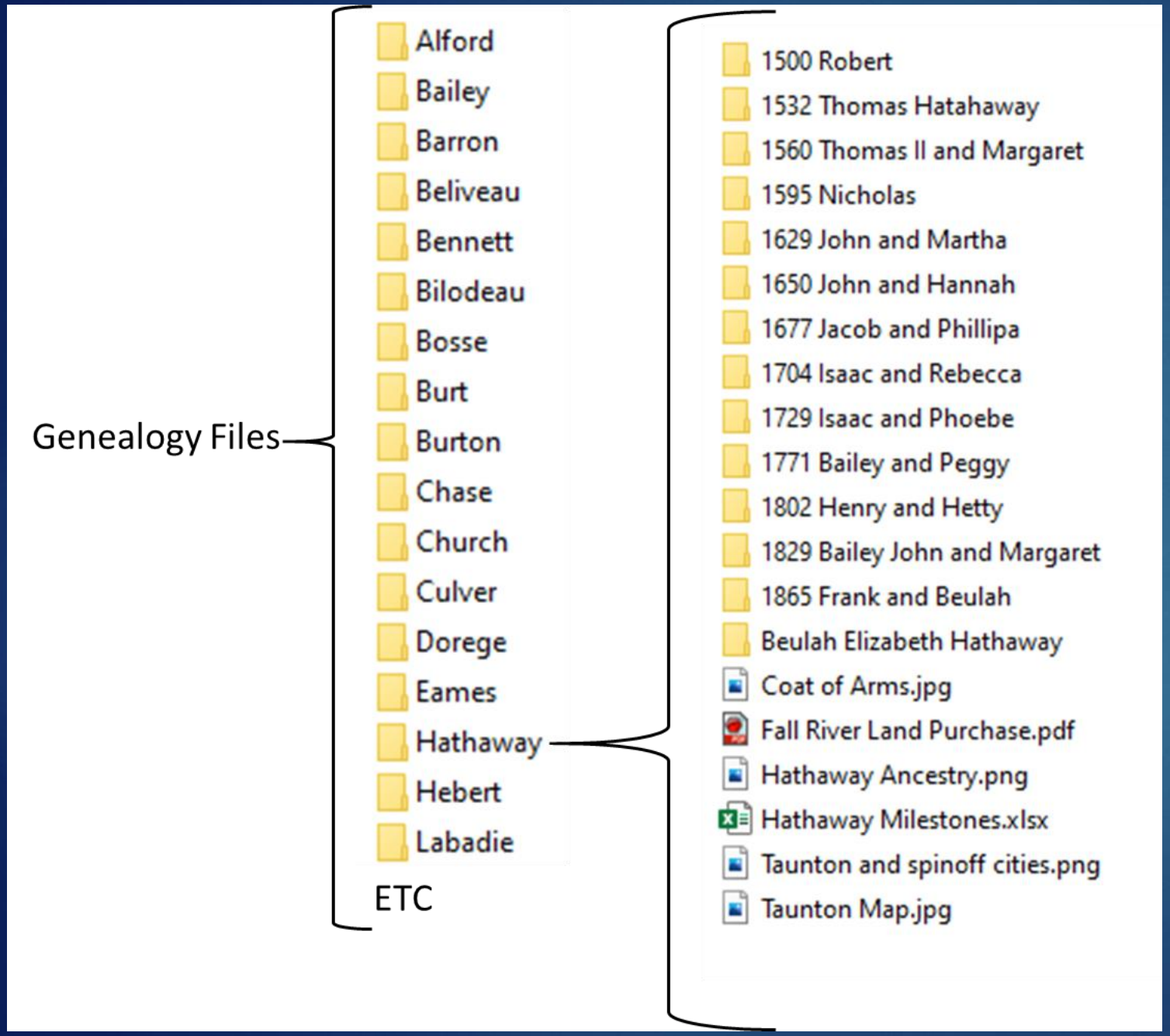
- Research requires organization
- You Need
  - A Tree
  - A digital filing system

I have a master directory I call Genealogy Files



In There I Have a Folder for Each Surname

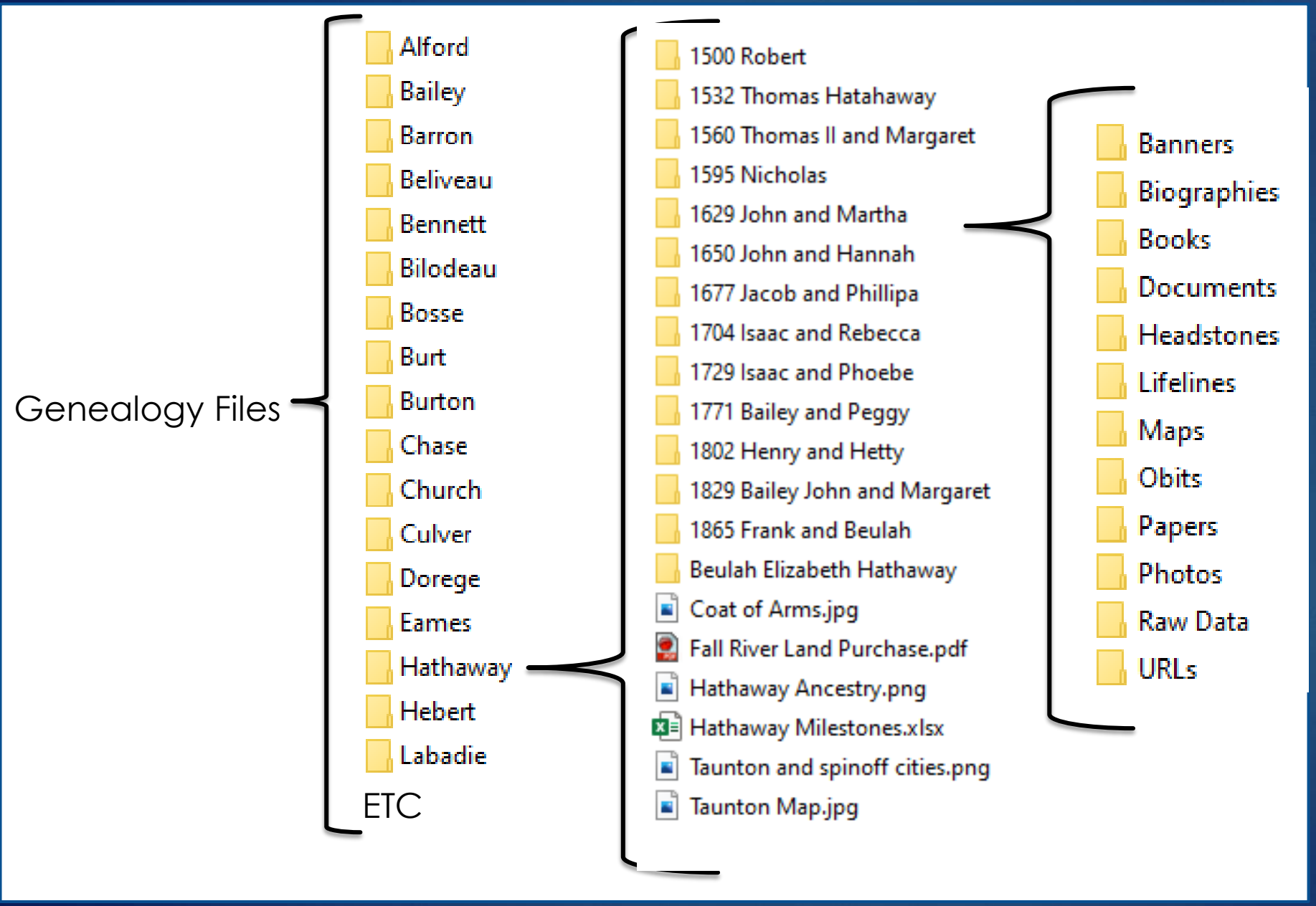




In each surname folder I have a folder for each generation

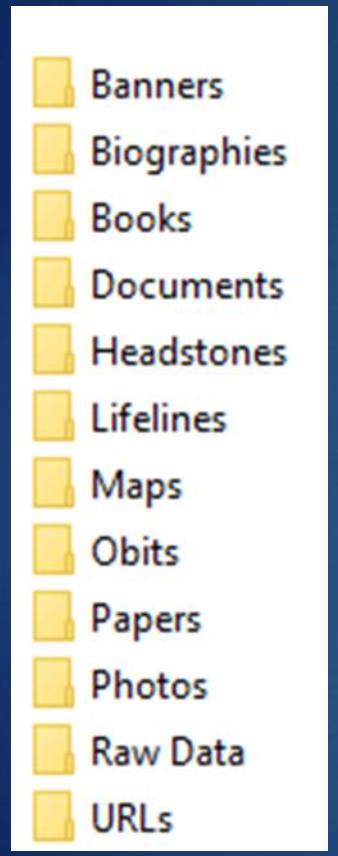
I also have files that pertain to multiple generations with that surname

I name the generation folders starting with the birth year of the male so that they will sort in order



In each generation folder I have a standard set of folders

I Keep a Template Folder



- I have a template folder in Genealogy Files with empty folders predefined.
- When I create a new generation folder, I copy the template folder to it.
- I may or may not use all the folders in a generation folder. But I can quickly locate what I have by knowing the surname and the generation names.
- I have tens of thousands of files in these folders and can locate precisely what I want in seconds

Raw Data

One of the directories in the template is called “Raw Data”
This is where I store my research notes
Example:

- Things copied from websites
- Notes from interviews with relatives
- My own notes and observation
- List of things to be proven and open issues

Digital Filing Systems

- There are other approaches
- There are numerous webinars on organizing files on Rootstech.org
- Perhaps you have already designed your own system
- It doesn't matter how you organize your files, only that you do keep them organized.

Your Tree

- Your tree is your roadmap
- All of your research will be guided by your tree
- If it is wrong, you will waste your time researching the wrong people
- It is **much more important** that your tree be **accurate** than big.

OF O.P.T's

- Other
- People's
- Trees

OPTs are the #1 cause of errors

- Trees I check for people usually have 20%-30% errors, usually from data copied from OPTs
- Be careful when adding data
- Never accept automatic updates

Stay Focused – Keep Organized

- When prospecting – stay on one Surname
- Record others you encounter but don't let them distract you
- When doing Family History Research – stay on one ancestor at a time.
- Record locations of information about others you run into, but don't get distracted.
- Use your digital file system
- Don't bang your head on Brick Walls

Take Great Notes

- For everything you find
  - Record the web address so you can return
  - Copy via cut and paste or screen grab all interesting info
  - Add your own comments to record your thoughts at that the time
- Your note file or files are for your eyes only.
  - They don't need to be neat, but do need to be readable by you
  - They don't need to be verified. Note if the data is verified or not and/or what you think (needs verification, possible, but not likely, verified, etc.)
- Keep all your note files in your digital filing system

Verify Everything

- Good Sources
  - Vital Records
  - Court Records
  - Census Records
  - Obits
  - Birth, Marriage, Death certificates
  - Family Bibles
  - Church original records
  - Cemetery records
  - Wills
  - Military Records
  - Deeds, Contracts, other legal documents
  - Firsthand historical accounts
  - Genealogy Papers/ Books with sources
  - Newspaper reports
- Be Skeptical
  - Other People's Trees
  - Papers/Books without sources
  - Family Folklore
  - Newspaper articles about past events
  - Crowd sourced websites

Third Section

The Border Cities Star

Third Section

THE STAR GOES HOME · WINDSOR, ONTARIO, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1932 · THE STAR GOES HOME

FIRST LABADIE, FATHER OF 33, HERE IN 1769

Thousands In Canada And U.S. Descendants

to the garrison side of the river. His widow and son, Louis, however, continued his business here. That is, they conducted the business with the exception of the wind-propelled grist m[illegible]. In accordance with the fe[illegible] sold to one Lassaline in or about 1806.

Given under our Hand and Seal

Antonine Descomps dit Labadie

- Lived in Detroit in mid 1700's – Had three wives
- Mid 1800's a book reported he had 33 children
- In early 1900's, a Detroit newspaper picked up the story and did a major article that embellished on the story.
- Around 1980, a member of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Genealogical Society wrote a white paper telling the same story. No sources provided.

Must be true

- A book, a newspaper and a white paper from a creditable source all claim he had 33 children. Must be true.
- WRONG – FAKE NEWS
- The author of the book lived in the mid 1800s and made a mistake, crediting him with have 10 additional children that were not his.
- The Newspaper plagiarized the book and embellished the story but did not credit the source.
- The Genealogist plagiarized the newspaper almost word for word but did not give any sources.
- Note the lack of any original records from all three sources.
- Many online genealogies today falsely report this story as fact.

How do we know it is false?

- The original records of the Catholic Church are now available online, as is Antoine's will.
- He had five children by his first wife, eight by the second wife, and ten by his last wife. All were baptized in the Catholic church.
- Based on the spacings of the births there is no room for an additional ten children, nor are there any other baptisms recorded by the Church.

Where did the others come from?

- Antoine's second wife, who he refers to as Marie, was the daughter of Chief Pontiac.
- The natives gave him a native slave couple, Mannon and Jean Baptiste.
- The initial author confused Mannon with Marie and credited her ten children to Antoine. They were the children of John Baptiste.
- Lies, Damn Lies, and OPTs.

Types of Websites

- Websites that tell you where to look.
- Websites that contain reliable data.
- Websites that contain both reliable data and OPT.
- Websites mostly built on OPT (still may be useful).
- Other Useful Sites.
- The data you seek may be on different websites than the ones I use.
- I will focus on sites that help you find sites that contain the data you need.
- Over time, you will establish a set of sites most useful to you.

Where to Look

- Google (advanced search)
- ResearchGuides.net
- FamilySearch Wiki
- Random Acts of Genealogy Kindness
- Library of Congress Research Guides

Websites with Reliable Data

- Official government archives, census records, and official government lists.
- Published transcribed or digitized government records
- Church records
- Official Cemetery records (not FindaGrave or BillionGraves, which are user-generated)
- Genealogical Society Websites (use with caution)
- Historical Society Websites (use with caution)

Websites with Reliable Data and OPTs

- Ancestry.com $$
- FindmyPast.com $$
- MyHeritage.com $$
- FamilySearch.org (free)
- FindaGrave (free) (or Billion Graves $$)

Crowd Sourced Websites

- Wikitree.com
- Geni.com
- WeRelate.org
- Familypedia.wikia.org
- others

Other Useful Sites

- Archive.org
- Wikipedia.org
- OurTimeLines.com
- Rootstech.org

Newspapers and Old Books

- Newspapers – Many websites, use the Wiki to find them
  - Obits are great sources
  - News articles are generally useful, but fake news goes back hundreds of years, so be careful.
- Old Books – Archive.org, Google Books, and others
  - Books containing transcribed records from named sources are excellent.
  - Historical Accounts are useful
  - Family Genealogies are OPTs, although they are often better than online trees.

Getting the Most from a Research Session

- Establish your objectives
- Understand what you already know
- Form a hypothesis
- Identify sources with related records
- Stay focused – Don't chase bright, shiny objects
- Take great notes
- Don't bang your head on a brick wall

Tools I Use

- Microsoft Cloud
- Microsoft Office
  - Word
  - PowerPoint
- Snagit (Screen Capture software)
- Coral Paint Shop Pro (cheap substitute for Photoshop)
- Power PDF Advanced (cheap substitute for Acrobat)

Takeaways

- Your tree is your roadmap.
  - Quality is much more important than quantity.
- Get Organized
  - Adopt or develop a digital filing system.
  - A place for everything where it is easy to find.

Takeaways

- Develop a methodology, then follow it.
  - Use my three phase methods or develop your own.
- Stay Focused
  - Set short term goals and stick to them.
  - Keep short term goals reasonable.
  - Don’t wander or follow bright, shiny tidbits.
  - Celebrate short term successes.

Takeaways

- Treat all unsourced data, including OPTs, as hints, not facts.
  - Verify everything
  - Track your sources
- Learn to use sites that tell you where to find things.
  - Example: Google Advanced Search, the Wiki, ResearchGuides.net, etc.

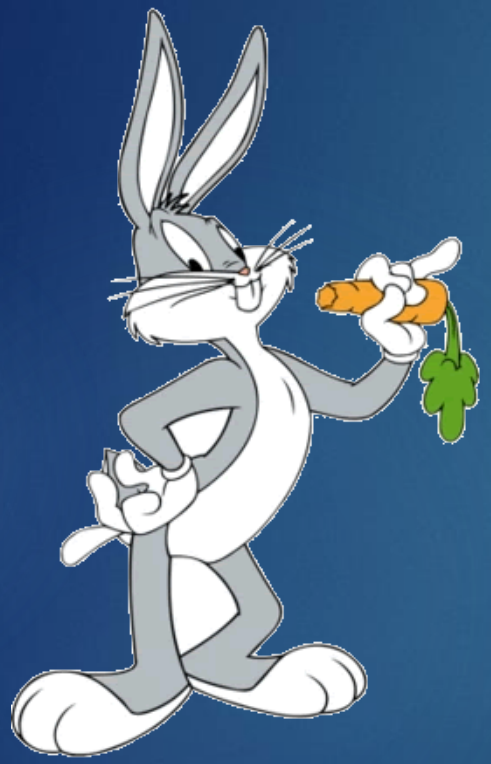
Takeaways

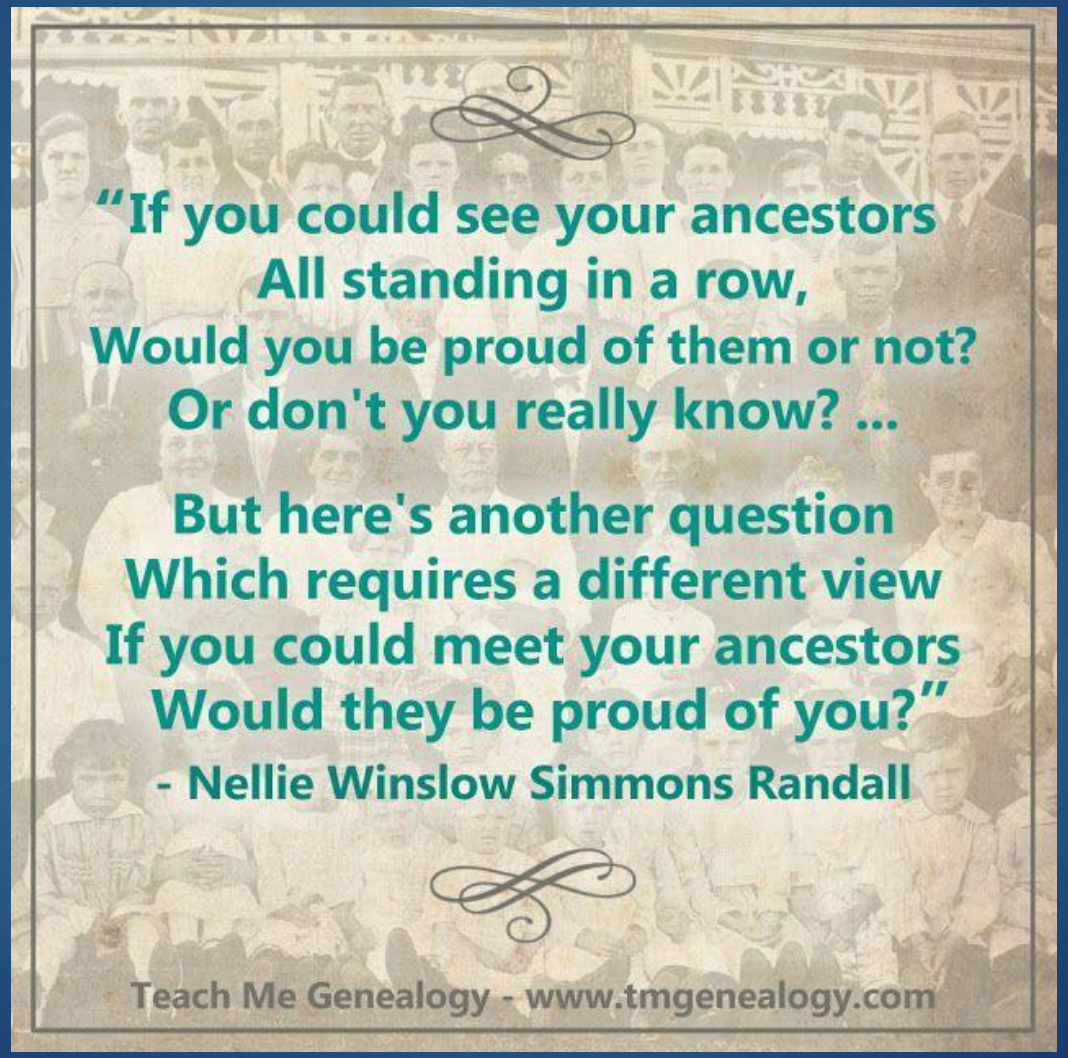
- Three main sources of failures
- Copying OPTs.
  - Leads to false information and wastes time.
- Wandering while researching.
  - Easy to do, but nonproductive.
- Banging your head on a brick wall.

Things to do Next

- Download and read the white paper on this site
- If you don't have a digital filing system, set one up
- Use the "cheat sheet" and try the sites listed
- Learn to use Google Advanced Search and the Family Search Wiki

That's All Folks!





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