# More Useful Tools Helping Me Break Down My Brick Walls

*- a case study*

## Bob Inhoff, Indian River Genealogical Society

In previous lectures I outlined how I used more than thirty tools to break down two of my brick walls. In this lecture, I will share the story of how I used these (and a few more) tools to discover the identity of my dad's birth father and open up an entirely new branch of my family tree. (*Blue underlined phrases are active links*.)

Steps I used to break this brick wall:

- Identify Research Objective: determine the identity of my dad's birth father

- Identify what I know: date of my dad's birth (1910) and where his birth mother lived (Shelby County, OH)

- Consider DNA Options

    o Y DNA – applicable here since this is my paternal line
    o Autosomal DNA – focus on largest matches

- Filtering Autosomal matches – I have identified matches to three of my four grandparents. What matches do I have that don't match others from any of these 3 families?

- Begin collecting matches that could be cousins from this new line

    o If they have an online family tree, do they have any family who lived in the right place at the right time?
    o Build a list of possible surnames.
    o Look to see if I have other matches who share theses surnames.

- Watch for new matches who share matches with others on my prospect list.

- When there is only a small branch of the tree. . .

    o Research what we have - using Ancestry trees, FamilySearch family trees, obituaries, Google, etc. I have also found the research tools at My Heritage helpful in this project.

- Estimating relationships by the size of the match

- Shared Cm Project - information now also available on Ancestry DNA

    o Determine possible relationships – such as 3$^{rd}$ cousins

- Create a working research tree

- Keep notes of questions, conclusions, and research ideas

- Develop working hypotheses about possible relationships

- I keep my research in a cloud-based notebook using Microsoft's OneNote

- Contacting matches – keep initial contact simple – track messages

- Patience

- Evaluating time and place – as we develop hypotheses, can we place candidate in the right place at the right time?

  o Census records
  o City Directories, et al

- Once we have one or more candidates:

  o Can we construct a tree to explain hypothetical relationships (assuming multiple DNA matches)?
  o Applications such as Microsoft Excel let you create a tree – and update it with new information

- Test hypotheses – using tools like those found at DNAPainter.com (see below)

- Evaluate any conflicting evidence

- Write notes about conclusion

**Resources**

- **OneNote** is a digital notebook.  With **OneNote**, you can type notes or record audio at your laptop, sketch or write ideas on your tablet, add a picture from your phone, clip a page from the web, forward an email to your OneNote notebook, find notes instantly, freely move notes around the page, organize those pages into sections, keep your sections in one or more notebooks, switch devices and pick up right where you left off, share your notebooks with others so you can all view and contribute at the same time.  For a copy of the handout for my lecture on ***Organizing Your Genealogical Research Using Microsoft OneNote***, *go to* [http://bobsgenealogyquest.com/onenote/](http://bobsgenealogyquest.com/onenote/).

- **DNA Websites**
  - Blaine Bettinger's [The Genetic Genealogist](https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/) website, [https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/](https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/), especially the [Shared cM project](http://thegeneticgenealogist.com/2017/08/26/august-2017-update-to-the-shared-cm-project/), [http://thegeneticgenealogist.com/2017/08/26/august-2017-update-to-the-shared-cm-project/](http://thegeneticgenealogist.com/2017/08/26/august-2017-update-to-the-shared-cm-project/)   The charts are very helpful in determining the possible relationship with a DNA match
  - The DNA Painter's [Shared cM Project page](http://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4), [http://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4](http://dnapainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4) offers a visualization tool.  Enter the length of a match – and it will display a range of possible relationships with probabilities associated with each.  Another tool on this site is "What are the odds?" [https://dnapainter.com/tools/probability](https://dnapainter.com/tools/probability)

See my online site for updated handout and other resources:  [http://bobsgenealogyquest.com/irgc-april-2019/](http://bobsgenealogyquest.com/irgc-april-2019/)

The following pages of resources are from my previous lecture on brick walls, outlining other useful tools.

# 20 Tools I Used to Break Down a Brick Wall I Never Knew I Had
*- a case study presented in 2017*

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| Genealogical Proof Standard | Genealogical Proof Standard, Board for Certification of Genealogists<br>• See "The Genealogical Proof Standard" in *Genealogy Standards – 50th Anniversary Edition* – Chapter 1. Also, a video on Ancestry.com: An Introduction to the Genealogical Proof Standard<br>• See: "The Evidence Analysis Process Map" – see appendix to *Genealogy Standards – 50th Anniversary Edition*<br>• Evidence Explained Facebook Group – Evidence Analysis Process Map |
| Google | Ohio Adoption Laws, Surnames and Locations, Libraries, Genealogical Societies, etc, County Histories, etc.  Check addresses and hours. |
| Ancestry.com | • Ancestry.com Census<br>• Ancestry DNA<br>• Ancestry.com – Family Trees<br>• Ancestry.com – Ohio, Wills and Probate Records, 1786-1998<br>• Ancestry.com – New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 |
| Smart Phone Camera | • The camera in the smart phone takes high resolution photos, even without flash.  Helpful in libraries, court houses and other locations.<br>• The camera has built in GPS – which helps document exact locations.  Snap a photo of a tombstone.   You can use the photo's GPS coordinates to track back to the exact location in the cemetery on a subsequent visit. |
| Familysearch.org | • Record Search https://familysearch.org/search<br>• FamilySearch Family Tree https://familysearch.org/tree/find/name<br>• FamilySearch Catalog https://familysearch.org/catalog/search |
| Familysearch.org Wiki | https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page.   More than 88,000 helpful articles. Be sure to look at pages for states and counties in which you are doing research.   For all states and many localities there is a button such as "Ohio Online Records" which gives links to more than 50 online collections (free and paid) of Ohio records.<br>Also check wiki for information such as courthouse fires, changes in county boundaries, and much more. |
| FamilySearch.org Un-indexed Records | • "Worth a Thousand Words: How to Find and Use Image-Only Collections on FamilySearch" - https://familysearch.org/blog/en/worth-thousand-words-find-imageonly-collections-familysearch/<br>• A YouTube video demonstration of how I found Peter Geib's 1838 naturalization record https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUsH_Yz73v8 |
| Family History Library | https://familysearch.org/locations/saltlakecity-library While a large number of resources of the library are available for loan to a local Family History Center, the immediate access to microfilms and availability of consultants was exceedingly helpful. |
| FamilyTree DNA | https://www.familytreedna.com/   The place for Y-DNA tests.  Also "Family Finder" autosomal.  You can transfer test data from Ancestry and 23 and Me.   Good chromosome browser and other tools for analysis. |
| Historic Map Works | http://www.historicmapworks.com/  Has free and premium versions.   Can overlay historic map with current Google map. |

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| Libraries: County Histories | While county histories are frequently not authoritative sources, they can provide important clues about family members, migration patterns, church memberships and more. Written in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many are in the public domain and are available online. |
| Libraries: Historic Maps | Many historic maps show land ownership, providing clues to neighbors and other family members. Good source of clues for land research. |
| Libraries: Cemetery Indexes | Many local genealogical societies have transcribed and documented cemetery headstones, often with details on location and a map of the cemetery. Since some of these indexes were completed more than 50 years ago, they may contain information on headstones that are no longer visible or readable |
| Libraries: Historical Assn Records | Many local historical associations have completed transcription projects that are housed in local libraries. For example, the New Bremen (OH) Historic Association transcribed and translated local German church records from the mid 1800's. These were typed and are stored in a card file in the New Bremen library. |
| Libraries: Obituaries | Obituaries may be available either in clippings files or on microfilms from the local newspapers. Often there is an index of obituaries in the library. |
| Facebook | Many genealogy societies, surname groups and other groups have Facebook pages. Many are "closed" which means you must make a request to join. Most gladly welcome new members. Share research surnames and interests. |
| Court House – Probate | Probate records will often contain the names and addresses of children, including married daughters' names. Check the local county's website to determine which office houses the records you are seeking. Check also Family Search wiki. |
| Court House VR (BMD) | Ohio historic birth, marriage and death records are housed in the Clerk of Probate Court's office. Many are online through digitized films at FamilySearch. |
| Court House Land Records | Land records help tell the story of a family. They may also contain listings of other family members, such as the sale of land upon death of the owner. |
| Find A Grave | https://www.findagrave.com/ Good source of clues for families. Also gives GPS coordinates of the cemetery. Occasionally has additional information such as obituaries. Not an authoritative source. |
| My Blog | Bob's Genealogy Quest - http://bobsgenealogyquest.com/ I use this as a place to share stories of what I find in my research, along with other items of interest to family. I also use it as "cousin bait" to connect with other distant family members. |
| Local Genealogical and Historical Soc. | Many genealogical societies, even in small towns, may have their own offices and collections outside of a library. Some archive old county records and other items. |
| Google Maps | Create your own Google maps and mark locations on your surname timeline. See https://support.google.com/mymaps/answer/3024454?hl=en |
| Castle Garden | http://castlegarden.org/index.php - database of information on 11 million immigrants from 1820 through 1892, the year Ellis Island opened. |
| MyHeritage DNA | MyHeritage is a relatively new entry in the DNA testing companies. But they are coming on strong. If you have tested with another company (such as AncestryDNA) you can transfer your results to MyHeritage for free. I have found at least two very significant DNA matches which were only on this website. https://www.myheritage.com For a review: https://thegenealogyguide.com/myheritage-dna-testing-review |