

Documents: Errors, & other Mysteries

TIP: Don't assume anything you know is "the truth".

Last column I explained the importance of writing down the basic details you have for each of your known ancestors, on a **Master List** – numbered names, dates, places, occupations. Remember that you cannot assume any of your information to be correct – it's a starting place.

Go through your Master List and make a tick mark (coloured ink?) on each detail where you have a document in hand: birth certificate, marriage banns/registration, death registration, burial certificate, copies of military services, land deeds. You notice I haven't listed Census records – there's a reason. Many amateur genealogists aren't aware of the many errors on Census records. Names can be incorrect, or spelled oddly, ages can be very wrong, parents and/or children's birth dates or places mixed up, immigration dates incorrect, and so on.

Here's an example: my family has a story that Grandpa G. (Jack) with Grandma G. (Harriette) & their 6 kids including my dad, lived in Scotland before they emigrated to Canada, and that the children played on Hadrian's Wall. Hmm. That might have been around the 1891 or 1901 Censuses – but where were they living?



I found all the correct kids and their relatively correct ages living with a Harriet and a Wm. John G. That is how I found out that Grandpa Jack's real name was William John, and also that he had been born in Northern Ireland. An earlier census 1881 showed his entire family (now that I know the correct name to search) living in northern England, all born in Northern Ireland – 3 generations living in one home. This gives me more information for future searches, and makes me interested in learning more on Irish Famine periods and northern England industrialization records.



As you find any details on your direct ancestors, write them down – all the data – again using each ancestor's identifying #'s from your Master List.

Questions? Need a 5-Generation form? Email Celia@RootsBasic.com

TIP: Google your local Genealogy Society, or any provincial genealogy society. Find out what they do, what their research resources are, dates of meetings, and read online information.