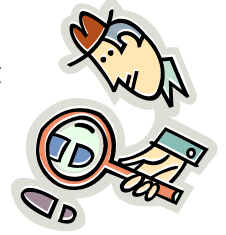


Find 30 Genealogy Clues From Every Document

When you are beginning to search for your ancestors and build your family tree, you may not be aware of all the possible clues there may be on any document you find. In order to be sure of your sources, to be certain of the relationships, on any document, it is important to look for every possible clue that you can follow. You may have only found 1 or 2 documents - how can you use those documents to find further ancestors?



Assume that there are "30 clues" on every document. In truth, there may be only 5 clues or there may be 45, but there will definitely be more than the one or two that you are looking at on the document in front of you.

All these clues may help you make an educated conclusion about the validity of your searches, the validity of your relationships, the validity of your dates and places and more. Your family tree is only as good as the quality of the sources found, and the quality of your conclusions based on those various sources.

For example, here are clues you may find on a birth registration:



- Full name. *Clues?*

Ahhh, look at that middle name - it seems to be a surname, who's is it? Likely a mother's maiden name, her mother's maiden name, his mother's maiden name. Or none of the above. Is there a naming pattern - first son named after father or grandfather, for example.

What kinds of names are used in this family, are there second names or namesakes known? Look at siblings of parents if possible, for more records you can mine for other clues of ancestors.

- Birth date. *Clues?*

Look at the distance in years between children, and if there are large blanks, think about why?

Immigration? Father away at war? Epidemics? Is this an eldest child? - if so, a marriage date is likely within 2-5 years. Youngest child? - check the age of the mother; if over 45, it could be that father remarried and the mother is a 2nd wife.

- Birth place. *Clues?*

Look at the residence over time through censuses, other birth registrations and birthplaces, immigration. If you see one or more children listed as born in England, but others born in Upper Canada or Maine, you can make a good guess as to when they immigrated! With the birth place in hand, you may find other records of the family or parents, even grandparents, in that place. Often families lived in the same area for many years, or within 20 miles or so. Check around to see if there are other relatives in a close region. Neighbours may have immigrated as a group, or come a year or more after - check records to see if



this will help you find the original residence of your ancestors. Compare the birth place listed with other residences you have for other siblings and other ancestors. What were the migration paths, and can you find details of these migrations? (check historical records) What about religion - was this child baptized in the region? Don't be surprised to find baptism records at a later date such as before marriage, or at a time several years after birth when a minister finally came to visit in the region.

- Parents' names. *Clues?*

Try to determine if they are using a legal name, or a nickname. Make a guess as to what the "proper" name might be if it seems to be a nickname. Examples: "Lizzie" - Elizabeth, Eliza, Lisa, Lindsey; "Jack" - John, Jonathan, Jon, Jackson, Jacob. Some families used the middle name as the commonly-used name, but the first name on legal documents. For example, my Grampa Jack was actually "William John" and his brother Jim was actually "Robert James." Look for naming patterns if any, in the family. You may get the maiden name of the mother (wonderful!). Sometimes the birth registration will also give the occupation of father at time of birth of his child; other records may include the grandfathers' names as well. A parish registration may also include additional information such as names of farm, village, street or more.

- Parents' birthplace. *Clues?*

There are many possibilities to search with the birthplaces listed of the parents. At times, the birth

registrations may have included only the country or, only the county or state or, listed the village or town. Country only? Look at neighbours and see if there are others also stating they are from that country. Perhaps they came as a group, or originally lived in the same town in the old country. Be certain that it is the birthplace that is listed, not the "racial or tribal origin", as I have seen parents listed as "Irish" when it was their grandparents who were actually born in Ireland, all other generations born in the new country.


▪ Father's occupation. *Clues?*

At the time of birth, the father's occupation may be listed. Generally, this will be stable over time, but it could be that father did whatever he could in order to support his family.



Look up the definitions of these old occupations, so that you know what they actually describe. See if sons took up a similar occupation as they became old enough to work - usually 14-16 years of age. If it is a business, the father may be listed in a local directory, or he may have been a member of an organization or



society such as the Masons, with details kept in their Archives.  Check historical sources for what kinds of industrialization was happening at the time.

Do you see the way you can mine every little item on a document for several more clues to search or, to support your conclusions about your ancestor? You may have looked at the birth registration and ticked off your ancestor's birth date and place, thinking that was all there was. Hopefully you will see that there is a wealth of information on every single document or record you find. By the way, Censuses may have many clues; look for a blank form so you know exactly what information was being asked by the census enumerator for that particular census year. Although there may be errors on Censuses, you may still find a few good clues to follow back to your ancestors, to confirm details.

Enjoy your searches, and remember: *look for 30 clues on every document!*

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