

9-NUGGETS of KNOWLEDGE for the

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With Real Life Examples from Decades of Tracing My Own Family Tree



1. In looking up records such as Census, etc., you must consider the SPELLING POSSIBILITIES.

There are several reasons why a name be spelled one way in one record, then differently the next time.

Take for example the simple name of **SMITH**. You must consider it could also be spelled **SMYTH, SMYTHE** or another variation. Voorhis could be *Voorhees, Daly, Daley, Schwarz, Schwartz, Paton, Paten, Doran, Dorin, Hoyt, Hoit*, etc. These 6 are all from work I've done myself. There are so many more out there.

Why would this happen?

One example is that the Census Enumerator or person recording the event wrote as they heard it pronounced or how they thought it should be spelled. People may have not necessarily known the exact spelling of their own name!

One of my Great Grandmothers who came to America from Lithuania was married to Jurgis **Bluvas**. He died before their 3 sons started school and as each one was enrolled, all 3 ended up with a *different* spelling. Uncle Walter was **BLUIVAS**, Uncle Joe was **BELOWAS** and my Grandfather was **Bluvias**. My Great Grandmother did not understand English and just wrote it her own way.



2. **MYTH** - My Ancestor used the **SAME** First Name All the Time?

NOPE – not always! Some people sometimes listed their **middle** name on documents, censuses, etc. Or, even a **nickname**. If you are looking for a **JOHN** and not finding him, look for **JACK**. Even something simple as **ROBERT/BOB** can trip you up when you are first starting out. **THERESA** could be **TESSIE**, **ELIZABETH** could be **Beth**, **Bettie**, **Lizzy**, **Lizzie**, **Liza**, **Eliza**, **Lizzeth**.
Mary/Polly, **Sarah/Sally** ****See the headstone for the young daughter of my 3rd Great Grandfather, Elizabeth Jennings. It simply reads, "Lizzie."**

Elizabeth Jennings

Vaughn Cemetery

Mehoopany, Wyoming County, PA



This following example tripped me up for a couple of decades:

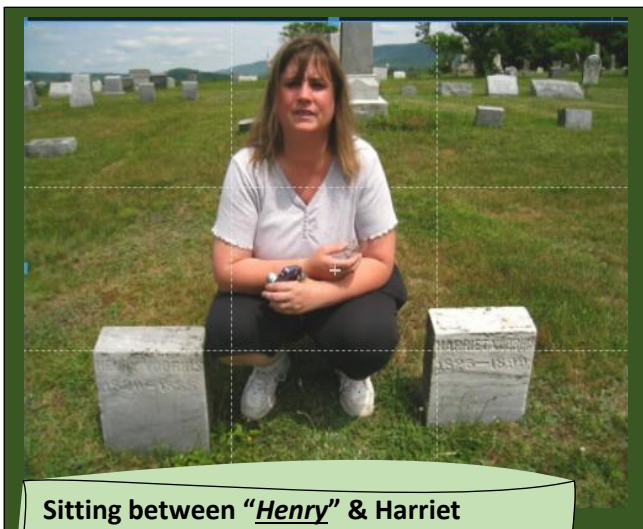
I started my Genealogy in 1979 when I was just 12 years old. My Grandmother, Jessie, provided me with many family documents, the Family Bible, letters, etc.

I knew that my 2nd Great Grandfather was **James Voorhis**, **HIS** father was also **James Voorhis** and **HIS** father was also **James Voorhis**. However, researching where I know they came from, I could find **NO** James Voorhis! This had me in a tizzy for quite a while.

It wasn't until I moved to Salt Lake City for a while (*and got to work in the Holy Grail of Genealogy – the Family History Library*) that I was able to resolve this situation.

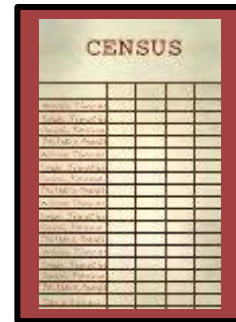
Each James Voorhis **only** used his **MIDDLE** name. For practically everything. ***See here that I am sitting next to the grave of, "HENRY" Voorhis.* Even in death he simply went by Henry.

Only in the documents we had in our possession were they listed as **James WARREN**, **James HENRY** and **James STEPHEN**. In nearly all of Census, Death, Marriage and Birth records I could find they each went by their middle name. It was quite tricky for the amateur genealogist!



Sitting between "**Henry**" & Harriet
Beech Flats Cemetery, Troy, Bradford, PA





3. Census Records are not always accurate.

There are so many great things about the Census, but you must think of them as a **General Guideline.**

One thing you must consider is that the information given to the Census taker could be wrong for many reasons:

****People Lied.*** Yes, our Ancestors were Not Always Truthful.

Some lied for ***vanity.*** It's not uncommon to see a woman lose a decade off their age between her 1st Census and her last. Or it was not uncommon for a woman to change her age to be younger than her husband.

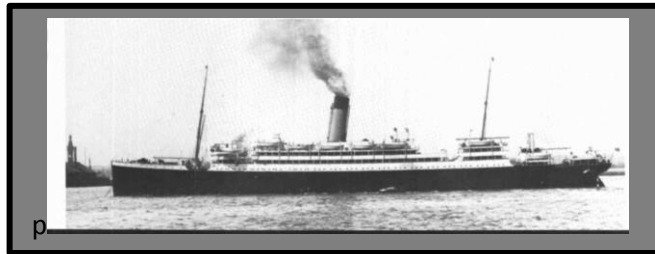
A couple may have lied so they could get ***married*** – or to ***legitimize*** a baby (*every baby was born at least 9 months after the marriage – right??*)

A boy/man might have lied to avoid or enlist in the ***military.*** Or a young one may have lied to start ***working.***

Another consideration for ***erroneous information*** on a Census record:

Our Ancestors ***did not always know*** the information and were approximating. Birthdays weren't widely celebrated before the 20th century and it wasn't a big deal. Mothers often had so many children it was difficult to keep track of all the dates & years. The common person did not have a calendar etc. on which to write certain dates. And they were so busy with life, it wasn't as important.

When an immigrant was asked when they came to America, some would approximate, “*oh, about 10 years*” or so. In my 3rd Great Grandparents records they have them arriving in 1882 and 1894. They just guessed or lied.



The information that was given to the Census Taker could have been given to him by **ANY MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD “OR EVEN A NEIGHBOR!”** So you could have an older child or neighbor telling the enumerator that the dad comes from Scotland, but it was really Ireland... Which it says in the NEXT census – but you don’t which is correct now?

Whoever was in the household at that time was listed as a member. So a visiting cousin is listed in the 1870 Census and you assume it’s a child of that family. But you find that same person in a neighboring county, same unusual name, (such as a x-great uncle of mine – **Amasa Putnam Pepper**) same age... and you think, “That can’t be so.” **IT CAN.**

If the Census taker did the county of Union one day, while the child was in the home of his Uncle he was listed as a member of that family - but then the following week the census enumerator did the neighboring county of Bradford and **Amasa Putnam**, same age, is now back at his own home with his actual parents – he is counted again. When 1880 comes around, no more **Amasa Putnam** at the first house, but yes, he is still at the same second household.



4. ASSUMING - No Good Comes from it!

If you are checking the census records and come across an early census to a family where the adult male is missing, don't assume he is deceased. He could just be away and because he wasn't there at that time the enumerator was there, he wasn't listed.

In a situation that threw me off, I could not find my ancestor, Josiah Milton Daley in the 1870 Census. I found his wife and their 11 children. I was dumbfounded. I searched high and low and found Josiah Milton Daley, right age, living with John Rolley Daley about 50 miles away. Turned out that John Rolley, about 32 years older than my Josiah, was the Father of Josiah and he was visiting with his father apparently, as were several of Josiah's siblings.

It took a lot of research but checking it all out it seems like the adult children went to see their **very** aged father, perhaps to say goodbye.

Many years earlier I may have stopped and thought that maybe his wife was a widow, or they divorced, etc. But from years of experience I knew to persevere.

Also considering the value of the Census -

The Census Enumerator wrote what he Heard. If you stated the name Cindy, but he heard 'Sandy' Sandy it is. If it's Liza but he hears Lisa, or Dan & Don, etc., I have a x-great aunt Abby that is listed as 'Happy.'" One I don't quite get is my great Uncle Walter as Vladimir. I don't think it sounds that similar.

	Frank	Son	M	16	S
	William	Son	M	15	S
	Elizabeth	Daughter	F	13	S
	Catherine	Daughter	F	12	S
	Jennie	Daughter	F	10	S
	Joseph	Son	M	7	S
	Elizabeth	Head 1 R	F	37	Wid
	Joseph	Son	M	4	S
	William	Son	M	6	S
	Edward	Son	M	2 1/2	S
	Michael	Head 2 R	M	27	
	Mary	Wife	F	26	
	Anna	Daughter	F	4 1/2	
	Peter	Son	M	4 1/2	
	Margaret	Daughter	F	1 1/2	
	Catherine	Daughter	F	7 1/2	
	John	Daughter	F	18	
	Robert	Daughter	F	17	
	Josephine	Head 3 R	F	37	Wid

Vlademere?
Belowas 1920

4 197 238	Albert	Son			V	M	W	3
	George	Head	0 8800		V	M	W	7
	Wife	Wife			V	F	W	6
	John	Son			V	M	W	3
	Priscilla	Son			V	M	W	3
	Frank	Son			V	M	W	3
6 197 231	Marion	Head	0 2005		V	M	W	26
	Elizabeth	Wife			V	F	W	14
	John	Daughter			V	F	W	1
	William	Son			V	M	W	3
	Blumas, Joseph	Step Son			V	M	W	20
	Walter	Step Son			V	M	W	16
	Edward	Step Son			V	M	W	16
	Walter	Step Son			V	M	W	16
	Walter	Step Son			V	M	W	16
2 197 240	Walter	Head	0 400		V	M	W	44
	Melba	Wife			V	F	W	31
	Agnes	Wife			V	F	W	31
	Valonia	Step Daughter			V	F	W	12
	Albina	Step Daughter			V	F	W	7
	Florence	Step Daughter			V	F	W	6
	Leonard	Step Son			V	M	W	11

Walter Blumas 1930

I searched long and hard for some CARTER family records but could not find them... because the person who transcribed it thought the "C" was a "P."

270	Albert	Son	4 1/2	Aug	1872	27	S
	Luzie	Daughter	2 1/2	Jan	1874	11	S
	Carton George	Head	4 1/2	Apr	1876	28	W
	Annies	Wife	1 1/2	Nov	1876	27	W
	Thomas	Son	4 1/2	Nov	1876	3	S
278	Oliver	Daughter	4 1/2	Jan	1876	12	W
237	Martin	Head	4 1/2	July	1875	37	W
	Margaret	Wife	4 1/2	July	1875	35	W
	Arthur	Son	4 1/2	Oct	1875	12	W
	Winifred	Daughter	1 1/2	Nov	1875	11	W
277	Norman	Son	4 1/2	Nov	1875	11	W
272	James	Son	4 1/2	Nov	1875	11	S

"P" mistaken for "C"

In the example previously above of Walter/Vlademere we see this again -

My Great Grandfather , Jurgis Bluvas, died in the 1918 Flu Pandemic and a few years later my Great Grandmother remarried Pijus **Miliauskas**. Here the person who transcribed this had it as **Walauskes**. That wasn't so easy! And notice Pijus is going by PETER now.

This is a blended family with Peter/Pijus and Elizabeth/Elzbieta listed with '**their children**,' JULIA and WILLIAM and then my Grandfather with brothers listed as stepsons.

WILLIAM – His name was Vincent Anthony. We don't know why she listed him on here as William.

Miliauskas now transcribed as Walauskes →

Bluvas is now Blumas

4	197	338	—	Albert	Son		V	M	W	1
			—	George	Head	0-2800	N	M	N	7
			—	Alida	Wife #		V	F	W	6
			—	John	Son		V	M	W	5
			—	Pincant	Son		V	M	W	2
			—	Stanly	Son		V	M	W	3
			—	Milawskas, Peter	Head	0-2900	V	M	W	2
			—	Elizabeth	Wife #		V	F	W	4
			—	Julia	Daughter		V	F	W	
			—	William	Son		V	M	W	3
			—	Blumas, Joseph	Step Son		V	M	W	2
			—	Walter	Step Son		V	M	W	6
			—	Edward	Step Son		V	M	W	1
			—	Walter	Step Son		V	M	W	4
2	119	240	—	Gustavys, Matthew	Head	0-4000	N	M	W	4
			—	Agnes	Wife #		V	F	W	3
			—	Valonia, Anna	Step Daughter		V	F	W	12
			—	Alma	Step Daughter		V	F	W	1
			—	Lourence	Step Daughter		V	F	W	6
			—	Leonard	Step Son		V	M	W	0

One X-Great Uncle's occupation seemed a mystery... From the census it was either **SAWYER** or **LAWYER**.

He was about 44 years old and I knew his family 'had money.' I found this picture of him and it helped me decide. He was NOT a sawyer –



In a situation where you have a lot of text on the record, go through it and look for similarities.

Often in old handwriting an upper - case **L** & **S** may look similar. If you can't decide if that's Lawyer or Sawyer, see if there is something like a "Samuel or Lawrence" to help you decide how this person wrote.

When checking out the ancestry sites we are at the mercy of the person who transcribed it. If you can't find what you are looking for, **Think Outside the Boxes.**



5. MYTH: If it Doesn't Make Sense – It Mustn't Be So –

This is a case I worked on a couple of years back (names changed).

James Millet, my client's 2nd Great Grandfather born in *Louisiana*, we find him living in Chicago with the same wife *Bertha* we knew to be, and 3 sons we knew to be. So we are satisfied it is him, though Chicago seems out of place. But on his draft card he lists his residence in Chicago and relative as *Juliette Howard* in *Louisiana*. Even better.

A George *Howard* appears with mother, *Juliette Howard*, in *Louisiana*. George is about 3 years younger than James. ***How does James Millet fit in?***

It turned out the James Millet was born 1879 and was a 7-month-old baby in the **1800 Census**. He was the child of Juliette Millet and John Millet. John and Juliette had one more child, George in 1883 and then John died.

Juliette remarried a *Charles Howard* and she and the boys took his name in the 1900 Census. However, after that James went back to his birth father's name – *Millet*.

For what reason we don't know – perhaps he did not have a good relationship with his stepfather, Charles. ***We won't know the answers to these questions until we get to the place that these ancestors are.***





6 – If I see it in front of me, it Must Be True – FALSE! –

In the 1870 Census is my 2X Great Grandfather, Terry Pepper. He has 7 children living with him, 4 in their teens. Logic would have it that these 4 teens would be young ones in 1860... but wait, Hubert, age 16 is not there in 1860, but in 1870 he's 16. So did my 2x Great Grandfather have a 16-year-old son named Hubert Alonzo? *Where was Hubert Alonzo in 1860??* I'll tell you where - on a farm near by Terry's in 1860. It didn't make sense so I put my **Genealogy Thinking Cap** on. *From where did Hubert come?*

Checking the neighbors in 1860 I see a 6-year-old Hubert Alonzo with parents Thomas and Mary Anne Dulopp. In 1870 Thomas Dulopp is nowhere to be found, but Mary Anne Dulopp is a Servant in the same town they've been in. Further research showed that Thomas died not long after the 1860 Census.

Instead of listing Hubert Alonzo as a great uncle, I took what didn't feel right and solved the puzzle. After the death of his father, Mary Anne sent her young son Hubert to live with their neighbors and she went to work as a servant.





7 – CITATIONS – THEY'RE SUPER IMPORTANT!

There's no way you're going to remember where you obtained each piece of information – And I'm not saying you have to make a Citation for ***Every-single-Detail***, but the situation **WILL** arise where you will want to verify something and will need to know where you got that fact.

Your system should be your own ***personal*** style (assuming you are doing this as a personal enjoyment project for your self – There is a lot written on how to write professional citations that you can google). Your system should be something ***easy*** so you *actually do it*, and ***simple*** so you can easily remember it.

Something as simple as putting initials after a fact can be sufficient. -

For my Great Grandfather George Arthur Carter I have in his Box (I will get to Boxes)

For each Direct Ancestor they have a **Biography Box** where I list as much about them to give me (and whoever comes next) a Glimpse of this family member's life

GGF – George Arthur Carter b. 27 Aug 1893
Linden, Union NJ PK, 1900 Cn, DC,, /Anc

Geo Art Carter d. 1 Oct 1964, Elizabeth, Union,
NJ, bur St. Gertrudes Colonia, Middlesex, NJ - PK, DC/ pic
Grave

M. Helen Hart 1900-1950 – Father of Francis, William, Edmund,
Janet. PK, Gma's Bible,

Worked for Standard Oil, also painter, was known to think
outside the box. Built boat in basement – couldn't get it out.
Sent Parrot for ride in taxi

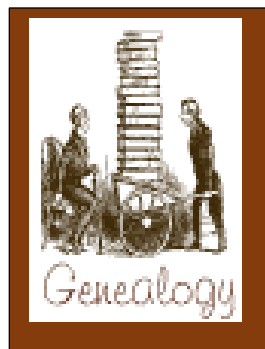
Died of pneumonia.

My Simple Abbreviations

GGF = Great Grandfather /(**GGM**) **b.** =born, **d.**=died / **PK** – Personal Knowledge (stories from family members, papers, Bibles, memorabilia, pictures, diaries/Journals, etc.) **DC** = Death Certificate, **BC**=Birth Certificate, **Conf.** = Confirmation Record, **BpChr** = Baptismal/Christening Record, **Sch** = School Record, **Mil** = Military Records, **SFF**= Story from Family or Friend (*list who told you the story*)
Anc = Ancestry.com, **MH** = My Heritage, **FS** = Family Search.

When listing **PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE** you may wish to be *more specific* and *state exactly* what it was – Such as, *“Conversation with Jessie Jennings 1979 in her home when I discovered Emma’s Bible in attic. – Notes of this conversation are in Blue notebook in 1st floor filing cabinet.”* That may seem a little extreme but I have been doing this for so long and have gotten information from so many family members, I like to remember exactly who said what. After a time you may come to find out that a specific person’s memory or reliability is not as reliable and you may take that person’s stories/ “facts” not as seriously.

Make this citation style your own – and keep it simple. This makes it more likely you will actually do it.



8. There is NOT a Record for Every Event - no matter how hard you try to find it.

It’s difficult to accept, and very disheartening, to know that **a good number of records do not exist.**

Records (most of the **1890 Census** for example) were destroyed. Some by **fire, flood** etc., and some by people **‘cleaning up’ parishes, courthouses, etc.**

In some places records were not kept for certain time periods, for certain events, etc.

And sometimes records don’t exist because they were **never created** – Such as the ancestors who **‘were married’** but never quite made it to the Justice of the Peace.

Genealogy is like putting puzzle-after-puzzle together.



9. **MYTH:** This is going to be So FUN!

Not necessarily. Stress, frustration, mental fatigue – days you want to pull out all of your hair...

You think you got it right, only to find out weeks or months later you were wrong & all the hours you put in building off just 1 fact is now going to take you twice as long to fix it.

It may not be easy; it may not always be fun – BUT it is almost always rewarding!

To know who makes up you is a one of a kind thrill.

“You are the Result of a Thousand Loves.”

How fulfilling it will be to know some of their stories.

Sandra Ashton
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