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December 13, 2011 Schaumburg Township District Library Genealogy Program "Handouts"

Hi Everyone,

This document should be considered as the program "handouts" document for our December 13, 2011 Schaumburg Township District Library Genealogy Program.

What does this really mean?

Prior to this "new" process, our program handouts would actually be paper handouts that were based on me often printing up the first page related to a web site that I wanted to mention. Then on the paper for the web site I would handwrite what things of importance are associated with the web site that the researcher should know. Maybe it was a new web site or maybe an important date related to a significant event or maybe a new database was released. Whatever it was I noted it on the paper of the first page of the web site.

The source for the vast majority of what is in the Handouts is the monthly Schaumburg Township District Library Genealogy Newsletter. From within this larger document I extract information on upcoming genealogy programs local to our area, important items from Dick Eastman's Online Genealogy Blog, as well as I summarize some key periodical articles of interest that I think are important to be aware of. The Handouts simply provide me with the opportunity to focus in on what I consider are important genealogical bits of information important to the researcher as well as to share my own personal thoughts on why it is of note.

You will also see a small redesign of the PDF Handout package. You will now see a Table of Contents on Page 1 listing what the following "handouts" are by topic. Within the Table of contents you can quickly access the handouts by using the hyperlinks and bookmarks that will get you quickly to your handout of interest. You will no longer have to scroll through the entire package of handouts to get to the one you want.

I also plan on use the "yellow highlight" tool within Word and highlight certain areas of these notes that I think are important to note. The visual highlighting will take your eyes to areas of importance to note. Please let me know if you think this OK or if it may be a distraction? I thought I would give it a try.

Going forward I plan on creating this document on a monthly basis that will include my notes regarding a web site of interest and a link to the web site itself.

The reader of this "handout" list can themselves then read my overview summary of the site and then link to the site directly themselves to get more details or print out what they want from site.

I will clearly identify my own comments when the handout is a combination of material that came from some other source such as Dick Eastman's blog as well as my own comments. I will indicate my comments in Italics, clearly marked so the reader can distinguish between the original verbiage and my own comments. If a handout item was completely created by me then you will see that noted at the top.

In this case, the entirety of the handout was created by me and will not be shown in Italics.

This program "Handout" information will then be uploaded to the Schaumburg Township District Library Genealogy Blog that is titled "Genealogy with Tony". This blog will be accessible from the library's main web site page at www.schaumburglibrary.org. Select "Local History and Genealogy" at the top of the page, then look for the icon on the Local History and Genealogy page that says "Tony's Genealogy Blog". Open the blog link and then look at the right hand sidebar of the blog and you will see the "Handouts" information. The direct web address for the blog I author is <http://genealogywithtony.wordpress.com>

Here we go with the list of "handouts"!

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Handout #1 – VISIT THE SCHAUMBURG TOWNSHIP DISTRICT LIBRARY GENEALOGY BLOG

I will continue to remind participants of our library’s new genealogy blog. You can access it through our library home page at www.SchaumburgLibrary.org by scrolling across the top of the first page and look for the tab that says “Local History and Genealogy”. Click on that tab and look on the right side for our library genealogy blog on the right side that says “Tony’s Genealogy Blog”.

Or you can just go directly to the blog at:

<http://genealogywithtony.wordpress.com>

You will find postings on upcoming programs, both at our library, and elsewhere in the area. You will also find a myriad of other kinds of postings, especially those that I offer on “Genealogy Tips” to help make your research efforts more productive.

You will also find our Schaumburg Township District Library Genealogy Newsletter and our “Program Handouts” at the blog as PDF files for you to view online, or download and save to your own computer for future referral.

Please remember that the blog will be the place to retrieve the newsletter and the “handouts”. I do not plan on making paper handouts of these available for distribution at the program or for mailing to individuals.

Try to visit the blog frequently to see what is going on. Subscribe to the blog via RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and you will receive notices when a new post or comment has been made at the blog.

Our blog is the way of the future and the future is here now!

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Handout #2 – NEXT MEETING OF THE NORTHWEST SUBURBAN COUNCIL OF GENEALOGISTS ON JANUARY 7, 2012

THERE IS NO PROGRAM SCHEDULED BY THE SOCIETY DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER. ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS!

PLEASE NOTE THIS IMPORTANT CHANGE FOR THIS SOCIETY. THEY ARE CHANGING THE MEETING DAY, MEETING TIME AND MEETING LOCATION FOR PROGRAMS FOR THIS SOCIETY EFFECTIVE WITH THE AUGUST 2011 PROGRAM. THIS SOCIETY WILL NO LONGER BE MEETING ON THE 3RD TUESDAY EVENING OF MONTH FOR SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER AND JANUARY-MAY AT THE FOREST VIEW EDUCATIONAL CENTER IN ARLINGTON HEIGHTS. INSTEAD, THE SOCIETY WILL BE MEETING ON THE 1ST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH STARTING AT 10:00 AM AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS SENIOR CENTER LOCATED AT 1801 WEST CENTRAL ROAD IN ARLINGTON HEIGHTS. THERE IS A 30 MINUTE ROUND-TABLE HELP SESSION THAT STARTS AT 9:30 AM PRIOR TO THE ACTUAL PROGRAM.

The next meeting of the Northwest Suburban Council of Genealogists will take place on Saturday morning, January 7, 2012. The program for the morning is titled **“Organizing and Writing Your Family History”**. The speaker for the evening will be Steve Szabados.

Steve Szabados is a retired project manager with a Bachelor of Science degree and a MBA who started researching his ancestors in 2004. He has given numerous presentations to groups in Illinois and Wisconsin and wants to share his passion for Family History . He is a member of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, Illinois State Genealogical Society and also a genealogy volunteer at the Arlington Heights Library. His roots are Polish and Hungarian plus he has also had success researching Slovenian and Bohemian records.

Meetings are held at the Arlington Heights Senior Center at 1801 West Central Road in Arlington Heights. They begin at 10:00 AM with a Round-Table discussion/mingling time starting at 9:30 AM. They encourage people to bring their research problems, achievements or interesting tips to share with each other during the time prior to the program start. **The main portion of the meeting begins promptly at 10:00 AM.** Donations are always welcome! Coffee is available to attendees for a charge.

You may visit the society web page at for any further details on the program as well as on the society:

www.NWSCG.com

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Handout #3 – DUPAGE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEXT SOCIETY PROGRAM ON JANUARY 18, 2012

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the DuPage County Genealogical Society will take place on Wednesday evening, January 18, 2012. The program scheduled for that evening is **“Visualizing Your Genealogical Data: Excel, OneNote, Maps and Blogs”**. The speaker for the program will be Jennifer Holik-Urban.

Most genealogists use some version of family tree software to record and organize their data. Does that software always show the data in ways that help answer all the questions, fill in data gaps, and move research forward? Research examples will be shown from Excel and OneNote to visualize data to fill in research gaps, answer questions, and organize your data. Mapping tools will be explored as a resource to visually document families. Finally, blogging will be discussed as an option to answer questions, share data and move your research forward.

Jennifer Holik is a professional genealogical researcher, house historian, lecturer, and author. Jennifer authors several blogs including, Chicago Family History, Genealogy for Kids and Family History Research. Her book To Soar with Tigers about Flying Tiger, Robert R. Brouk, was published in early 2011. Her website is www.generationsbiz.com.

This meeting will take place at the Wheaton Public Library, Lower Level Meeting Room. The address of the Library is 225 N. Cross St. in Wheaton, IL. The meeting room opens at 6:30 PM. Refreshments are available at that time. The program starts at 7 PM and will conclude by no later than 9 PM.

You may visit the society web page to find out further information about this program and other future programs the society has on their schedule at:

www.dcgcs.org

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Handout #4 – COMPUTER ASSISTED GENEALOGY GROUP OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS (CAGG-NI) NEXT PROGRAM ON JANUARY 12, 2012

The next meeting of CAGGNI will take place on Saturday morning, January 12, 2012 from 10:30 AM until 12:30 PM at (To Be Announced). The program scheduled for this day is **"Digital Scrapbooking: Presenting Your Family History"**. The speaker for the program will be Kate Thommes.

Kate will explain how to preserve and digitize your photos and documents, and put it all together in a beautiful, professional, presentation book your family can enjoy for generations.

You may visit the organization web page to find out further information about this program and other future programs the society has on their schedule at:

www.CAGGNI.org

Visit the group's web site noted above for information about this program as well as what CAGG-NI is all about.

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**Handout #5 – SCHAUMBURG TOWNSHIP DISTRICT LIBRARY NEXT
GENEALOGY PROGRAM ON JANUARY 10, 2012**

Our topic for our next program on January 10, 2012 will be **“Social Networking for Genealogy: Family Trees, FaceBook, Blogs and More”**. Our speaker for the evening will be Caron Primas Brennan.

Social Media is exploding all around us. Using genealogy networks is no exception. Are you on FaceBook yet? What about Google Plus? Are you blogging on WordPress or BlogSpot? It is hard enough at times to do basic genealogical research to uncover our ancestors with records, but now we have to be aware and should be participating in all of the exploding Social Media presence that now surrounds us.

Do you feel like you are falling farther and farther behind the curve? Are we losing out on golden opportunities to advance our research by not yet participating on all of these Social Networking outlets? Probably so.

Caron is going to fill the gap on this exploding aspect of genealogy networking so we can better understand what all the hoopla is about for Social Networking.

Caron loves history, biography, puzzles and a good mystery, which makes her perfectly suited to genealogy research! She has been researching her family history since a 6th grade school project got her interested. She has been using the computer and internet since before it was “cool”. She uses The Master Genealogist as her primary software and also uses Family Tree Maker and Ancestry to share with others in her family. Caron’s only vice is genealogy research so she has subscriptions to many resources including Ancestry.com, Genealogybank.com, NEGHS, Footnote, and Godfrey Memorial Library. She belongs to several local genealogy groups and is the Webmaster and Newsletter Publisher for CAGGNI (www.caggni.org).

You may visit the library’s web page at:

www.SchaumburgLibrary.org

to view a Calendar of Events section of the library web page for this program and for many more non-genealogical programs offered by our library.

You can also visit the Genealogy Blog of the library that is authored by Tony Kierna. Visit the blog at <http://genealogywithtony.wordpress.com> for all things related to genealogy and the genealogy programs at the Schaumburg Township District Library.

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Handout #6 – DEKALB COUNTY, IL TO OFFER ONLINE SEARCHING FOR VITAL RECORDS

The following was found at Dick Eastman's Blog at www.eogn.com dated October 21, 2011.

DeKalb County is set to launch a genealogy website by early to mid-November that will allow anyone to search and download birth, marriage and death records that date back to the county's inception in 1837. The search is free, but a \$10 fee – the same price it costs to pick up documents at the clerk's office – will be charged to print or save a copy of an original document.

County Clerk John Acardo said the website should increase the revenue generated from the genealogical records fee by 40 percent because of the global reach. He said the county already receives requests from people around the world, and the ease and accessibility the website will deliver along with a partnership with ancestry.com should increase the demand.

You can read more in an article by Jeff Engelhardt in the Daily Chronicle at

<http://goo.gl/RAqtu>

(I tried clicking on the above link and was only able to get the basic summary of the event. If you click on "Read the full article" it takes you to a site that requires you to log in to gain access to the full article. Tony Kierna)

Comments by Tony Kierna

It is nice to see a local county to our area developing this online searching and ordering capability. For those of you with any genealogical connection to DeKalb County, IL, you will definitely want to keep in touch with this newly developing capability.

I spent some time also trying to search the web site for the County Recorder of DeKalb County and I was not finding anything at the web site that indicated they have online searching available. The blog post above indicated this functionality would be available by mid-November 2011.

I called the DeKalb County Recorder's Office and they indicated that the online research functionality was still running a little late for implementation and was not activated by the mid-November target date. No activation date was given to me at the time of my call.

So now is the time to just be patient for those wanting to access this online search capability. It's coming, just not in the mid-November 2011 anticipated timeframe.

Here is a link to the DeKalb County, IL County Recorder's Web Site:

<http://www.dekalbclerk.com/Vitalrecords/VitalRecordsHome.html>

You may want to stop by and visit this site regularly at this time now to see when the site will be activated for online Birth, Marriage and Death certificate searching and ordering.

I also wish the link from the blog post above would not get you to an archived newspaper web site requiring password access and subscription. I do not know what the full article contained. Without the service being activated yet at the county level there is also no description present at the website yet either to truly know all the details and costs of the new online search service that will be activated shortly.

You are just going to have keep coming back to the DeKalb County Recorder's Office webs site. More and more counties are doing this as a way to increase their revenues and provide a great service to us researchers. I hope the county of your research interest offers this same service. If not, maybe it will be coming down the road. If not, let them know of your interests to start such a service.

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Handout #7 – SKEWING – A TECHNIQUE FOR SIGNATURE IDENTIFICATION

The following was found in Dick Eastman's Online Blog at www.eogn.com dated October 27, 2011.



How do you read a signature that is heavily slanted with the letters seemingly run together? Genealogists have that problem when trying to identify signatures but numismatists (coin and money collectors) also have the same problem when trying to identify signatures on banknotes and checks.

The answer?

Open a digital image of the signature in a photoediting program and then skew it (slant it) until the signature appears to be more vertical. A great example can be found in The E-Sylum, an electronic publication of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society, at

http://www.coinbooks.org/esylum_v14n43a06.html.

Neat trick! My thanks to Shirley Wilcox for telling me about the article.

Comments by Tony Kierna

When evaluating documents of our ancestors it almost always seems to be that the documents we have were originated by someone having the most horrible handwriting possible making our interpretation of what is written impossible!

It truly is the handwriting that is dramatically slanted to the right and having no curves in the formation of the letters that is the most difficult to read as you can see in the image above. I guarantee that if you are doing German research and are looking at passenger ship lists you will frequently see the above kind of writing prevalent throughout the documents. It was painful in my own research to come across this so much that I basically abandoned that aspect of my research. Thank goodness I did because much of what I discovered was done when the images of the passenger records were transcribed and put online. Trust me, the original handwriting is literally non-readable!

What a great idea that is shared above. Scan the document. Create an image. Manipulate the image to a more vertical appearance and you may be magically able to read what at first was impossible.

The link above shows the process of the before original image of a signature and the after image of the signature in a "skewed" manner using the software of the

photoeditor. It still looked hard to me but it certainly looks like it improves your odds in being able to decipher what at first was undecipherable.

I am going to check out my Photoshop Elements program at home to see if I can find this "skewing" capability. Take a look at the photoediting program you may use to see if you discover this handy tool within your program that you didn't even know existed.

What a great tip!

Revisit your old documents that you had a hard time reading. Scan the hard-to-read handwritten document. See if "skewing" the writing can help you discover the real hidden interpretation of the handwriting that you had given up on a long time ago.

I found another interesting article on handwriting interpretation on the Internet at:

<http://news.cincinnati.com/article/AB/20111104/NEWS/311040218/Older-handwriting-difficult-read>

Take a look at it for some other takes on interpreting difficult handwriting.

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Handout #8 – TURN OFF FILE SHARING ON YOUR LAP TOP

The following was found in Dick Eastman's Online Blog at www.eogn.com dated October 28, 2011.

During our recent power outage (caused by this weekend's freak snowstorm), I took refuge at a public library in a town some miles away. That library did have power and wi-fi Internet connections. Most important of all, the building also had heat. I spent several hours there yesterday, building the Plus Edition email newsletter and then sending it by email to each subscriber.

While at the library, I found huge security issues. Actually, I have seen them before when in hotel rooms or in public waiting areas at airports. However, I saw more security issues within a few minutes yesterday than I had ever seen before at any one time. About 30 or 40 people were in the library at the time, most of them using laptop computers. I believe that most of them, like me, were there to use the wi-fi Internet connection. In fact, there were so many of us using the single wi-fi router that it kept locking up and crashing every half hour or so.

In my Mac, I opened the Airport icon (Airport is the Macintosh term for wi-fi networking) and looked at available systems. About two dozen computers were listed. Some of the computers were listed by the names of the owners while others had some cryptic names, such as: BF354SA. This is not unusual for any place where a lot of laptop computers are in use in a small area. In any Windows or Macintosh computer, you can normally see the names of nearby computers on the same network you are using.

Now for the fun part:

I started clicking on computer names at random. On about half the computers in the network, I was able to gain access to the computer's contents **without being asked for a user name or password!** Yes, these people have configured file sharing on their laptop computers. The use of user names and passwords is optional in today's operating systems although I will suggest that it should be mandatory. Setting up file or printer sharing without requiring user names and highly-secure passwords is a security problem by itself. Then taking that computer to a public area where dozens of people will have access to your most important files strikes me as high risk.

I admit that I poked around in other people's computers for a bit. On a couple of computers I accessed, I could see and copy anything in the Documents folders and other folders as well. I even copied a couple of MP3 music files from one person's iTunes folder. Another person had a folder named "QuickBooks" but I decided to not click on it. There are some things I don't want to know!

In short, these people were making their sensitive files available to everyone. That's sort of like leaving the front door unlocked in your home when you leave the premises. You don't know who will access your things.

I checked my own laptop's configuration. I had file sharing turned off, so no one can access my files. Admittedly, when at home I do use file sharing occasionally to copy files from the desktop to the laptop or vice versa. However, I only turn file sharing

on for the few minutes I actually need it, and then a user name and password are required to gain access from any other computer on the network. When finished, I always turn file sharing off in the laptop computer.

Let me ask you some questions: Do you have file sharing or printer sharing turned on? If so, are a user name and password required to gain access to your files? Not only are you at risk while at the library, but also when using your computer at the airport, in a hotel room, on the commuter train, or even at home if you have neighbors within wi-fi range.

It is bad enough to enable wide open file sharing without user names and passwords on a desktop computer where your next-door-neighbors might be able to access your files by wi-fi. However, it is far worse when you take a laptop computer to a library, courthouse, hotel room, or airport waiting lounge where many more laptop computers are in use, greatly increasing the odds that someone will discover that your computer's "front door is unlocked."

Again, file sharing is not the culprit. You can turn on file sharing and still maintain security by requiring user names and lengthy passwords. The security problems arise from turning on file sharing and then not requiring user names and passwords for access.

For **Windows XP** users, instructions may be found on Microsoft's support site at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/307874>

For **Windows Vista** users, instructions may be found on Microsoft's support site at <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb727037.aspx>

For **Windows 7** users, instructions may be found on Microsoft's support site at <http://social.technet.microsoft.com/Forums/en/w7itprosecurity/thread/9a87b20f-15a4-4eff-b678-f228166f6d0a>

For **Macintosh** users, go to System Preferences, click on Sharing, and make sure all the boxes are unchecked. You can also watch a video on Apple's web site at <http://www.apple.com/findouthow/mac/#wirelessmore>

Comments by Tony Kierna

I think Dick Eastman really showed how important it is to know your own settings on your laptop computers when accessing Wi-Fi either at a library or at any other location. I would like to be clear that the security issue that exists lies with the user and not the provider of Wi-Fi service. Wi-Fi is a great feature that allows us to access the Internet wirelessly through our laptops when we are in a public setting within the range of a Wi-Fi network. But it is important to not get lulled into some false sense of security when using it. It is publicly available by both "good" honest users and also by "bad" nefarious users wanting to take any information about you they can find on your equipment.

It is shocking to see that Dick Eastman was actually able to access the hard drives of 50% of the users of the Wi-Fi network he was accessing. These users either had "File Sharing" on by default setting or had actually set it that way for their own home use. Usernames and Passwords should also be part of the process of accessing

material by File Sharing. **The laptop owner needs to at least be aware of this and take precautions by setting up access to File Sharing with Usernames and Passwords even for a home setting with Wi-Fi. The user should at least shut down the File Sharing capability on their laptops when leaving their own little Wi-Fi network and going off into the really “public” area of a library setting or a café or wherever Wi-Fi can be accessed.**

Now is the time to become aware of security to protect your information on your own laptop. **Set up your own network with the most secure access you can. Username access and Password access to your own network is a must even if it may seem you are just sharing information among your family.** But if you share and allow this access in your own home set it up in a way that challenges anyone that can pick up your computer in the same Wi-Fi network to at least have to enter in a Password to legitimately gain access to your network. Generally, a router in your home has a serial number on it that becomes the Password for anyone to enter your network. If they do not know the serial number to enter in then they cannot get into your network and other areas of computer information you have.

Read up on this necessity. Ask around. Check with your computer’s Customer Service/Technical Services group to be sure you know about this security feature, and that you actually incorporate it into your day to day use of your computer within your own network and the truly public ones that are all around us.

Make sure your information is safe. Maybe have a separate laptop for use in these truly public settings on which you have bare-bones information. Nothing is perfect when you try to prevent access but having no “gatekeepers” to get into your information is just courting disaster!

Dick Eastman is really a high-tech guru who knows his stuff. **I think he explained the situations quite well so that we should be able to take his advice and make our own networks and laptops more secure. Don’t take a chance.** All you basically have to do is be aware of turning File Sharing on when you truly need it and turn it off when you have completed your work. Set up File Sharing so a Username and/or Password is required to access your information. Be aware of your systems and your surroundings.

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Handout #9 – 10 TIPS FOR READING GERMAN PARISH RECORDS

The following review and comments were created by me, Tony Kierna, based on my having read an article that was seen in the November/December 2011, Volume 16, Number 2 issue of Family Chronicle.

If you are a researcher doing German research and working with German handwritten documents, then I would highly recommend you take a good look at the article titled "Ten Tips for Reading German Parish Records" by Gail Blankenau. It is a tremendous "kick in the stomach" when all of our hard German research finally pays off with the discovery of some documents pertaining to our ancestors, especially German Parish Records and we realize the handwriting is literally indecipherable!

These handwriting interpretation problems apply to all genealogical researchers, although I think German handwriting interpretation can be even more challenging from my own personal experiences.

This article provides us with some very good tips on how to go about "cracking the handwriting" dilemma for German Parish Records as well as a 5 links to get you to more online aids to help unravel German handwriting problems. The author provides us with a list of 10 tips to consider that will help unravel your handwriting interpretation problems for German documents.

The 10 tips mentioned are:

1. **Print Out the Alphabet in Different Germanic Scripts** – have some printed materials showing the various Germanic scripts when you are looking at the documents. These visual aids can be invaluable.
2. **Focus First on Names** – proper names are often easier to decode. Letters in these names can help you unravel other words in the document.
3. **List Villages in Your Parish** - know the villages that may be in the parish of your research because you should be easily be able to distinguish between records from Oesterwiehe and from Bornholte. This will allow you to focus on the records of your ancestors without looking at all of the details for each entry. Find the records of the village of your interest.
4. **A Later or Earlier Clerk May Have Better Handwriting** – we all have records from individuals that we wonder how they could have been in a position of such importance and cannot write legibly! Go backwards in time a few years or forward from your time period to see if you can find more legible writing. How does your surname appear in these better written pages? Just seeing your name of interest written

better may allow you to find it among those names in the poorly written part of the register.

5. **Look for a Word You Recognize on the Same Page** – look for a word that is more recognizable earlier on in the days entries when the writer was more energized and careful in writing. As the day wears on their handwriting may become more illegible. Seeing a recognized word earlier on may help you to more easily find that same word more easily later on in the day when it is more illegible.
6. **Pick Out the Vowels** – sometimes the vowels just seem easier to identify.
7. **Use a Good Genealogical Dictionary** – consider using Ernest Thode's German Genealogical Dictionary for word meanings but also to help you read the record. Sometimes deciphering the first two or three letters can get you to the dictionary location of the words that might match what is in writing.
8. **Word Length** – word length and the dictionary can help you rule out certain words. Instead of a hyphen as we use today to show a separation of a word, back then it was common to use a "+" sign at the end of part of a word on one line and the continuation on the next line.
9. **Look for Letters That Go "Below the Line"** – capital letters "E" "G" "H" and "J" often sweep below the line. Consonants "f" "g" "h" "p" "s" "y" and "z" also often sweep down below the line.
10. **Design Your Own Key Sheet** – try writing your own surname in German script. Look at the book by Edna M. Bentz titled "If I Can, You Can Decipher Germanic Records". Make notes onto your own personal key sheet for deciphering you have accomplished in records you looked at. Your own developed translation sheets will be your best guide for future interpretations.

The author also included some web sites to visit to get visuals on interpreting these challenging Germanic written documents. [Take a look at the following links for further help in deciphering Germanic handwriting:](#)

- <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kobie/script.htm>
- www.familysearch.org
- www.rootdig.com/european2.html
- www.kindredroots.com/What/germanletters/germanletters.htm
- <http://knol.google.com/k/paul-karl-moeller/german-scripts/3pj5r6n3uurvd/11>

Deciphering German handwriting from the time of our ancestors can be a daunting challenge. The article above with its tips and the links provided can help you make a better attempt to "crack the code" from the documents of your ancestors from Germany. It can be frustratingly challenging. Work at it. Practice it. You may find that it gets easier enough for you to get that one kernel of evidence of an ancestor from a German Parish Register to make it worth your effort. And then you can

become an expert and help others learn how to decipher these Germanic written documents.

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Handout #10 – THE MARRIED NAME PROBLEM: FINDING A MAIDEN NAME FOR MRS. KATIE ROMKIE

The following review and comments were created by me, Tony Kierna, based on my having read an article that was seen in the November/December 2011, Volume 16, Number 2 issue of Family Chronicle.

Another good article in this recent issue of Family Chronicle is one titled “The Married Name Problem: Finding a Maiden Name for Mrs. Katie Romkie” by J. H. Fonkert, CG.

This is a very common and universal problem all genealogists face. How do we discover the maiden names of many of our female ancestors? This problem literally applies to 50% of our overall genealogy simply because our statistical male/female breakdown is 50% for each sex.

This problem of identification is made even more complex because the mores of the times of our ancestors literally precluded women from participating in events of their times where a paper trail may have been required. With fewer paper trails of life’s important events we have an even lesser chance of discovering these elusive maiden names.

The author indicates that the best place to discover this elusive piece of maiden name information is to discover it on marriage records or death records. As for marriage records, it is really the **first** marriage that will provide the actual evidence because if there was a 2nd or 3rd marriage involved, it was often the married name of the first husband that might appear on a subsequent marriage record and not the true maiden name of the woman. Sometimes when a marriage record does not provide the information you may have to consider researching newspapers around the time of the marriage that may have mentioned an engagement taking place or may have reported on the actual wedding. The maiden name may be found in these two reporting events.

A woman’s death certificate is no guarantee you will find the maiden name. My own personal research sometimes is about a 50/50 chance. The death certificate information is provided by someone. It is amazing that even if a child is the one reporting the information you may often discover that **NO** maiden name is provided by the responder on the death certificate even if that person is a child. And sometimes when you see a maiden name listed it is the name guessed at by the responder and may be totally inaccurate!

The author notes that obituaries may also be a good source of maiden names. They often are. Plenty of obituaries exist in which the proverbial “nee” is shown after the woman’s married name at death, thus giving you the maiden name. Sometimes it is not stated so obviously. If living male siblings of the deceased female are stated you will see the maiden name of the deceased through the relationship to a sibling male.

The author also notes that sometimes a State Census in-between the Federal Census may provide such maiden name information simply because these censuses often asked for a lot of information that generally wasn’t contained on a Federal Census.

The author also suggests that consideration should be made for Declarations of Intent for Citizenship. That source may be a helpful source of a maiden name.

Basically, you need to be creative in your search knowing other sources of discovering the maiden name of a female when it cannot be found in the two most notable spots, that being a marriage record or a death record.

The author does note that your discovery of a maiden name may be a longer, more indirect route for you to take. Sometimes you will discover a variety of sources that create a pathway to discovery but without providing you the discovery in one discovery of evidence. The author provides an example of using an Iowa State Census for 1885 to discover that a female whose maiden name is unknown was born in Lee County, Iowa. The author then incorporated a search for the 1900 US Census in order to see if they could obtain a month of birth and year of birth for the female. The 1900 US Census is the only one that provides this nice piece of personal information that can be used for other research.

The 1900 Census information also seemed to indicate that the wife in the census was not the one being researched thus leading to the possibility that she was wife "number 2". This discovery then led the author to look for an obituary on the female in question back in Iowa. Though rich in information, the obituary did not identify the maiden name of the deceased female. I will bet you have encountered this more than a few times in your own personal research. Just when you think you have made a discovery you come up with nothing!

The author then started digging into relationships between the husband's surname as the name taken by the female and discovered the husband had bought land from another close by family. This other family name was then put into further research. Cemetery research then indicated that the deceased female with the surname of ROMKEE was buried next to a person with a surname of GERLOFF. It just so happened that the land record information showed that the husband had bought some land from a GERLOFF. Was there a connection between the GERLOFF surname and the ROMKEE surname??

The author then researched some wills and finally made the ultimate discovery. The female with the married surname of ROMKEE was actually a GERLOFF. This was finally uncovered in the research using wills when it was clearly stated that the female ROMKEE was in fact the daughter of the deceased GERLOFF, hence the female was a GERLOFF! She was mentioned in the will directly as the daughter of the deceased GERLOFF.

The author in a serendipitous manner still did further research and ultimately did discover the marriage record for the female GERLOFF and the male ROMKEE in an adjoining county from where the female was born. Obviously, had the author done the research in the manner he did initially, the discovery of the marriage record would have been done earlier on. We know things don't always work out that easily. This is why the author was tenacious enough to work to make the discovery in an indirect manner using a series of discoveries he tied together to ultimately come up with the answer.

This article provides a great lesson in how to go about making a discovery by using a series of resources that may ultimately lead to your major discovery. It also becomes a great learning tool for the researcher to get out of your normal comfort

zone and learn about resources that you may have never used in the past. The more you learn in your genealogical research about methods and resources using a real life example, the easier it will be for the next brick wall you will definitely encounter.

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