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January 14, 2014 Schaumburg Township District Library Genealogy Program "Handouts"

Hi Everyone,

This document should be considered as the program "handouts" document for our January 14, 2014 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. Or, just click on the WordPress icon in the lower right part of your screen that simply states “Follow”. By clicking on the “Follow” link you will subscribe to the blog and will receive follow-up e-mail notices when I publish a new post.

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 FEBRUARY 1, 2014

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 60 MINUTE ROUND-TABLE HELP SESSION THAT STARTS AT 9:00 AM PRIOR TO THE ACTUAL PROGRAM.

The next meeting of the Northwest Suburban Council of Genealogists will take place on Saturday morning, February 1, 2014. The program for the morning is titled **"From Land Records to Google Earth: Mapping Your Family's Place"**. The speaker for the morning will be **Jane Haldeman**.

Jane's passion for genealogy began in 8th grade with a school assignment. Her other passion is technology which lead her into theater as a stagehand. Today she has blended her love of family history and technology and shares that love with others. Jane lives in the suburbs of Chicago and her lectures focus on technology as applied to genealogical research. She is owner of "It's Relative," www.itsrelative.net; President, Illinois State Genealogical Society; Immediate Past-President, Fox Valley Genealogical Society; past Registrar Fort Payne Chapter, NSDAR; and past Design and Technical Editor, Illinois State Genealogical Society Quarterly Journal.

There are numerous sources that give our ancestor's legal land description; where are they and what do they mean? Learn where to look and how to convert section and range into Google Earth to see how that property looks today.

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 9:00 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:

www.NWSCG.com

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**Handout #3 – DUPAGE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEXT
REGULAR SOCIETY PROGRAM ON JANUARY 15, 2014**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the DuPage County Genealogical Society will take place on Wednesday evening, January 15, 2014. The program scheduled for that evening is **“Stories of the Lost”**. The speaker for the program will be **Jennifer Holik**.

We will explore the records available to tell the stories of those who lost something due to the war, never returned from war or returned, but didn't fully return. Each of them has a story that needs to be told.

This meeting will take place at the Wheaton Public Library, Lower Level. The address of the library is at 225 N. Cross St. in Wheaton, IL. The meeting room opens at 6:30 PM. Refreshments are available at that time. The society conducts business at 7 PM, the speaker will start by 7:30 PM and the program will conclude by 8:30 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.dcgs.org

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Handout #4 – COMPUTER ASSISTED GENEALOGY GROUP OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS (CAGG-NI) NEXT PROGRAM ON JANUARY 18, 2014 AT THE SCHAUMBURG TOWNSHIP DISTRICT LIBRARY

The next meeting of CAGGNI will take place on Saturday morning, January 18, 2014 at the Schaumburg Township District Library starting at 10:30 AM. The program scheduled for this day is **"French Genealogy Is Easy – Merci Napoleon!"**. The speaker will be Jacquie Schattner.

In the late 1700's, Napoleon's new laws created changes that help make today's French genealogy research easier. Curious to find out why? You will not only learn that but also about websites both French and American which will help locate your family in the countries where Napoleon ruled (France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherland and surrounding areas). Links to over 30 web sites. Document translations, French genealogical terms, and other aids will be presented. Come join us! *Bienvenue!*

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 FEBRUARY 11, 2014**

Our next genealogy program will take place on Tuesday evening, February 11, 2014 at 7:30 PM.

The topic for the program is **“First Contact – Interacting with Newly Discovered Relatives”**

Our speaker for the program will be **Barbara Peterson.**

Have you reached out to your newly discovered living “cousins” as a result of your genealogical research? It can be challenging because you don’t know how you will be viewed by these “family members”. All genealogy researchers that “reach out” will face this unknown connection effort. Will you be “rebuffed” and told to “leave us alone”? Maybe! Or, will you be embraced by the curiosity of these newly discovered “cousins”. Maybe!

Barbara Peterson is an avid and tenacious genealogy researcher who almost always is seated in our genealogy program each month listening to our monthly program just like you. She is one of you! She wants to share her “highs” and “lows” of trying to connect to newly discovered living cousins. She has discovered some methods on how to interact with them to increase the chances of making a good, solid, friendly connection that can propel the family research even further with new items of information that can be shared.

So listen up to Barb before you make that “cold” call or send that first e-mail to someone who probably does not know you from “Adam”. Hear the experiences from Barb and the tips she can offer to you before you make that next important “contact” you will embark on.

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 – LITTLE-KNOWN GOVERNMENT GENEALOGY SERVICE

The following was found at Dick Eastman's Blog at www.eogn.com dated November 24, 2013.

A little-known program of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) provides genealogy information that may be difficult or impossible to obtain elsewhere. The records include naturalization files, visa applications, and citizenship tests, and may reveal family secrets and mysteries. In addition to relatives, historians or researchers can also request files.

Under the USCIS Genealogy Program, which started in 2008, requests are usually completed within 90 days. The government will run a search of the name, as long as the person is deceased. If there are records available, the government charges additional fees for the files. The fee for a record copy from microfilm identified as (M) is \$20 per request. The fee for a copy of a hard copy file identified as (HC) is \$35 per request. More information about the fees associated with each file series may be found at <http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/historical-records-series-available-genealogy-program>.

The documents typically include immigration information, often (but not always) including exact hometowns in their ancestors' native countries. The files often have information on brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. Many times it is useful to obtain the records of your uncles, aunts, and cousins who also immigrated from "the old country."

If the immigrant applied for American citizenship, the details are also included in these files. For anyone of Japanese, German, or Italian origin who lived in the United States during World War II, the documents often include FBI reports about the person's activities, including friends, family, and political activities.

For more information about the program, check out <http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>.

Comments by Tony Kierna

Probably the most important factor for the genealogy researcher to remember is that citizenship occurring after 1906 in the United States has been handled through the Federal government since. Prior to 1906, citizenship was completed through the local court systems within the counties and states.

So if your ancestor arrived to the United States and went through the citizenship process prior to 1906 citizenship records provided very little genealogical information. After 1906 through the Federal citizenship process, a great deal more of genealogical information was captured through the process. You might encounter names of parents, place of birth at a very detailed town name, date of arrival, port of arrival, ship's name etc. But as the Eastman post notes there might be FBI reports providing even more insightful information about your ancestor.

The article above indicates that even more information might be available, especially if an ancestor might have been of Japanese, German or Italian descent as it related to World War I and World War II. You might be able to tap into Naturalization Certificates 1906-1956, Alien Registration Forms 1940-1944, Visa Files 1924-1944, Registry Files 1929-1944.

You can see a financial drawback associated with pursuing information through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It will cost you a pretty penny. However, you might hit a genealogical goldmine of information in the process since it is possible to receive so much more information than just the basics if your ancestor may have had to report information that may have found its way to the FBI.

If your ancestor became a citizen after 1906, it may be well-worth pursuing getting records of the event from this Federal agency. If records exist, they may very well be full of information about that ancestor that you may not be able to obtain anywhere else. The added data that might exist can really paint an interesting picture of that particular ancestor.

Give it a try. You may be surprised at what data exists for your post-1906 citizenship information of your ancestor.

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Handout #7 – DELIBERATELY MIS-SPELL “GENEALOGY” TO FIND BARGAINS ON E-BAY

The following was found in Dick Eastman's Online Blog at www.eogn.com dated December 15, 2013.



All true genealogists know how to spell the word "genealogy." However, not everyone else knows how and sometimes that can work to your advantage. I use this trick often when looking for bargains or to find overlooked items for sale on eBay and elsewhere.

For instance, perhaps you are looking for some genealogy books or records for sale concerning ancestors in the state of Maine. Normally, I would go to eBay and search for:

genealogy Maine

That should find all genealogy-related items relating to Maine that presently are for sale. However, that only works if the seller knows how to spell. Many times, they do not.

I just went to ebay.com and found the following items for sale: Searching for "genealogy Maine" (the correct spelling) found 418 results.

Searching for "genealogy Maine" found one item, a book about a family in a town where my ancestors lived for several generations although the surname listed in the book's title does not appear in my family tree. However, I wouldn't be surprised if my family might be mentioned someplace in that book.

Searching for "genealogy Maine" found one result, a book about a French-Canadian family that is in my own family tree.

To expand it a bit further:

Searching for "genealogy" (the correct spelling) found 44,902 results.

Searching for "genealogy" found 547 items although only a few of those results were related to genealogy.

Searching for "genealogy" found 126 results.

I used eBay in this example but the same thing is true when searching on Google, Yahoo, Mocavo, and other search engines. Experiment with all sorts of spellings, not only for "genealogy" but also for surnames and place names. After all, how many

people outside of New England know the proper spelling of "Worcester?"

The moral of this story is: "Don't overlook all possibilities. Just because you know how to spell properly does not mean that everyone else does the same!"

Comments by Tony Kierna

Just like with surnames, the way you spell something is important in your search term. I can't tell you how many times I have seen "genealogy" (the correct spelling) spelled as "geneology", especially by those simply unfamiliar with the hobby. If someone has an item that in their mind is genealogically related and they want to note that, it may turn out that they themselves are not genealogists so they come up with some variant spellings of genealogy that are incorrect to identify their product.

And as Dick says consider changing the spelling not just in eBay but in just about any other search engine you are using to track down genealogical information. Just when you thought you need to be creative with the creation of your surname spellings, you now need to consider that you can possibly find valuable information for genealogy items when "genealogy" is spelled as "geneology". Oh my, the challenges of research!!

I thought the example that Dick used above is very insightful. Seeing some results come up using "geneology" is eye-opening, more so if those results are actually promising for your research. You may be overwhelmed with numbers of results using the correct spelling of "genealogy" but now you know that there may still be much lurking below the surface if you use "geneology".

Consider opening up your searches with the above spelling change.

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Handout #8 – ONLINE DATABASE LIST UNION AND CONFEDERATE CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

The following was found in Dick Eastman's Online Blog at www.eogn.com dated December 16, 2013.



The Civil War **Soldiers and Sailors System** (CWSS) is a computerized database created by the National Park Service that contains very basic facts about servicemen who served on either side during the Civil War. Genealogists, historians, and Civil War buffs can now go to a single source to find 6.3 million service records of Union and Confederate soldiers.

The most popular database of the CWSS is the Names Index Project, a project to enter names and other basic information from 6.3 million soldier records in the National Archives. The facts about the soldiers were entered from records that are indexed to millions of other documents about Union and Confederate Civil War soldiers that are maintained by the National Archives and Records Administration.

Other information includes histories of regiments in both the Union and Confederate Armies, links to descriptions of 384 significant battles of the war, and other historical information. Additional information about soldiers, sailors, regiments, and battles, as well as prisoner-of-war records and cemetery records, are also being added over time.

Searching the free database for soldiers is simple: go to the Web site, and click on FIND A PERSON, then select the appropriate choice from a pulldown menu: soldiers, sailors, regiments, cemeteries, battles, prisoners, Medals of Honor, or monuments. A new screen appears with blanks for entering search criteria. For instance, selecting SOLDIERS produces an entry screen asking for Last Name, First Name, Union or Confederate, State of Origin, Unit, and Function. You fill in as many blanks as possible, leave any unknown information blank, and click SHOW RESULTS. Within seconds, a new list appears showing all the entries in the database that match the criteria that you specified.

The data for each soldier usually is very brief, primarily giving a reference where information may be found on microfilm. For instance, here is one typical entry:

Eastman, Albert P.
Regiment Name: 1st Regiment, Maine Heavy Artillery
Side: Union:
Company: A,M
Soldier's Rank In: Corporal
Soldier's Rank Out: Second Lieutenant
Alternate name:

Film Number: M543 roll 6

Notes:

With the above information, I know that I can view the original record on the National Archives and Records Administration's microfilm number M543, roll 6.

The Web site's data is not restricted to information about military personnel. It also has sections for politicians, activists, spies, religious leaders, regiments, battles, prisons, and more, as well as lengthy descriptions of the social, economic, political, and military aspects of the war as it impacted all Americans.

Historians generally accept 3.5 million as the number who served in the War Between the States. So, why does the database contain 6.3 million soldiers? "There are duplicates, mostly because of men who served in more than one unit and name-spelling variations," explained John Peterson of the National Park Service. The service manages 13 national cemeteries related to Civil War battlegrounds.

This is a great database! The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (CWSS) is a cooperative effort by the National Park Service (NPS), volunteers from the Mormon Church, Federation of Genealogical Societies, and United Daughters of the Confederacy.

You can access the free Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System at:

<http://www.civilwar.nps.gov>

Comments by Tony Kierna

Great resources like the above often make me sad related to my own personal research. My ancestors are all Polish and I know that the earliest ancestral immigrants to the United States arrived in 1880 and later. My research simply does not connect me to the Civil War in the United States. Darn!

For the rest of you lucky enough to possibly connect to Civil War era ancestors I offer you my congratulations! For the rest of us, we are envious.

The above system does seem like a wonderful system. When you visit the site you can select "soldiers" as a database or "sailors". You can select "Union" or "Confederate". There are many more sub-topics you can enter in the search form to search, but many of these would already some require about the person that you may not have like "Rank In", "Rank Out" or "By State". More than likely you may only know the surname of the ancestor you are researching. But look at the full template of information that is searchable at the site.

There is also a database on "Prisoners", "Politicians", "Activists", "Spies" and other terms. Don't be too restrictive in your early searching. Search the broadest base of information initially to see what you get. But don't forget these other more unique databases of people.

As Dick Eastman indicates above, you will get some minimal information to start with. You can then use these discoveries to probe into other military sources that

could be helpful for your search. Information has been transcribed from National Archives documents. You can then also use the source to look at the actual microfilm yourself ordered by yourself.

Explore the site. If you browse the "Places" category, it presents you with a listing of 71 important places associated with the Civil War. I did not see that you could search that part of the site. Rather, it gives you the 71 sites you can browse through. Places in this part of the site you can peruse through are Abraham Lincoln's home, Antietam Battlefield – Bloody Lane, Grant's Tomb, Salem Church and many more.

This is definitely a site you may enter to search for a particular ancestral name in the soldier/sailor database but you will undoubtedly look around at so many more databases related to the Civil War. You will expand your knowledge and understanding of the Civil War over and above what you can find on any particular ancestor. Use what you find for a particular ancestor to begin researching other resources for the ancestor such as their military service records and the pension records they may have created after their service. All of these can give you even bigger of a picture of your ancestor.

Enjoy the site and the databases.

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Handout #9 – “I’VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE. NO, YOU HAVEN’T”

The following review and comments were created by me, Tony Kierna, based on my having read an article that was seen in the October-December 2013, Volume 39, Number 4 issue of NGS Magazine.

I thought that a good article in this issue is one titled “I’ve Looked Everywhere. No, you haven’t.” The author of the article is Cyndi Ingle.

I can relate to the title of this article. As the genealogy coordinator, I often hear similar comments from those I help who are researching family history.

The author indicated she can get very upset when she hears someone suggest that they have tried looking everywhere for a sliver of information. The author feels that there is an opportunity to educate researchers on the “search process” and “where to look, how to look and how to think about searching.”

Quoting from the author: “If your expectations are that you will find a specific record in a specific place, for a specific date, and for a specific ancestor, you will certainly be disappointed in one or more of those expectations”.

Quoting again from the author: “You need to learn to think outside of the expectation box. Rearrange your thinking to be less specific and to allow in a little bit of gray area.”

The author is basically suggesting that we leave some “wiggle room” in our expectations. We should change our view of a fact and create that view with different expectations. Don’t just say “My ancestor had 4 children”. Rather, say something like “As of my current researching I have discovered that my ancestor had 4 children so far”. That paints the facts with some gray area allowing you to possibly discover a 5th child or an infant born previously that died shortly after birth.

Another example used by the author relates to an ancestor who lived in the Elkhart County, Indiana area in the 1860s. Over time the author could trace the ancestor through the 1860, 1870 and 1900 census but could not find the family in the 1880 census. If you phrase your parameter by saying my ancestor lived in the Elkhart County, Indiana area all of his life, then you shut yourself off from considering that your ancestor may have actually moved away for a time period and returned again later. Assuming he lived there all of his life does not allow you to be open minded for searching for him somewhere else between 1871 and 1899.

The author’s strongest point to help you in your research is that we need to stop making assumptions. Because you cannot find your ancestor in the 1880 census in the locale you expect does not mean he is there but you just can’t find him. That is an assumption that should not be made considering that there are other plausible explanations that may be present outside of your rigid belief the ancestor lived there all of his life!

The author also used Vital Records and their required creation as another trap for beginning researchers. We cannot think of today's mandated requirement to capture Vital Records to the time period of our ancestors. So when you indicate you can't find a vital record while assuming it exists, you are setting yourself up for a failed search. Perhaps you can't find it is because the state/county of origin was not required to capture it until 10 years after the event date you have in mind. By educating yourself to these facts you will be a smarter researcher. There is no official template that applies universally for when Vital Records began being captured. You simply have to know that dates of origin for capturing this data vary by State and by County.

The author also uses the searching of online databases as another area where the researcher needs to know facts. The author suggests that you should first search from the database itself of interest rather than using the universal search template that covers all of the databases? Why is this? Because if you look for the database of interest itself and find it, you will discover that there should be a good description of what the database is all about and what is contained in it. So when you search it and discover that your ancestor born in 1864 is not in the database you will readily know that the database contains birth information starting in 1875. That database may not be of immediate help to you but at least you know to keep searching in other resources for what you seek. But saying to yourself "I searched it and I did not find anything" is not a valid answer. You would never have been able to find anything because the database simply did not contain it because of the date limitations.

The author also suggests the researcher take advantage of online tools to learn more about a resource. At FamilySearch you want to tap into the "Learn More" link and get to the FamilySearch Wiki. You can get to this great online resource at <https://familysearch.org/ask/researchWiki>.

The author also clearly states that everything you may seek is not online. Do not make that research mistakes and think everything you need is at Ancestry.com or at FamilySearch. Maybe someday, but not now and not by a long shot.

In the article, the author has provided a nice "research checklist" that she uses when trying to discover ancestral information. Here is the "shortened" version of her list. You may want to read the article and make copies of it and the full-version checklist to begin using yourself:

- Go to FamilySearch and browse the list of the Historical Record Collections as well as browsing the online catalog and holdings of the Family History Library.
- Go to Ancestry.com and use the Search menu at the top to narrow down to a record type and also access the Card catalog to peruse their databases.
- Locate each of the genealogical and historical societies at the county, state, region and country for the area in which your ancestor lived.
- Locate the archives, libraries, courthouses and other record repositories in the area where your ancestor lived.
- Look through catalogs for books and publications available either online, through a library or for sale.

- If military records are involved, check with the national archive for that country. In the United States also check www.fold3.com.
- If land records are involved for the United States, check the Bureau of Land Management at www.glorerecords.blm.gov.
- If newspapers are involved check GenealogyBank.com at your library, Ancestry.com, NewspaperArchive.com at your library etc.

If you can't find something you think exists, especially if you have only looked online, then don't say "I've searched everywhere". There are likely many more places to look, especially many that are not online.

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Handout #10 – “ANCESTRAL CHICKEN SCRATCH”

The following review and comments were created by me, Tony Kierna, based on my having read an article that was seen in the October-December 2013, Volume 39, Number 4 issue of NGS Magazine.

I thought that another interesting article in this issue is one titled “Ancestral Chicken Scratch”. With a title like how could it not be an interesting article. The author of the article is Susan Zacharias.

So what do you think “Chicken scratch” is referring to?? Well, if you guessed handwriting, you are right on the mark.

In today’s online internet searching, we access material that may have already been reviewed by a series of volunteer transcribers who were asked to look at a handwritten document and then transcribe the words they believed appeared. More often than not because we think we got a match on the transcribed material, we may not even bother to look at the image of the original handwritten document. Please, please, please do not fail to look at the handwritten document! The results you think that are for your ancestor may in fact not be for that ancestor. Transcribing is an art not a science and an art that is loaded with luck, both good and bad.

Good researchers are not going to be able to avoid reading handwritten documents. No researcher is immune from crossing paths with the chicken scrawl documents that sometimes seem to exist everywhere. Just remember, everything you research has not been transcribed and uploaded to the internet by someone else. Sometimes material that is uploaded to the internet has not been indexed yet. You may need to simply browse through available images at your fingertips and in essence transcribe the record for yourself if you find an image applicable to an ancestor.

The author notes that you have a chance to be able to handle the chicken scrawl writing of our ancestors with the help of some online tutorials. For all I know there may even be an App for that!

The article includes some links to some various online handwriting tutorials that you may want to jump into to help you analyze your own documents.

One site the author notes in a bad way is at:

<http://www.dietandweightlossreview.com/google/old-english-handwriting-letters>

The author notes that the site is just not visually helpful and is poorly designed, yet it does offer some handwriting analysis help.

The author does a good job on providing many helpful handwriting analysis sites in this article. Sites mentioned are:

Helium.com @ www.helium.com/items/2408245-tips-for-reading-old-handwriting

wikiHow.com @ <http://wikihow.com/read-old-handwriting>

Script Tutorials @ <http://script.byu.edu/>

Archives.com YouTube video titled "Deciphering Chicken Scratch: Tips and Tricks for Reading Old Handwriting (22 mins) @ www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMUJ3eBUo_0

The author ends this light and informative article by pointing the finger back at you the reader. What if **YOU** are one that is guilty of chicken scrawl writing? She indicates there is a growing movement on Facebook to help you change your tune that "I don't have bad handwriting. I have my own font!"

Check out the Facebook site at <http://tinyurl.com/pbp6rm4>.

This is a short, humorous and informative article well worth a complete read.

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