



Are You Creating Your Own Brick Walls?

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Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?
The Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

Alice: I don't much care where.

The Cat: Then it doesn't much matter which way you go
"—so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.
"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."



Brick Wall? You Need to Know Where You Are Going

- Have a destination: What are you trying to find?
- What Do You Already Know?
- What Lead You to Where You Are Now?
- What Road Will You Take?
- What Sign Posts or Landmark Will You be Looking for Along the Way?
- How Will You Know When You Are Off Track?
- How Will You Know When You Have Arrived?
- Alice was not prepared – no plan; She jumped into the hole chasing the rabbit
- We do the same thing with our research; just jump into it, many times creating our own Brick Walls.



Sometimes We Create Our Own Brick Walls - How can we better prepare?

Your Greatest Asset

- The previous work you have done
- Take a fresh detailed look at everything
- Glean **all** of its information from every record
- Do you have documentation for everything you **KNOW** to be true?

Enlarge Your Ancestor with Information

- Write everything down – every details – Leave nothing out
- To reach the end - the details will make the difference
- Open a notebook
- Look at a record
 - Analyze & write down *everything* you see
 - Don't leave out information that doesn't fit
 - Cite the source you are looking at
 - Repeat with the next record – compare with previous
- Document every assumption as that - not fact



You Have Just Started Your Research Log

Don't Go Mad – Reorganize

- Reorganize the information in different ways
- Create Lists
- Spreadsheets
- Timelines
- Charts
- Maps



Which Road to Take?

- Make a Plan – a Research Plan – a Road Map
- Where you are going on your journey
- May contain day trips
- Write the details
- What you want to find?
- What records may contain that information?
- Where to find the record?
- What knowledge I need to learn?
- Where can I develop that knowledge?
- Webinars, FamilySearch Wiki, FamilySearch Learning Center, Conferences, other genealogists



Before You Take Your 1st Step

- Prepare for your trip – Make a plan, a Research Plan
- Use a Research Log – Document the journey
- Stay on the road – don't veer off

- Which road took you in the correct direction?
- Which roads lead you the wrong way? – off track
- Which were dead ends?
- The journey can take a long time – there maybe rest stops
- Track those sign posts, landmarks and side trips
- Brick Walls are difficult to pull apart once they are built

Let's Look at Ways We May Create Our Own Brick Walls

It's all in the Name

- Create List of variations in spelling
 - Incorrect spelled is the rule, not the exception
 - Standardized spelling is a modern invention
 - Recorder used their own language to write foreign names
 - Education level
 - Americanizing the name
- Name Changes
- Naming patterns within the family
 - Scottish naming patterns
 - 1st son - paternal grandfather
 - 2nd son - maternal grandfather
 - 3rd son – father
 - Similar for daughters, maternal grandmother, paternal grandmother, mother
- Scandinavian naming patterns - patronymic
- Similar names of past family members

Looking in the Wrong Location?

- Don't Make Assumptions
 - Know the history of the location
 - How did local history impacted your ancestor's life
 - Read county histories & local newspapers
- Know your Geography
 - Area maps of the timeframe
 - Maps, rivers, mountains, trails, boundaries throughout their life
 - Can dictate where their records are
 - David Rumsey Map Collection <https://www.davidrumsey.com/>
 - Digital Sanford Maps – through the Mid-Continent Library System



- Understand the Jurisdiction
 - What records are available for your timeframe
 - Redbook, The Handybook for Genealogist, [FamilySearch Wiki](#)
 - Who created the records
 - Who maintains the records
 - Where are the records located
 - May have records in the town, county, regional, state/provincial and federal levels
- Know the Laws of the Day

It's All in How You Search

- You Haven't Collected Enough Data
- Don't search for the parents until you know the child
 - Filling in the children - easier to find parents
- You're Searching Too Specifically
 - Less is More
 - You're Only Searching General Collections
 - Hints & Shaky leaves – only uses the top databases
 - Do a search in an individual collection
 - Only looking through indexed records - Search the all the iceberg of FamilySearch
- You're Not Power Searching –
 - Husband & wife search
 - Surname only in the location
 - Use Boolean operators to search - Learn the language of the computer to mine the data
- You're Not Using Enough Genealogy Sites or Resources
 - How many do you use? Branch out to other sites
 - Let's name a few
 - Branch out to other sites
 - **Use DNA Research**
- You're Only Searching Online – Go Local – Plan a visit
 - Connect with a local archive, library or cemetery office



You're Only Looking for the Person You Want to Find What? Stop looking for your ancestor?

- Look around them as well – siblings, extended family, neighbors

- Their FANs – Friends, Associates and Neighbors
- Those that might have mentioned your ancestor in their records.

Defy Logic!

- Didn't own land – don't search land records. **Big mistake!**
 - May be a witness or listed in a life lease, or other type of special document.
- Born in the United States – don't look at naturalization records – **Not True**
 - They may be a witness in another's naturalization papers
 - Women married a foreign born male

Look for your ancestor in all records groups of their FANs even if logic is telling you they wouldn't be listed there.

Let's Get Talking

- Verbally Discuss Your Research - for feedback
 - With friends, family members and other genealogist. If needed, hire professional
 - They don't understand the path you took – may see something else
 - Can see the holes in your research
- Asked for Help
 - For support, research help and ideas
 - Join an online or local group. Connect with group and individuals in the area where your ancestors lived.



Don't give up to early – Don't Stop Short

- Don't assume the information doesn't exist
- Or that it is impossible
- May take decades
- Very unusual that your ancestor dropped out of all records

Brick Walls can be torn down – Brick by Brick

But is a lot easier to avoid creating a Brick Wall in the first place