

A Look at RootsMagic: Version 2

By Mary Lou Harline

In August, 2003, when our newsletter was still called PAFinder, we introduced you to a new genealogy database program, RootsMagic. Now there is an updated version of RootsMagic with some very interesting additions to the already comprehensive features. We'll tell you of the added features and give a few more details on the basic program.

Color Code Names

One of the most interesting new features is the ability to color code the names in the file. You can choose a direct line of ancestors of a selected person, the descendants of a certain person, or a group selected from the list of names. You have a choice of colors. I chose four colors to use on four separate lines. Since only the direct lines are colored, when I am browsing through the file looking at ancestors in the "Family" view and going back to ancestors, I can easily come forward again because the direct line ancestor will be the only child with a colored name. This feature is found in the "Tools" menu.

Publishing a Family History

Roots Magic has had the ability to combine the narrative reports (Ahnentafel and Descen-

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dants Register reports) with other charts, reports and scrapbooks to make a good history of your family or an ancestor. More pages have been added in this new version: A cover page, title page, table of contents, copyright page, dedication page, acknowledgments page, a preface page, and free form text pages. You can also customize your index: choose the number of columns (one, two, or three); choose the data to be shown with the name (name alone, name with birth year, name with birth/death years); choose the font for the index text and the index title.

You can print your book with the "Screen/printer" option, or print to a Rich Text File (RTF) or an Acrobat File (PDF). If you add new people or facts, you can return to the RootsMagic Publisher and generate the book again. The changes will be made.

History and Back Commands

Another new feature is a "History" command that will let you backtrack to the last 200 persons that you have

previously visited. You can also use a "Back" command to go to the last person visited. These commands are found in the "Search Tools" menu.

Charts with Boxes That Move

No, this is not Harry Potter's world, but it does mean that you can adjust the boxes in your ancestor and descendants charts to fit where you want. A new addition to RootsMagic is the RootsMagic Chart program which is included in the installation with RootsMagic. After RootsMagic creates your wall chart or timeline, RootsMagic Chart will take over and allow you to resize the box for an individual or drag it to another location on the chart without breaking the links. You can add more text or shapes and you can change colors of individual boxes or change the font or color of the text in the boxes. These large wall charts and timelines are meant to be printed at a print shop with a large plotter.

Events on Same Screen

One advantage of the

structure of RootsMagic is that you can see all events for a person in one screen and you can enter as many events on that screen as you want. That means you can see the data of a marriage event in the same screen as the birth and death events. You can choose from a list of events, or create your own event and include how you want it worded in the one of the narrative reports— known as ancestor and descendant reports.

Possible Problems List

The possible problems can be edited right from the list when you find you entered the wrong date and made the child to be buried before he died. But the best part is that you can create a "Not a Problem" list. Just click on the "Not a Problem" button. This is especially helpful when you have included adopted children who were born before the marriage of the parents. To find this feature, click on "Problem Search" in the "Tools" menu. Then click on "Problem List" or view the "not a problem" list.

Preventing Duplicate Entries

RootsMagic will display a dialog box if you are entering

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a person who may already be in your database. The data for the possible duplicate will be displayed. You can then decide if the individual is already in the database and link that person or you can continue entering the new individual if he or she is not a duplicate.

Finding “Not a Match”

This feature helps you to manage duplicate names. You start by creating a list of possible duplicate names and then merge them or declare them “not a match.” When you click on “Tools,” then “Merge” and then “DuplicateSearch /Merge” you are presented with a screen showing a list of pairs of records which appear to be duplicate records. Details for the individuals in the pair are given in panes below the list of duplicates. If you agree that the two records are duplicates you click on “merge highlighted pair” and go on to the next pair on the list. If you decided that a pair does not match, click on the “not a match” button. You won’t see those two records again on a duplicate list. You can look at “not a duplicate” list from the “Merge” menu in the “Tools” menu. Having this available you can merge them if in the future you decide that the records really were duplicates. There is a fairly comprehensive list of criteria to use in searching for the duplicates.

Other Merging Strategies

RootsMagic has other features to merge duplicates. “Manual Merge” is useful when you find several duplicate records and want to take care of them. Click on “Manual Merge” from “Merge” in the “Tools” menu. The highlighted name will be displayed. Find the other record through the name or the record number.

There is also an automatic merge feature. It is always smart to make a backup before doing merging, but it is especially needed before you try an automatic merge. You choose the criteria for finding the duplicate records.

Add Records from Other Database

Usually you will use GEDCOM files to add records from another database. If you receive a GEDCOM file from a cousin, from your researcher, or from the Internet, you should import that GEDCOM file into a new, empty database to look it over

and decide whether it really has data of your family and it fits your standard of data entry. You can make corrections if needed and then create another GEDCOM file to import into your database.

If while you are looking at the new data you notice that you only want to include some of the names in your database, you can do this without creating a GEDCOM file. Open your database and then open the newly created database. They will be shown side by side on your screen. Click on a person in the new file that you want to be in your database. Hold the mouse click down and move to your database. This will not remove it from the original file. RootsMagic will display a dialog box with options to bring along the person’s family, ancestors or descendants. You can actually include the whole file or selected individuals. If the person you dragged to your database is dropped on a record of the same person, you can mark the checkbox in the dialog and RootsMagic will automatically merge the two records and link the dragged information to what you already have.

Counting Unlinked People

While PAF will give you a list of persons who are not linked to anyone else, RootsMagic will also give you a list of people who are linked together but not linked to others in the database. Each of these groups is called a “tree.” From the Tools menu, click on “Count unlinked trees.”

The list will show the largest tree first with the number of records, then other trees with the number of records. Some trees may only have one record. You can print a list showing the record number of the first person (lowest record number) in the tree with the record number. Using this feature may avoid a search for a missing group of ancestors after importing a file, or a part of a file.

Customize your Tool Bar

The icons on the Tool Bar are meant to make it easier for you to do selected functions. RootsMagic will let you decide which icons would be most helpful for what you do. Right click any place on the Tool Bar and click on “Customize.” You have a box with the icons in use on the right, and icons that are available on the left. To add an icon, click on one on the left and then click on “Add” in the middle vertical bar. To remove an icon, click on one on the right and click on Remove in the vertical bar.

Adding Facts

As you add facts to an individual’s record,

you can choose where that fact will be displayed.

Other Features

- When you restore a backup, you are asked if you want to overwrite the existing database.
- When you want to change the file name for your database, you must use the command, “File, Rename” in RootsMagic, not the command from the Windows program.
- The Correspondence List is available from the “Reports,” “Lists.” It helps keep track of your correspondence and check to see if you really did write that letter that you planned to write.
- The Surname Statistics List will display all surnames in your database, the number of times each surname appears, and the earliest and most recent date when the surname shows up in the database.
- The Timeline Chart lists all events about a person or family in chronological order.
- A Scrapbook can be made for an individual or for a family. If you want to print just one picture from the scrapbook, open the scrapbook, click on the photo you want to print, then click on the “Print Photo” button.
- The Place List contains fields to enter the latitude and longitude for each place.

Take a look at all the lists. They can be very interesting. Remember that you will automatically see the result on the screen before you print it.

Many features of RootsMagic can be used after importing a GEDCOM file from a PAF database. However, making changes and creating a GEDCOM file to go back to PAF will probably cause problems because many features in RootsMagic are not supported in PAF.

RootsMagic is a powerful genealogy database by itself. You can get more information about it and order it online at: www.RootsMagic.com You can also order a printed manual “Getting the Most Out of RootsMagic.” The program cost is \$29.95, bundled with the book the cost is \$39.95, the book alone is \$14.95. Shipping and handling are extra. There is a free demo file. If you already have the program an upgrade is available for \$19.95 for the program alone, or \$29.95 program and book.

Ask Dr. PAF — “I Give No Answers Before Their Time!”

By Dr. Cornelius D. PAF

Guessing Birth Dates

Q Why do some people guess at a birth date when giving information about their ancestors? Data entry procedures suggest that we leave a space blank when we don't have real data. For instance, we don't enter “unknown” for a name or a place. The blank space itself gives the message, “I don't know.” Isn't it better to leave the birth date empty.



A If you have a christening date for an individual you don't enter a birth date. Don't try to estimate one. While a christening date is frequently within a month or two of the birth date, some dates may be years away. Two children who may appear to be twins because of the same christening date may actually be two or more years apart. Perhaps the parents had not taken the older child to church for christening until they took the second child.

There are times when it is appropriate to estimate a birth date. If you don't have birth or christening date or a death or burial date for James Jones, your computer program will consider James Jones to be living. It doesn't matter that a parent was born in 1678, or a sibling was born in 1700, the computer isn't smart enough to check the family data before declaring this James Jones as a living person. You could use the words Dead or Deceased in the Death field if you are certain the person is dead, or if it is obvious from event dates of others in the family, that James Jones was born more than 110 years ago. That would enable James Jones to be included with deceased ancestors for submitting to the Internet or other programs.

An event, with a date, is important for research purposes. To start your research you must have some identification. A birth is not always the easiest event for which to find a document. A death certificate may be what you start with. It should contain a birth date. The date of death is considered to be primary evidence because it was recorded by an eye witness close to the time of the event. The birth date on the death certificate is considered secondary evidence because the event may have taken place several years before it was recorded on the death certificate and the informer may not have known the person well and guessed at the birth date. Of course in the event of an infant death the recorded birth date will more likely be correct. Not many states or countries issued death certificates before 1900. That is why we rely on burial dates in church records.

Perhaps a marriage certificate is your only connection to the ancestors. These were the earliest of the vital records (birth, death, marriage) to be required by governments. There are standard genealogy procedures for estimating birth dates:

- Men were generally 25 years old when they married
- Women were generally 21 years old when they married
- The first child was usually born one year after the marriage

- Other children were usually born with 2 year intervals.

There are always exceptions:

Families frequently had eight or more children. In years past it would be unusual for all of the children to reach adulthood. Watch for gaps in the 2 year intervals.

If a man marries for the second time, he is probably more than 4 years older than the second wife.

In rural or frontier areas, men and women frequently got married earlier. Of my ancestors in Illinois in the first half of the 19th century, women were frequently married at the age of 16.

In the larger cities you may find that the bride and groom were older than 21 and 25 when they married because they were required to have more resources before starting a family.

Another caution, if you estimate for more than one generation, you may be creating a large gap between your estimation and the real date. Three generations away you are close to myths.

These estimations are not a substitute for the real dates. However, when you are looking at your list of James Jones to find the one with an estimated date of 1789, it is easier to find him if he has a birth date showing in the search list, than to look at all your entries of James Jones.

It also helps you in searching records. You can start with a date and hunt for 5 years on either side of the estimated date, and increase the date range as needed.

A hint when looking for an ancestor on the Internet. You may feel confident in entering search data with an exact date because you have records to prove that date to be correct. However, the person who submitted that information may not have had the correct date and entered one that was two, five, or even more years off from the correct date. If the search doesn't find your ancestor on the date you have, try again with a range of dates.

Backup of GEDCOM File

Q Should I use a GEDCOM file or a backup file when I am sending someone a copy of my database as protection against a disaster at my house?

A It might be a good idea to send both. The backup file is the best for an accurate copy of the file but you usually need to have the original version of the program to restore it. For instance, if you have an old copy of a backup file created by PAF 2, you must have access to the PAF 2 program to be able to read the file. This isn't the case with PAF 3 and PAF 4. They can be restored by PAF 5 which will then convert it to a PAF 5 file. We don't know if that will be true for later versions of PAF.

A GEDCOM file may have some problems with keeping the data intact, but can be imported into other versions. At least a PAF 2 version GEDCOM file can be imported and read by PAF 5 (except for PAF 2.0).

Software of Interest: GenMerge. Google's Hard Drive Search

GenMerge

GenMerge is a stand-alone software utility. It finds and merges duplicates in GEDCOM files. When you receive a file from a relative, GenMerge makes the job of merging the data with your database much easier by reducing the time needed to merge the data. GenMerge preprocesses each database to find problems, and produces a detailed analysis of the problems in each database. The program can then find, and merge the actual duplicates. A report of the merge process is created and the merged database is written as a new GEDCOM file. The two original files are unchanged. For more information or to download a 10-day free trial, go to: www.genmerge.com.

Google's Hard Drive Search

Google recently announced a test version of a free Windows application designed to let users search for information stored on their desktop computers. Anyone who can't remember where they put an e-mail message or file can find it with this program. Google Desktop Search helps users search for information stored in their PC files, local e-mail inboxes, archived chat sessions and lists of Web sites visited. It works like a search engine that only looks at your hard drive. Google Desktop Search can search files or data stored by Outlook and Outlook Express e-mail applications, Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel and PowerPoint), Microsoft Internet Explorer Web sites visited and America Online Inc.'s AIM service (stored instant message chat sessions).

Google Desktop Search is integrated with the Google.com search engine. Queries submitted to Google.com are also run simultaneously in a user's Google Desktop Search application. Results from the two searches are combined in the Google.com results. For the sake of privacy, the desktop results are not

made available to Google.com without permission of the user.

Google Desktop also can index e-mail messages that a user views from his Web mail account (such as Hotmail or Yahoo mail), even though those messages do not remain in the user's hard drive. Believe it or not, it does not search Gmail, Google's online mail service.

Google Desktop Search can be configured to index all Web pages visited, none at all or all with the exception of those belonging to a specific URL. Also, users can configure the application to not index AIM chats and to not index certain parts of their hard drive. Google Desktop Search can find multimedia and PDF (Portable Document Format) files based on their file names. It doesn't currently search the metadata of multimedia files, such as images, MP3s and video clips, nor does it index the full text of PDF files. These features are expected to be added in the future, plus indexing of IM chats from services other than AIM.

Google Desktop Search runs with Windows XP and Windows 2000 Service Pack 3 and above. The program is available in English with plans to support other languages in the future. The program can be downloaded for free at: www.desktop.google.com/

Quotable Definition:

Genealogy: an account of one's descent from an ancestor who did not particularly care to trace his own

Ambrose Bierce
1842-1914

Stranger Than Fiction: Right to Privacy for the Dead, An Obituary with Style

Right to Privacy for the Dead?

Dead people have no legal rights to privacy in the United States. Until recently, living people had little protection to their privacy until a court decision was issued deciding that it was guaranteed by the Constitution. A rule by the Census Bureau began protection of privacy for the dead by sealing census records for 72 years. This was the average life expectancy when the regulation was made. The more recent "Freedom of Information" Act passed by Congress has not changed the application of this policy. A bureaucratic decision seems to have more precedence than a law.

The policy regarding privacy rights for the dead seems to have changed. When Vince Foster, former White House Aid to President Clinton, committed suicide, news organizations requested pictures of the body taken at the scene and during the investigation, citing "public interest" as the reason for their release. Foster's heirs cited a recent Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which states that the right of privacy in health information lasts beyond death until "the end of the universe." The court agreed and blocked the release of the photographs. Death is a

"health issue." It appears obvious that a public official could easily decide that birth records, death certificates and many other vital records kept by the government contain health information and should be sealed to the public citing the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. For the genealogist, it is a long wait until "the end of the universe" should an overzealous bureaucrat decide that is what Congress intended when they passed the law.

An Obituary with Style

A good genealogist may look at thousands of obituaries and see little more than the names of family members and a date or two. Once in a while, an obituary that uniquely describes the character of a person with grand style. Such is the obituary of Ken Kobin who recently died of congestive heart failure in St. Petersburg, Florida. His wife, Pat, wrote the death notice for the local newspaper and described her departed husband as a person who "loved his family, food, TV, food, the Bucks, food, the Gators, food, Tiger, food, his dog Buster, and food." She ended the death notice saying that his television remote control was cremated with him. She may be just the person to help write your family history.

News For Genealogists: **New Zealand Cemeteries Database , Genealogical History of Taiwan Families, New Owners of Everton Publishing**

New Zealand Cemeteries Database

The Christchurch City Council recently announced the launch of the Christchurch City Council cemeteries database. The database, available on the Council library computers, saves hours spent looking at microfilms of transcripts of hand-written interment registers. Users enter a surname to find out immediately where people of that name are buried in all Council cemeteries. Information beginning with the oldest plots in some of the city's oldest cemeteries, long ago closed, is recorded. The only access to the data now is by visiting the libraries. Inquiries from outside the region must be made through library staff, and there is no charge for the first 15 minutes. The data is being updated with new burials on a regular basis.

Genealogical History of Taiwan Families

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently announced an index of genealogy for the people of Taiwan. FamilySearch Service began in 1970 to compile Chinese family history records, which contain mostly families from Taiwan and southern China. So far it includes 9,300 individual files, covering the histories of 192 families of different names. Now, individuals with Chinese ancestry can search an index on the Internet for

names of ancestors and then go to a Family History Center with the numbers of microfilm rolls containing the information about the families and view the records.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been microfilming genealogy records starting in 1938, and has more than two million rolls. These records can be viewed at one of the 4000 Family History Centers around the world, all open to the public. Two thousand of these centers are outside the United States including centers in Taiwan, Beijing and Shanghai.

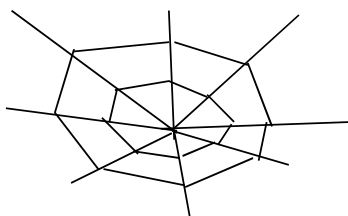
New Owners of Everton Publishing

Everton Publishing, an old and respected publisher of genealogical books and magazines, now has new owners. The company had been operating as a family-owned business and appeared to be having problems earlier this year. A new group of owners has taken over the management of the company and are voicing assurances that the company will continue serving the family history market. The new CEO, Walt Fuller, promised, "Be assured that we will honor each and every issue of the magazine that has been paid for and not received." Subscribers to Everton's *Genealogical Helper* magazine had been concerned that they would not have their subscriptions honored when rumors of the demise of the company were being circulated.

Spider Webs: The USGenWeb Census Project, Historic Directories from England & Wales

The USGenWeb Census Project

USGenWeb has had the goal of putting the U.S. census data on their popular genealogy Web site for a number of years. The progress has been slow, but since the USGenWeb site is free and operated by volunteers, the results are encouraging. The census project differs from other Internet projects to put scanned images of census returns online, such as the effort by Ancestry.com. To cover their costs, Ancestry.com must charge for the use of their records. The volunteers at USGenWeb are transcribing the data, making their project similar to the project coordinated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which transcribed the U.S. 1880 census and the British 1881 census and published them on CD-ROM. The advantage of transcribing data is that the data can be searched with an intelligent search engine. A second advantage is that all the data for a town or locality can be downloaded and inserted into a table or a spreadsheet. Of course with transcribed data, you must watch for errors in transcribing. Thus you can search for John Smith and include birth date, birthplace and other data in the search, and sort out



a family with a common name from all the other individuals with the same name. The results are spotty now, but a significant number of counties have data. The work is done by counties. Some have done well and others have yet to post their data.

An inventory of work completed and work in progress is available on the Web site to let you know if data is available where and when you are looking for data. A quick look will indicate the status. You can scan the projects completed or in progress at: www.us-census.org/inventory/.

Historic Directories from England & Wales

The University of Leicester has collected directories from England and Wales and converted them to digitized images, using a grant of £335,000 from Lottery funds. Some

of the directories are from as far back as 1750. City directories were the equivalent of the phone book before the telephone, but they were much more informative. They often included census details and the occupations of those listed.

The directories are going online on a new Historical Directories Web site which includes a search engine developed by the document management firm, Zy-Lab.

Genealogists and historians can now view local directories from England and Wales as far back as 1750 by going online. The search engine uses fuzzy logic, which allows users to search documents for specific words, even if the term is spelled differently in the document. The site has 330,000 documents already online from some 643 directories. More directories will be added as they are completed.

The Historical Directories Online site is found at www.historicaldirectories.org. The site is quite busy and you may have to try several times to get onto the site.

How Should You Record a Place?

By Allin Kingsbury

Your genealogy software demands that you enter a place for each event. You can look at family history as a series of events linked together by the members of a family and their participation in the events. The primary events of family history that link family members to each other are birth, marriage and death. A significant absence of dates and places for these events serves to classify many family histories as “junk genealogy.”

Personal Ancestral File (PAF) was not the first computer program available for the recording of genealogy, but it certainly is the first genealogy program that has been successful by withstanding the tests of time. The program did not take long to become popular and it set standards for features now considered essential in any competing products. The events recorded in the PAF database used fixed fields to record places. Of the four fields available, the first field was for the locality (town or parish), the second was for the county and the third was for the state or province if the place is located in the United States or Canada. For other parts of the World, the third field was used for the country. These recommendations implied that the fourth field was not needed, yet many found instances where the fourth field was useful. The system could have worked very well if there were consistency in the way places are recorded. Of course this did not happen.

Current versions of PAF and other popular genealogy programs have switched to a more flexible method for entering places. The new method runs the place names together in a single field with the city, county, state and any other jurisdictions separated by commas. The new method can handle more fields and does not limit any of the names of places to a specific number of letters. The system is compatible with earlier data entry in that places in older databases can be automatically converted to the new format. The only manual intervention required is where long names were truncated due to limits to the number of characters. These should be restored when converted to the new format.

Inconsistency Creates Problems

Because individuals are identified by the primary events of birth, marriage and baptism, a lack of consistency in the recording places made it impossible for the computer to ascertain whether two individuals with the same name were actually the same person. One of the early causes of inconsistency was the use of abbreviations. “England” would be written out or abbreviated “Eng” or Engl.” There is no standard abbreviation for a place, and it is unlikely that there will be. “Co.” could mean “Colorado” or “Columbia.” There is no organization that wants to take on the project of standardizing geographical abbreviations and has the universal respect of all genealogists to have everyone accept and use the standard. Even if there were a standard abbreviation for every place, there is also a lack of rule regarding when one should abbreviate. While some genealogists like to abbreviate whenever they can, others avoid the use of abbreviations like the plague.

The computer could easily handle abbreviations or work without them. If there were a standard set of abbreviations, the computer could easily be programmed to recognize a place and its abbreviation as being the same. With no standard abbreviation for a place, and license for anyone to create any abbreviation at will, the problem of abbreviations will never be solved. The only way to avoid the problem is not to use abbreviations.

Jurisdiction Changes Present the Biggest Problem

Boundary changes have created a problem even more frustrating than abbreviations. One genealogist will say that a particular region should be recorded as being in Russia because it was part of Russia when the event took place. Another genealogist will say the place is in Poland because that is where the current atlases claim the place is located. The first genealogist is correct in saying that a genealogist wants to know the place as it was at the time of the event because that information indicates where the records are located. The second genealogist is also correct in saying that family history is written for the family, whose members are

more interested in where on the map the place can be found. They have little interest in a history lesson and boundary changes that took place 200 years ago. And if Uncle Frederick is proud to be Polish, he may decide to burn a family history that has Warsaw in a country other than Poland.

The problem of political boundary changes is enormous. Just in the twentieth century, we have witnessed these:

- A major change in the county boundaries in England including the elimination of some counties
- The creation and breakup of the Soviet Union
- The conversion of Africa from colonial empires into many independent countries
- The breakup of Indo China into independent countries
- The final breakup of the Hapsburg Empire into the Balkan states and then the breakup of Yugoslavia into the countries of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and more
- The creation of the Panama Canal Zone and its return to Panama
- The creation of Indonesia from the Dutch colonial empire

The list could go on with many more changes. The English speaking portion of the map seems more stable than the rest of the World, but there have been many boundary and name changes everywhere throughout the world.

Many genealogists have taken sides on the argument over current place names versus places as of the time of the event, but there are no compelling reasons for either side to capitulate. The databases with current place names seem to be more popular. The advocates of historical place names have many of the eminent genealogists arguing for their side

Current place names are necessary to find places in modern atlases and maps, to have meaning to non-genealogists, and to pass place check software like World Place Finder and others. The historic jurisdictions are more important to the genealogist engaged in research. The history of the

boundary changes helps to produce a time line for the local area necessary when creating the historical setting for the family. The answer to the conflict appears to be that both current and historic place names are desirable.

GPS

A third method of stating location has been suggested and is available on many of the feature-rich genealogy software. Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) coordinates can be obtained using inexpensive electronic equipment of from Internet sites, atlases and maps that have these coordinates. GPS equipment can locate a place to an accuracy of about 10 feet. This accuracy can place you at a specific headstone in a cemetery or place you near the bed inside the hospital where your mother was born. However the coordinates are just numbers and not recognized by everyone. With some software available, one can enter GPS coordinates and instantly see a map showing the location and surrounding area. While GPS is an excellent tool, and very useful to the genealogist, it will not eliminate the need for place names nor weaken the arguments for current versus historic place names.

That word "of"

Another problem occurs when the word of is used before a place. The practice began before the advent of the per-

sonal computer, and was intended as a best guess when a place was not known. Rather than leave the place blank, the first known place of residence for an individual was entered preceded by the word "of." The practice was quite helpful because "of" flagged all unknown places. With the data in a personal computer, the place fields could be searched for "of" and the unknown places could be found.

Some include "of" as part of the place name while others separate it from the place name with a comma or use a separate field. Either of these methods creates a serious problem. Most computer software does not understand place names with "of," and treat "of" as though it were the name of a place or part of the place name. Almost any program looking for a match with a place will be confused by "of." After all, there may be a town named "of" somewhere. World Place Finder and similar programs will list places with "of" as an error. Programs looking for a place match such as a search engine will miss possible matches. The best recommendation from the experts seems to be, "Leave places that you do not know blank when entering data." Although this is not an ideal solution, it avoids some of the problems.

What Should You Do?

To avoid problems with your places, you can run a place checking program like World Place Finder to find places that do

not match the gazetteer used in the program. The program will list places where it finds problems. You may not like the way some of the places are listed, but you places will then follow a widely accepted standard.

Both sides in the argument over current or historic place names seem to agree that both place names are desirable. The leading genealogy programs all offer a solution through the use of notes. When a name has changed, you can add a note to explain how the name has changed. This will not solve the argument over which place name is the most important or which should be entered in the data fields. That argument is bound to continue and genealogists will need to do computer searches for events using both the current place name and the historic place name.

If you are in doubt about place fields, you need to give the argument some thought. The database is yours to use as you decide. Decide which will be most convenient as the data is used. Also consider prospective readers or users of the data are. Family members will probably want current places to locate events. Other researchers are likely to prefer historic place names. Search engines may be more efficient if they only have to consider current places. Keeping two sets of data is too much work, so you should choose what will work best.

Recently Published: **F.W. Beers Atlases of Massachusetts, Map Guide to German Parish Registers**

F.W. Beers Atlases of Massachusetts

In the late nineteenth century, F.W. Beers published his *Atlases of Massachusetts Counties and Local Maps*. Piper Publishing has converted this classic to a Windows CD-ROM. Between 1870 and 1876, an atlas was published for each of the counties in Massachusetts. Each county atlas is now available on a separate CD-ROM. The detailed historical maps in color are works of art. They show the locations of schools, churches, and individual homes with owners' names as they were about 1870 when the maps were made. This CD-ROM disks also includes business directories, and engravings of local landmarks. There are 40 to 120 maps for each county showing detailed layouts of towns and communities.

To fit the scanned maps into a CD-ROM, the latest compression technology was used. Some compression techniques reduce image quality, but no loss of quality is visible in the images on this CD-ROM. The viewing software can be used to zoom in to see the smallest details. Samples of the maps can be viewed at the Piper Web site at: www.piperpublishing.com/gen.htm

F.W. Beers Atlases of Massachusetts, Map Guide to German Parish Registers

The price each for each CD-ROM disk varies from \$35.00 to \$45.00 depending on the amount of information available for the county. To view the atlas, Windows 95 or a later version of Windows is required. Also required are 64 megabytes or more of RAM memory. No Macintosh or Linux versions are available.

Map Guide to German Parish Registers

The first volume of a series of about 40 volumes called *Map Guide to German Parish Registers* by Kevan M. Hansen has been released by Heritage Creations, the publishers of Heritage Quest Magazine. This is the first English language publication to explain the historic boundaries and changes in the parishes of Germany. German genealogy research is accomplished by determining the parish of Lutheran, Catholic, or other churches where records for christening, marriage and burial are found. The book has detailed maps showing parish boundaries and all the towns within the parish. Volume 1 includes the parishes of the Grandduchy of Hesse. Soon to come are volumes covering Baden, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Volume 1 sells for \$34.95 (soft cover) or \$65.00 (hard cover). For details, go to: www.heritagecreations.com

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Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

www.svcomputergenealogy.org

Richard D. Rands, President rrand@earthlink.net (650) 969 6567

Please send inquiries, address changes, new memberships, and membership renewals to:
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SV-CGG meets monthly, except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints building, 875 Quince Avenue, Santa Clara, CA. We offer classes and sponsor guest speakers at meetings to help family historians with computer technology and research techniques. Membership dues are US\$15 per year (US\$20 for Canada and US\$25 for other international). Members are offered classes at meetings, mentor help, *Silicon Valley PastFinder* (a monthly newsletter published each month there is a meeting).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Membership	Lesly Klippel	Leslyk@earthlink.net
Newsletter	Allin Kingsbury	Allin8@juno.com (408) 257 8447
Classes	Leland Osburn	telephone 408 243 8348
Questions	Dr. PAF	mlharline@aol.com

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Articles contributed by readers are welcome. Articles may be submitted as a text file on PC-compatible disk, CD-ROM, or as an e-mail attachment. The editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit articles. Articles are not returned.

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