

GenSmarts Leads to Smart Genealogists

By Richard Rands

As I read the documentation for the latest version of GenSmarts, I was reminded of Charles Dicken's novel, *Great Expectations*, in which a poor man is faced with insurmountable odds to persuade a wealthy woman to accept his love and the help he received from an unexpected benefactor. The GenSmarts manual describes a long list of incredible features that would certainly convert the most inexperienced researcher into a successful genealogist. After turning over your database to the GenSmarts program you can have great expectations!

The basic purpose of the program is to examine a genealogy database using a programmed set of rules, and suggest places to look for data missing from your family tree. Some call this feature of the program a form of artificial intelligence, and though it is certainly a good beginning for an intelligent research tool, it falls short of true artificial intelligence. Once the rules in GenSmarts are used to make suggestions, you must do the really challenging work – finding the answers.

The ability to systematically apply a powerful set of rules to your data is well worth the time, effort, and well worth the reasonable price. The feature that creates a task list for organizing

- GenSmarts is Windows-based program from Underwood Innovations, LLC
- Version reviewed: 1050 - reviewed in August 2004
- Documentation Manual: available online - about 40 pages
- Cost: Regular price \$29.95, limited time offer = \$24.95
- Purchase online from: www.GenSmarts.com

a family history research trip will, by itself, pay for the cost of the program many times over. It can easily eliminate the need for additional trips to the same location.

To review GenSmarts, I used a laptop with a 1.70 GHz Pentium 4 processor and 768 Mb of RAM. I did not try the software on a variety of computers with different speeds or memory size. Most of the testing was performed on a PAF 5.2 database containing about 45,000 individuals. I did some timing tests with two smaller PAF databases, one with 68 names and the other with 9,460 names. The documentation claims that the program will run with most genealogy database software including Family Tree Maker, Legacy Family Tree, The Master Genealogist, RootsMagic, plus any other programs that can export a GEDCOM file. GenSmarts requires about 25 Mb of space on your hard disk.

Installation is quick and easy using the downloadable file. The last step of the installation process launches a setup wiz-

ard that helps you through the key settings for your style of use. For example, it will ask you to indicate the type of Internet access you have, the country you are working from, and which online subscriber research sites, if any, you use. Next it will ask you to specify which genealogy database you wish to use, which then causes it to automatically read through the database and build its internal working files. At the last step, you specify the individual or individuals you wish to be treated as the roots for direct ancestors. Other settings are set to defaults and may be changed by clicking on the "Tools" menu and selecting the options that you prefer.

GenSmarts does not interact with your database to allow you to update any information directly. Any changes that you decide to make must be jotted down for later entry into your database. Once you have loaded GenSmarts the first time, it will remember the last database that you worked on and reopen the

program with that database.

On my moderately fast machine, it took about 10 seconds to scan a small database with 68 individuals, and about one minute to scan a database with 9,460 individuals. The time to work through a large database of 45,136 individuals was 4 minutes and 40 seconds, long enough time to take care not to close the program during a research session.

Since the quality of the research suggestions are heavily dependent on the quality of the data in your database, success from GenSmarts hinges entirely on the efforts you make in entering the data into your database in ways that the "smart" rules within the program can decipher. Since most genealogy programs do a good job of separating the components of each individual's name, GenSmarts' rules do a good job of understanding people's names. Dates are handled equally well.

However, place names are a different story. Virtually all of the research suggestions you will get from GenSmarts are linked to the location determined by the place names in your database relevant to each individual. If the "smart" rules cannot decipher your

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place names, then most of the research suggestions are useless. Consequently, GenSmarts includes a "Data Cleanup" function that is extremely important to use before you create the research leads in the "To Do" list.

The place name cleanup function is well conceived, but can be a daunting task if you have a large number of places that cannot be interpreted. I have devoted a significant amount of time trying to maintain accurate and consistent place names in my large database. GenSmarts made my work seem wasted, but it was useful to know which place name formats could not be interpreted by GenSmarts rules. For example, if you use the common practice of enclosing estimated place names in brackets, < >, then the place is not interpreted. A thorough review of the place name interpretation rules would take too much of this review, but fortunately there is a large button on the "Data Cleanup" screen labeled "Help On Place Name Data Cleanup" that displays a reasonably good description of the interpretation rules. I recommend that a GenSmarts user spend time cleaning up the place names in his or her database so that the program can handle the place names.

The primary purpose of GenSmarts is to make intelligent research suggestions for the missing data in your database. The rules built into GenSmarts are impressive, and when the data in your database is accurate, they are very likely to lead you to sources of missing data. When GenSmarts finished scanning my 45,000+ names, it produced 135,574 suggestions. The 9,460 name database created 20,552 suggestions. If I were to spend two minutes on each of the suggestions from my large database, I would need 564 eight-hour days to work through them all. Based on the two Internet subscriptions I specified at the outset, 98,064 of the suggestions could be searched online. This is very impressive.

In addition to providing suggestions for the individuals in your database, GenSmarts has a "Query" tab on the main screen where you can enter other

names with dates and places to submit to the program. The next time someone complains to you about not knowing what to do about a dead end in their database, you can fire up GenSmarts and make a special query just for the person.

The "To Do" list screen is well conceived and has a good choice of selection or filtering criteria, and a search feature to narrow the list of suggestions. It includes a reasonable explanation for the suggestion, and if the suggested source is available online, a click of a button will take you directly to the site on the Internet. Whenever possible, your search criteria are transferred to the search engine to take you more directly to the page you need. The accuracy of this aspect of the process is entirely dependent on the quality of the search capability of the Web site. You must be somewhat familiar with the online sites, and you often will be forced to refine the search at the site to do a better job of researching the source.

Additional features on the "To Do" list screen let you sort the suggestions by priority, surname, date, and geography, or to flag the status of each suggestion as found, not found, or planned. The design of the screen is effective, and navigation will soon become second nature to a frequent user.

I did discover some limitations to GenSmarts' rules. First, I found that I had to have my PAF database open at the same time to check the accuracy of some of the suggestions. I found it convenient to have my PAF database open on my desktop computer and GenSmarts running on my laptop. Of course both machines must have identical copies of the database. If you have a single computer, the database software can run at the same time as GenSmarts, in separate windows. GenSmarts became hopelessly befuddled when an individual has multiple marriages for reasons such as divorce or death. And as mentioned above, if place names are misinterpreted, you will get suggestions that will send you off to a record source that will, at best, amuse you.

The explanation with each suggestion is useful. One feature that is not prominently explained is the term *GSEST*, often used in the explanation. Whenever the rules in GenSmarts require that a detail,

such as a birth date or marriage date, be estimated, it prefixes the estimated detail with the term *GSEST*, meaning GenSmarts ESTimated.

In my database, I lack the birth place and the marriage location for my grandfather's second wife after he divorced my grandmother. The data for my grandfather and grandmother are complete. The suggestions for how to locate these details points to record sources in Idaho and were linked to my grandmother instead with the following explanation: "Researching the Idaho Marriage Records makes sense because she was married in *GSEST*. 1914 in (perhaps Madison County, Idaho)." In fact my grandmother was married in Salt Lake City which is clearly noted in my database. The explanation goes on to state: "NOTE: This suggestion is important because her place of marriage and date of marriage have not been recorded, and you could obtain this information by researching this record. Some background on Anne Lund: She was born in *GSEST*. 1895 in (perhaps Madison County, Idaho). She married Oswin Percival Rands on *GSEST*. 1914 . . ."

The suggestions might be useful to locate data for my step-grandmother, but they are misdirected using places for my grandmother and include estimated dates and locations that are available in my data.

GenSmarts is a powerful tool for any family history researcher. Besides providing a comprehensive list of research suggestions, it will help improve the quality of the details in the database. And just as importantly, it will expose you to record sources that you may have never searched before and will give you invaluable experience useful in future research.

Quotable Quote:

The best way to convince a fool that he is wrong is to let him have his own way.

Josh Billings 1818-1885

American Humorist

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

By Dr. Cornelius D. PAF

Using Two PAF Files

Q How can I look at two PAF files at the same time so I can compare the data in each?

A Open the first file, then without closing it, open the second file. Click on “Window” on the top menu bar and then click on “Tile Vertically.” The two files will be shown side by side. They will have a slightly squashed look, but will be readable. Notice that there is only one set of drop-down menus and icons. Only one file can be active at a time. The top bar of the active file will be blue. The inactive file will have a gray top bar. You change from one file to the other merely by clicking any place on the file you want to use.

When you are finished you can click on the “X” in the upper corner to close the file that you no longer want to use. Or, you can click on the rectangle to the left of the “X” in the file you want to use and it will fill the screen and the second file will still be open.

If you should want to have more than two open at a time you can change files by clicking on “Ctrl” and “Tab.” They will show in rotation. The name of the file on the screen will be in the top bar. You need to have an active personal memory to keep track of data displayed by each file.

Entering An Unusual Family

Q I have a family that isn't easy to put on a family group record. Please help. The woman had a baby boy before she married, then she married a man who had two children, a boy and a girl, by his first wife. He adopted my son, and we have three children of our own. How do you enter the data.

A Each family has its own family group record. In this case you will record four “families.”



First: You and your son. You can enter the data on a family group record with just you two, or you can enter the information on the father.

Second: Your husband and his wife and their two children.

Third: You and your husband with your three children.

Fourth: Your extended family: You and your husband with all the children. This last “family;” is to use if all the children live with you or spend time with you and

want to be considered as part of the family. It is up to you who you want to include. Sometimes it is best to not leave anyone out.

A child can have a biological link only once. In the different family group records:

Your son has a biological link to you.

Your husband and his first wife have a biological link to their two children.

Your husband and you have a biological link to your three children.

In the family group record for the extended family, Your first son, could be listed as Adopted since your husband adopted him. This will mean that you will be included in the adopted link also, just because PAF can't do mother and father separately when it comes to the parental links. The two children by your husband's first wife could be listed with a Guardian link, or with an Adopted link, whichever seems best. Neither link requires any legal process. The three children that are the “Ours” part of this “Yours, Mine, and Ours” family are still biological because they are in the family group record with both biological parents.

You will probably get some error messages popping up when you enter the data on the combined family group sheet. Some messages will tell you that the child was born before the marriage, others may tell you that there isn't nine months difference between birth dates of some of the children. Ignore the messages. Your data will stay.

News For Genealogists: Family History Magazine Earns Royal Award

Family History Magazine Earns Royal Award

Michael Armstrong, a family history enthusiast, founded Family Tree Magazine, which soon became the best-selling British genealogical magazine. He thought about starting a magazine about family history in the 1980s when there were no magazines on the subject. He contacted a publisher in Peterborough, but they weren't interested, so Michael and his wife went ahead with the project themselves. Michael, had been teaching night classes about family History. He is a founding member of Huntingdonshire Family History Society, and has traced his own family tree back to the mid-1600s.

The first edition of Family Tree Magazine appeared in November 1984. Circulation has grown to more than 40,000 copies a month

and the magazine is sold in more than 40 countries. The magazine has grown into a publishing firm, ABM Publishing Ltd, and Michael and his wife, Mary, have turned the business over to their two daughters and sons-in-law, Helen and Darren Marriott and Janice and Darren Boon.

Michael Armstrong, now aged 67, has been honored with an award from royalty. The Society of Genealogists' Prince Michael of Kent Award was given to Michael for “introducing family history to a wider audience over the past 20 years.” Asked what is next, Michael said that he will write his family history. “It is something I wish my great grandfather had done years and years ago,” he said. “A lot of people come into it when their mother and father have died and older relatives, but really it's too late then - you need to ask questions while people are still alive.”

Software of Interest: Family Tree Maker 2005, GEDSTAR PRO for Palm

Family Tree Maker 2005

Family Tree Maker 2005 is the latest release of the Family Tree Maker program from Genealogy.com. The new program looks more like a redesign of the program than an update. New features include:

Family View: You can start with a view of the family and enter information that you already know, including up to eight children.

Pedigree View: A side panel displays the pedigree of an individual.

Web Search: An automatic Web Search can run in the background to provide a Web Search report, which can be analyzed and compared with information in the database.

New Merge Process: An easy to use wizard takes the user through the merge process and makes recommendations. The user can decide whether to make the data "preferred" or "alternate" information. None of the existing information is overwritten.

Bookmarks and History: Users can create bookmarks to quickly jump to the individuals in the database that are most frequently viewed. The History feature automatically lists the last 30 individuals that were edited for a quick return.

Helpful Adjustments: Several small features have been added or changed to make the program more user-friendly. They include an automatic notification when program updates are available, a default date display that follows the standard genealogical format (dd mmm yyyy), a more intuitive toolbar, improvements to the GEDCOM importing process, a menu item to compact the database, and improvements for uploading information to a user home page.

Family Tree Maker 2005 can be purchased online for \$29.99. Current users can upgrade for \$19.99. For more information, go to: www.familytreemaker.com

In the United Kingdom, a version of Family Tree Maker 2005 for the England and Ireland and Scotland is for sale with delivery promised in October. This version has a manual written in the Kings English and has no CDs with American data. Instead, purchasers get Ancestry.com UK Parish and Probate Records CDs and UK Census Index data CDs. Also included are 30 days complete access to the UK and Ireland data on Ancestry.com and a one year access to One Family Tree. The UK version sells for £34.95 including VAT. For more information, go to: www.twrcomputing.co.uk

GEDSTAR PRO for Palm

GedStar Pro is a viewer for genealogy data on a PalmOS handheld PDA. Earlier versions only supported users of The Master Genealogist. The latest version supports PAF5 data. The program uses GenBridge (tm) technology from Wholly Genes, Inc. to extract directly from the PAF database. This eliminates any need to use GEDCOM files to transfer data.

For more information about GedStar Pro, go to: www.ghcssoftware.com/gedstarpro.htm and PAF add-information is at: www.ghcssoftware.com/proaddon.htm

Genealogy Quote:

A good storyteller is a person who has a good memory and hopes other people haven't.

Irvin Shrewsbury Cobb 1876-1944

American Journalist

Recently Published: Cherokee Trails

Cherokee Trails

Pharos Games has created a computer game called *Cherokee Trails* that may be the Christmas gift for the genealogist that has everything. The game can be fun to play and provide some education about U.S. history. The game has already received an award. When the Shareware Industry Awards Foundation presented its 13th Annual Shareware Awards this year, they named *Cherokee Trails* the best shareware educational program or game.

The Cherokee Indians lived in the mountains of the Southeastern United States. Their territory extended over 40,000 square miles. As the European colonists moved westward, the Cherokee territory shrunk. Gold was discovered in Georgia, and prospectors overran the Cherokee lands. The Georgia legislature came up with a plan to remove the remaining Cherokee people to land west of the Mississippi. In 1838, soldiers forced the Cherokee to walk 900 miles to an area then known as Indian Territory; and now known

as the state of Oklahoma. Many Cherokee did not live to see their destination. The Cherokee people called this long trek "nuh NO hee doo no glo HEE luh, now known as the Trail of Tears.

Cherokee Trails is based on the Trail of Tears. The player explores a ghostly trail filled with characters from Cherokee legends and history. The 3D graphics includes beautiful river views, log cabins, horses, and period artifacts. Cherokees named Raven, Rabbit, and Bear tell their stories using 3D animated sequences. Cherokee Storyteller Choogie Kingfisher and Cherokee linguist George Stopp saw that *Cherokee Trails* was as authentic as possible. Special music was written by a well-known Cherokee musician, Lisa LaRue, who also is Resource Coordinator for the Arts for Cherokee Nation.

The program runs on a PC with Windows 95 or later version. *Cherokee Trails* Version 2 sells for \$19.95. A network version is available for schools. A free trial of version 1.0 can be downloaded at: [http://shareware.pcmag.com/product.php\[id\]60804\[SiteID\]](http://shareware.pcmag.com/product.php[id]60804[SiteID]) pcmag For more information , go to: www.pharosgames.com/

Stranger Than Fiction: Blue Blood in the Presidential Election, Sorting Out the Modern Family

Blue Blood in the Presidential Election

According to Burke's Peerage, Senator John F. Kerry has blue blood from all the royal houses of Europe, with even more titled relations than President Bush. Senator Kerry's mother, Rosemary Forbes, is descended from the royal houses of Albania, England, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Russia, Byzantium, Persia (Iran) and France. Her ancestor, William Forbes, was the Laird of Newe, whose extended family included many baronets. Through this family, Senator Kerry is descended from Henry II, the king of England and father of Richard the Lionheart, who was leader of the third Crusade in 1189.

Kerry's rival in the election, President Bush, is related to Queen Elizabeth II, twenty British dukes and many European princes, according to Burk's Peerage. MyFamily.com, which published British census records from 1841 to 1901 on the Internet, has found that President Bush, Princess Diana and Winston Churchill are distantly related and all trace their ancestry to the 15th century English squire Henry Spencer 1420-1478 of Badby, Northamptonshire.

Sorting Out the Modern Family

In 1993, Miss India Scott of Detroit was dating both Darryl Fletcher and Brandon Ventimeglia. In 1994, Miss Scott gave birth to a lovely baby boy. Neither man knew about the other, so Miss Scott told each of them that he was the father and the child support payments began arriving at the appointed times. Visitation rights were a bit of a problem, but Miss Scott managed the schedule carefully, and neither father suspected that the other existed. In 1997, Miss Scott had a problem when she announced that she and her new boyfriend were to be married and leave the area. Both fathers had become attached to their son and were opposed to the move. Both Fletcher and Ventimeglia filed custody suits. It was then that the two men discovered each other.

To resolve the problem, they decided to have blood tests to determine which of them was the father. Truth is stranger than fiction, and as you may have guessed, neither father was the real parent of the boy. This presented a dilemma for the court to decide, but for the family historian, this is a family that would make a challenging final exam question about data entry for a genealogy program. If you can get it into the computer correctly, you deserve to graduate with honors.

Spider Webs:

Our Roots, The Pilgrims and Plymouth Colony: 1620, HistoryBuff.com, Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, British War-dead Records

Our Roots

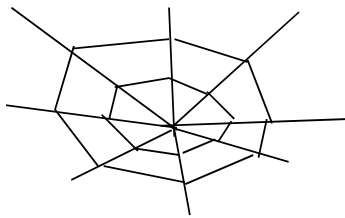
Laval University and the University of Calgary have a partnership to do a project funded by the Canadian government to put local histories on the Web. Family historians with Canadian ancestors will often find information in these local histories not to be found in other records. The site presently contains about 1,500 digitized books, all of which are fully searchable. Although the books are about communities in Canada, many families moved between Canada and the US, and to Canada from the UK, so the collection may provide information regarding families outside of Canada.

The books are displayed as scanned images, free from transcription errors. A right click of the mouse on the image will produce a command menu where you can save the image as a file using "Save Picture As..." The image file can be added to a family history, scrapbook, or genealogy database later.

To visit the Our Roots/Nos Racines Web site, go to: www.ourroots.ca

The Pilgrims and Plymouth Colony: 1620

The Pilgrims and Plymouth Colony: 1620 is



a Web site created by Duane A. Cline as an educator's tool. Material on the site describes the events leading to the 1620 voyage of the Mayflower, gives details about the ships (the Mayflower and its predecessor, the Speedwell) and the details about the voyage and formation of the colony. This includes the storms at sea, animals on board, arrival in the new lands, the *Mayflower Compact*, dealings with the Indians, the first winter when almost half the settlers died, the first Thanksgiving, the starvation of 1622, and more. This material is divided into lesson plans for teachers.

Professor Cline has compiled a detailed list of all the known passengers on board the Mayflower and a brief biography of each. There are about 100 links which point to other information on this Web site and to other sites containing useful information. There are about 90 illustrations, most of which is original artwork by Duane Cline.

Professor Cline is an expert in this topic. He received his M.A. degree in Speech and Theater from Northwestern University. He has written, designed, and directed theatrical productions and historical pageants as a university professor and head of theater department. He is also a founding director of a regional art center and the author of two books: *Navigation in the Age of Discovery: an Introduction*, and *Centennial History: General Society of Mayflower Descendants*. Twice he has been invited to be the Guest Curator at Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Both he and his wife, Carolyn, are descendants of Mayflower passengers.

See *The Pilgrims and Plymouth Colony: 1620* at: www.rootsweb.com/~mosmd

HistoryBuff.com

HistoryBuff.com is a catchy name for a Web site about history but it does not describe the purpose of the Web site. The site is about newspaper coverage of events in American history from the well known events to the obscure. The family historian will like this site, not only because it is an excellent site, but because the view of history presented on the site is the one our ancestors would have read in the newspapers available at the time. The newspapers would give a little more

Spiderwebs (continued from page 69)

detail than what is found in many of the history books. Included on the site are transcripts of newspaper coverage of events important to American history; articles about how the news made it to the press and how the press covered the events. The site includes an online newspaper archive where original newspapers can be read full size. A special section is devoted to collectors of old and historic newspapers.

In addition to the coverage of newspapers, there are recordings of P.T. Barnum (an 1890 recording believed to be the first commercial message ever made which plugs Barnum's circus), Teddy Roosevelt, Amelia Earhart, John F. Kennedy (inaugural address) and the famous narrative of the airship Hindenburg bursting into flames broadcast from the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey.

HistoryBuff.com also has a lot of trivia. You can find the state flower, bird, and nickname of every state, plus the date of admission to the Union. You can also find the names and terms of office for all the governors of all the states.

To explore the site, go to:
www.historybuff.com

Atlas of Historical County Boundaries

The Newberry Library, a well-known genealogy library in Chicago, has started a Web site which will have historical county maps for the United States. The maps will

show historic county boundaries and how they changed as new counties were added. The maps of the first three states are online. They are California Historical Counties (IMS), Virginia Historical Counties (IMS), and West Virginia Historical Counties (IMS). Other states will be added as the maps are completed. Researchers can view and print information from the interactive maps at no charge.

The maps can be customized by choosing a date of interest and adding or deleting various layers, such as modern county seats, county names, and boundaries. Tools are available to zoom in and out and pan, and to query and manipulate the map in several different ways. Additional information can be viewed by clicking on the "Chronologies" or "Supplemental Texts" buttons. The interactive maps do not work well with some browsers. Internet Explorer is recommended for current viewing.

To visit the site, go to:
www.newberry.org/ahcbp, and click on "View Historical State and County Maps" and select one of the three states.

British War-dead Records

The United States has had the Military Death Index available for many years. Unfortunately it only covers deaths since the Korean War era. Now the British have put

their military deaths online.

The 1837 online.com site now has scanned images of the original death records of more than a million British soldiers killed in conflicts during the time from the Boer War to the Korean War. The records, provided by Britain's General Register Office (GRO), are part of a database which includes several million documents gathered by officials while overseas. Other records on the site include indexes for a variety of military births and marriages, and births recorded for British citizens not in Britain.

The site is not free, but is a pay-per-view genealogy subscription site. The site is not indexed and if the date is not known, browsing through documents, especially for a common name like Smith, could be expensive. To visit the site, go to:
www.18370online.com

Genealogy Quote:

A good storyteller is a person who has a good memory and hopes other people haven't.

Irvin Shrewsbury Cobb

1876-1944

American Journalist

What If He Wasn't There?

By Allin Kingsbury

My great grandfather was married in 1879 and moved from Connecticut to western Iowa. His bride died about a year after their marriage. We could not find him in the 1880 census and assumed he had gone back to his family in Connecticut. We searched the 1880 census in Connecticut and he was not there either. I then assumed he was missed because he was traveling at the time the census was taken. Another try with the search feature of the 1880 census on CD-ROM found him. I looked for all the Kingburys in Iowa that were born in Connecticut. He was boarding with a family in the next county and was listed as J. Kingsbury. He was

there where we expected him to be, more or less, but hard to find..

There are times when an ancestor is absent for some unknown reason, and should he or she be found, it may reveal some new and interesting facts about the person. Another of my ancestors, William Bennett, proved to be a difficult person to trace. His daughter was married in Medina County, Ohio in 1833. However, he was not there in 1830 when the census was taken. That is our conclusion because he was not listed as a head of household in the 1830 census. To complicate the search for more information, there were seven other Bennett families in the same county before 1850. They all appeared to be unrelated to my ancestor.

In the 1850 census, we find the same William Bennett living with his son in Michigan. There is no wife and the son is also without a wife. The conclusion one could easily accept is that the wife died and he moved to Michigan with his son to help him clear land and establish a farm. However, a look at the 1860 census shows his wife and daughter living in the neighboring county in Michigan without her husband. A search for a death record in Michigan does indicate that a William Bennett died there in 1853, but the record was gone from the file, so we are not sure if it was my ancestor who died there.

Later we learned some of the details of the saga of this Bennett family. In 1850, William Bennett was helping a son get es-

tablished on a farm, but his wife was living on their farm in the adjoining county and taking care of the crops and animals while her husband was away. In 1860, the family had decided to move to Iowa and William had gone there to look for land. His wife stayed behind to tend the farm. Any assumptions about a death or divorce would have led to more confusion and wasted more time. The fact that the husband and wife were not where they were expected to be in the census records was related to events important to the family, but not understood by me at the time.

Marriages Happen in the Darndest Places

Often records are not found where they are expected. David Rencher told of an experience in his research when he spoke to the PAF Users Group. He was adopted by a family in Arizona at a young age and much later learned that he had a step-sister who had lived in the Philadelphia area. He thought a trip to the court house in Philadelphia would get him the marriage record of his step-sister and the name of her husband. This would make them easier to find. Unfortunately he was wrong in his assumption. She had been married in Turkey where her husband-to-be was stationed at a military base. They had decided to be married so she went to Turkey where they were married. He could have searched for the marriage forever and not found it if he had not gotten other information about the step-sister from other relatives. Individuals who travel long distances for various reasons tend to leave more records than those who do not, but the records are often hard to find and occasionally difficult to connect to the individual.

Often ancestors who are not where they are expected to be are dealing with situations that, when understood, will provide information about the earlier generation of the family. The father of my ancestor, William Bennett, was John Bennett and seemed more elusive than his son. I knew he came from Pennsylvania and was born in New York, but these states were large and each had a large number of individuals named John Bennett. I searched the 1820 census for a family headed by John Bennett that had the approximate number of family members that I expected to find and the ages and sexes of the family members to fit what I knew about the family. I later found that the reason that this strat-

egy did not work was that John Bennett inherited a farm from his family in New York and when the 1820 census was taken, his family was in Pennsylvania while he was in New York, taking care of the farm and preparing it to sell. The census, which was usually an effective tool for locating families, was of no help.

Why Are People Missing?

If an individual is missing, there must be a reason for the absence. It is seldom because the census taker forgot to write the name down. They were usually paid by the number of names counted. The most common reasons for a husband or wife to be absent for an extended period of time have to do with family situations:

- A death in the family leaving business affairs or property that require attention
- An illness of a parent requiring care by a family member
- A move to a distant location where one spouse goes ahead to find a place to live
- Inheritance of property following a death of a relative

Sometimes it is necessary to maintain separate residence because of situations resulting from the career of the husband:

- Political office at Washington or at the state capital may not be a full-time job while operating the family farm was.
- A husband serving in the military may be on a temporary assignment and may leave the family at a permanent home.
- Business travel may take the husband abroad for months at a time.

Other reasons may add a bit of excitement or scandal to your family history:

- The husband may have gone to look for gold in one of the gold rushes.
- A family member may have had trouble with the law and is serving time in jail.
- A daughter expecting a baby without benefit of a husband may have quietly been sent to stay with a distant relative to avoid scandal.
- A husband may have moved on to flee creditors after a business failure.
- A member of the family may have been

institutionalized due to a mental or physical illness.

What Do I Do?

There are many other situations that may temporarily separate families and the list could go on and on. Speculating usually will not help when family members are not with the family, though a look at the historical events at the time may be helpful. We can formulate some “dos and don’ts” that may help:

- Avoid jumping to conclusions. The fact that a spouse or family member is not with the family does not necessarily a death or divorce.
- Separations can indicate long distance moves, temporary assignments to distant areas, businesses that require extended travel and other reasons. Learn what the head of the family was doing at the time.
- Separations may be related to historical events such as war, new economic opportunities, drought, flood, or fire. A look at national history and local history can provide a list of possible cause for separation
- Separation or moves may be explained by legal documents if they can be found. These documents may include probate records, land sales or purchases, military records, court records. Local newspapers and local histories may also provide clues.
- A look at all known relatives and family members may uncover the missing individual.
- Even though a family owned a farm, it may not have been the only source of income. A look at business directories and federal and state office holders at the time may yield a clue.

Blessing In Disguise?

A missing relative may be a blessing in disguise. It can be frustrating to search for an explanation for the missing individual. However, when the facts are known, they may tell a story about your family that had long been forgotten. Keep in mind that you need the facts about these family members and you need to be thorough in your search for them.

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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).

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