

Forensic Genealogy: Law & Order Meets Family History

Presented by Michael Brophy

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Topics:

1. What is Forensic Genealogy?

Defined as genealogical research involving, analysis and reporting in cases with legal implications." [Copyright Dee Dee King - 2008.]. Most of the cases involve living people, which distinguishes forensic genealogy from traditional family research. The standards remain the same, but we use more recent census and obituary records for instance and seldom delve into records such as tax, Pre Civil War Census, Church, and other traditional sources. The field is dynamic, growing, challenging, and takes a great deal of genealogical experience to practice and master.

2. Missing and Unknown Heir cases

Forensic genealogists are employed in a wide variety of cases involving missing and unknown heir cases involving testate and intestate estates. State law governs important matters such jurisdiction of probate proceedings, who can search for heirs, who is an heir, and if records needed to find heirs are open or closed to the forensic genealogist for research. The heir search industry has important ethical and legal considerations such as Champerty to consider when conducting their business. The booming Oil and Gas Industry and leasing of Mineral Rights have a great need for skilled Forensic Genealogists.

3. Adoption Research

Adoption Research is among the most challenging research projects any genealogist will encounter. Our country has had a history of open access to adoption records, to closed records, with a trend in recent years towards open records. Six in ten Americans has a close family

member or close friend in the adoption Triad (Adoptee, Birthparent, or Adoptive Parent). Forensic Genealogists need to be creative, persistent, and ethical when searching for a birthparent or searching for an adoptee put up for adoption for a client.

4. Citizenship and Immigration Cases

Dual Citizenship offers many advantages to those who are eligible such as ease of travel, a sense of ethnic pride, a gift to your children, access to cutting edge medical treatments, among other reasons. The most common countries to seek citizenship are Ireland and Italy but other countries offer the benefit.

5. Military Repatriation

Military repatriation is defined as the return of remains of servicemen to their country of origin. Forensic Genealogists who practice in this field find this work among the most rewarding of their career. The genealogist's work consist of finding next of kin of a serviceman killed in action for matching DNA to remains that may be found from a recovery mission conducted by JPAC (Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command). Those remains are then returned to the family for burial.

Top Websites for Heir Research

1. www.ancestry.com Public records index, Vital Records databases for 43 states, Census 1880-1940, Military records, naturalization indices, public family trees, yearbook collection, more
2. www.zabasearch.com Free site that lists age and address information
3. www.genealogybank.com Obituary database, SSDI, Newspaper articles
4. www.legacy.com Recent obituary database tied into thousands of US Newspapers
5. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> Historic collection of US newspapers on the Internet
6. www.classmates.com yearbooks for living people
7. <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/> 1901 and 1911 Irish census online and more
8. www.pipl.com Historic record links and modern social networking sites are listed here.
9. www.numberway.com International Phone Directory
10. www.irelandxo.com Reaching out for descendants of the Irish Diaspora worldwide
11. www.americanancestors.org Online MA Vital records as so much more!
12. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm> Center for Disease controls guide on *Where to Write for For Vital records*. State by State guide with links to state websites.
13. <https://www.deathindexes.com/index.html> state by state genealogy record guide
14. www.whitepages.com Phone numbers and address history for a small fee.
15. <http://www.military.com/member-reg/buddy-finder> Useful for finding military service men still living
16. www.pacer.gov National Bankruptcy Site and Court records
17. www.checkmate.com Some information in credit header databases found here

18. www.fold3.com Modern naturalizations and military records
19. www.Cyndi'slist.com Links to hundreds of thousands of genealogy websites. Great finding aid.
20. www.familysearch.org Free access to world census info and lending library catalog. Irish Civil Registration from 1845-1958.
21. www.rootsweb.com Specialized mailing lists and community message boards.
22. www.newspaperarchives.com Historic newspaper archive
23. www.usgenweb.org Free Genealogy website access project.
24. www.findagrave.com Huge database of gravestone pictures and information
25. www.fec.gov/disclosure Federal Election Commission Database. Find out who is giving to what political campaign through public filings. Contains address information.

General Forensic Genealogy Business Association:

<http://www.forensicgenealogists.org/> The Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy website. The premier professional business association dedicated to public awareness, education, and understanding of the Forensic Genealogy Profession.

Bibliography and Suggested books on Heir Search

Public Retriever Network Membership Directory 2011, (Tempe, AZ: BRB Publications, Inc, 2011)

Kemp, Thomas, *International Vital Records Handbook* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 2009)

Smolenyak, Megan, *Reverse Genealogy: Finding the Living*, (Surprise, AZ: Millennia Corporation, 2012. CD ROM

Boyle, Dr. Maryann, *Advanced Forensic Genealogy*, Coursework, July-August 2012, Boston University Center for Professional Education.

The Sourcebook for Public Information (Tempe, AZ: BRB Publications, Inc., 2009).

Michael S. Ramage, J.D., CGSM, ForensicGenealogist.Pro, Wynnewood, PA, telephone interview by Michael Brophy, 27 May 2015, notes held privately by interviewer, Abington, MA, 2015.

Wanda Smith, J.D., FGCSM, Professional Ancestry LLC, Plano, TX, teleconference via Google Hangout, with Michael Brophy, 12 May 2015, notes held privately by interviewer, Abington, MA, 2015.

Wanda Smith J.D., FGCSM, "Targeting the Oil and Gas Market: A How-to Guide for Forensic Genealogists" lecture, Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy's Annual Institute: Dallas, TX, 2014, Syllabus, Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy (Dallas, TX: CAFG, 2014). P. 35

A good article that presents both sides of the business of the “heir hunting” industry and contingency fee based agreements: *The controversial business of tracing beneficiaries of unclaimed estates* <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/54265.article> accessed 4 May 2015

Bibliography and Suggested Resources for Adoption Research

The Adoption History Project, <http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/archive/MassACA.htm>
Accessed 18 May 18, 2015, “An Act to provide for the Adoption of Children,” Acts and Resolves passed by the General Court of Massachusetts, Chap. 324, (1851).

Katz, Sanford N. and Katz, Daniel N., *Adoption Laws in a Nutshell*, (St Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2012)

Corangelo, Lori, *The Adoption and Donor Conception FactBook*, (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Publishing Co. by Genealogical Publishing Company, 2014)

Drake, Paul, and Sherrill, Beth, *Missing Pieces*, (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2008)

<http://www.almasociety.org/> The Alma Society. Reunion and Reform Society.

www.bastards.org An adoptee rights organization. State by state guide with news updates.

<http://orphantraindepot.org/> National Orphan Train Complex, Concordia KS.

Kimberly Paglino, Donaldson Adoption Institute, New York, New York, telephone interview by Michael Brophy, 6 May 2015, notes held privately by interviewer, Abington, MA, 2015.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/> Child Information Gateway. A fabulous Resource for State Adoption statutes by state, resources, ethical issues and where to get help among other material.

<http://www.adopting.org/serch.html>
Good tips for searching for birthparents.

Michael S. Ramage, J.D., CGSM, “Adoption Laws & Procedures for the Forensic Genealogist,” lecture, Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy’s Annual Institute: Dallas, TX, 2014, Syllabus, Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy (Dallas, TX: CAFG, 2014). P. 139.

<https://vimeo.com/12476393> “Vital Records” A short film that presents both sides of the debate on open access to birth certificates for Adoptees.

<https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/> Advocacy Group for Privacy and continued Closure of Adoption records

<http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/> Advocacy Group favoring the openness of Adoption records and birth certificates. The site tracks state legislation.

Bibliography and Suggested Sources for Dual Citizenship

<https://www.dfa.ie/passports-citizenship/> Department of Foreign Affairs Ireland. Lots of good information here on Irish dual citizenship.

<http://nomadcapitalist.com/2014/04/25/countries-allow-dual-citizenship/> Gives a brief overview of dual citizenship requirements and status for dozens of countries.

Melissa Johnson, CGSM, Johnson Genealogy Services LLC, Middletown NJ, telephone interview by Michael Brophy, 11 May 2015, notes held privately by interviewer, Abington, MA, 2015.

Melissa Johnson CGSM, "Dual Citizenship," lecture, Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy's Annual Institute: Dallas, TX, 2014, Syllabus, Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy (Dallas, TX: CAFG, 2014). P. 51

<https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/USA/> Embassy of Ireland in Washington DC. Contact the Embassy for a consulate near you to apply for Dual Citizenship.

<http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it> Embassy of Italy in Washington DC. Contact the Embassy for a consulate near you to apply for Dual Citizenship.

<https://www.atanet.org/> American Translator Association. Certified Translators for documents.

Bibliography and Resources for Military Repatriation

<http://sna-intl.com/> SNA International. Company contracted by the Army at present to perform Military Repatriation work.

Dee Dee King, CGSM, Forensic Genealogy Services LLC, Manvel, TX, telephone interview by Michael Brophy, 6 June 2015, notes held privately by interviewer, Abington, MA, 2015.

James J Canik, Dover, DE, Dover AFB, telephone interview by Michael Brophy, 28 April 2015, notes held privately by interviewer, Abington, MA, 2015.

<http://www.dpaa.mil/> Website of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.