

Fairfield Genealogical Society NEWSLETTER

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HERITAGE DAYS PARTICIPATION PROVES TO BE BOTH SUCCESSFUL AND FUN.

The Heritage Days celebration in Fairfield got off to a worried start with off again and on again rain that lasted until about eleven o'clock that morning. But then the skies cleared and for two perfect summer days the Fairfield Genealogical Society showed the participants how to run a well managed booth!

James Green had saved the day initially by bringing and erecting a large plastic cover over the booth. Having thwarted the rain, James, Dot Cooper, Helen Rexroad, and Rudy and Carolyn Walters set up the tables and put out an impressive display of materials for the browsing public. And browse they did!

There were over 1,800 paid attendance at the celebration with over 2,200 total attendance. (Reinactors, workers and children got in free.) Surely every one of them must have come by the booth at least once because there was seldom a time when there were not several people looking through the books and asking questions. Often the people were backed up trying to get a look. Each interested person got a friendly word some literature and a genealogical sales pitch.

Sunday saw George and Pauline Lauderdale helping with the booth while Dot, James and Helen kept up the on-site missionary pace. The people of Fairfield and surrounding area know there's a real genealogical society in their midst now thanks to the cheerful dedication and hard work of our workers.



The Heritage Days booth was a huge success. Here some people eagerly lean forward to view the materials offered.

James Green, who also made the signs for the booth and who erected the awning, helped from the first to the last.



Dot Cooper gave her special up-beat and cheerful help all day for two days.

MAKING SENSE OUT OF THE CENSUS.

Sources of information in the field of genealogy are classified as primary or secondary. The first, primary, is an official source such as a death certificate or a census. The secondary sources are those sources that are not official government documents, such as a tombstone or even a printed family history. But anyone who has worked these various areas can tell you that even a primary record can be as full of misinformation as it is a source of correct facts.

The very first primary genealogical source a budding genealogist usually uses is the U. S. Census. They are easy to access, readily available in archives and libraries, have lots of information and are the easiest to understand of all the sources we use, not counting the family Bible, of course.

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BY JOHNNY HART



But the above cartoon that a friend sent served to remind me that there are problems with the U.S. Census that are sometimes so grave as to make me wonder if they should be considered a "primary" source at all. In fact, sometimes I wonder if a turtle couldn't have done a better job than the census taker who happened to have worked on whatever census I'm looking up.

To illustrate, let me pull a few real live examples from the files to give a pointer or two as to how you might overcome some of the ever present flaws found in any census.

A cousin wrote me from North Carolina asking if I knew who the father of Sophronia High was. Well, it just so happened I did because I had just worked the 1870 North Carolina census for Anson county. And I do mean "worked." As you may remember, the 1870 census is not indexed. To find any information you simply have to start at the first of the census and read every page name by name. And if that wasn't enough, the 1870 N.C. Anson county census is hard to read, that is, it is microfilmed badly. Some pages appeared to be completely blank--just a white sheet. But, as luck would have it, I had spotted the family of Sophronia High and copied it down. In fact, I had copied every High family down. And that is hint number one. If you are working the 1870 census--don't do it twice. Copy everything you think will be even remotely helpful.

Another hint is to try to learn what part of the county your family lived in. What "township," as it was called, and look in that particular township first. If you don't find them there, then you have to do the whole county page by page.

My North Carolina cousin had done all of the easy censuses; that is, all of the ones that had an index. He had avoided the 1870 census because it was too much work. So he had missed the information he needed. But the 1870 census contains lots of good information so it shouldn't be passed up just because it is unindexed.

I might add that the 1870 Anson county census had proven to be the one that opened the door for me on my great great grandmother, so all my hard work paid off for me too.

Which brings me to another point. In that census I recorded every High and Mills family I could find, but it was only in going over the notes I had made that I realized that "Jane Mills," age 4, was my ancestor, Jennie Mills. She was never named Jane--the census taker probably "dressed up" her name. I've seen that upgrading of names happen many times. So very often the name in the census isn't quite what the real name is so when you are looking at the family names keep that in mind.

We've all experienced a Margaret that becomes a Peggy in the census or some such standard nick name, but how about an Alifair that becomes an Alford? Be alert for changes that even seem more remote than those examples. I saw a male head-of-household named Elsie. His name should have been listed L. C., but the census taker heard "Elsie."

In the 1880 census, when my grandfather Luther Redd was four years old, he is not listed. There is a "Lucy", female, age 4 listed in his place. What obviously happened is my grandfather who was called "Lute" was named and the census taker thought the person said "Lucy," and since Lucy is a girl's name he just went ahead and marked "f" for female next to the "Lucy" he had recorded. The census taker not only got the name wrong, but the sex wrong too!

If I were relying only on the 1880 census I would not find my grandfather at all, plus I would wonder who this "Lucy" was since there was never any girl in the family named that.

What you should do, I have found, is examine every name closely. Say them over aloud to yourself to see if they might fit the name you are looking for.

Then there is the ever present problem of the changing age. Look at this example I found in Union county, S.C., when I was working the 1850 and the 1860 census.

1850		1860	
Bailey Lawson	58	Bailey Lawson	63
Mary	48	Mary	58
Caroline	19	Caroline	21
Jefferson	17	Monroe	21
Monroe	15	Thomas	19
Louisa	13	William	17
Mary (no age given)		Laura	13
Thomas	7	Robert	13
William	2	Mary	8
Laura	4		

Isn't it interesting that in the same ten year span that Bailey would only age five years, from 58 to 63, while his wife Mary aged the full ten years? But not as funny as Caroline who only goes from age 19 to age 21 in ten years! Notice that Monroe gains only six years from age 15 to age 21 in the same ten year span that his brother William gains fifteen years going from age 2 to 17. Laura is closest to a ten year period going from 4 to 13. Heavens knows where Robert, age

13 in 1860 was in 1850. Maybe he is Laura's twin since they are both 13 in 1860. Too bad he wasn't around in 1850 to make that so.

I remember that the ages in the 1850 and the 1860 family of Sophronia High in Anson county, N.C was just as bad as this example in Union county. I remember thinking then that the census taker must have estimated ages from looking at the person rather than ask them what might have been an embarrassing question. Plus, remember that some people lied about their ages for one reason or another. The problem of age from one census to another is so common that sometimes I average the ages given in three census in order to get a general approximation. Experienced genealogists know an age difference of from five to ten years as given in any two different census is commonplace.

The moral of the age story is to not restrict your thinking to one age just because you find it in one census.

Then there is the problem of your ancestor not being in the census at all. A professional genealogist who has spent a good number of years working in the 1860 census in north Richland county in South Carolina finally concluded that about one fourth of the families in one township were not enumerated. The census taker in that area just didn't do his job. I learned this sad fact when I discovered an ancestor who was supposed to be in north Richland County was nowhere to be found. But--and this is the hint--I found her in the Agricultural Census listed as head of household. While that wasn't nearly as good as finding out all of the other helpful information that would have been in the regular census, at least I found out she did live where I thought she did. So when all else fails, check the Agricultural Census when one is available.

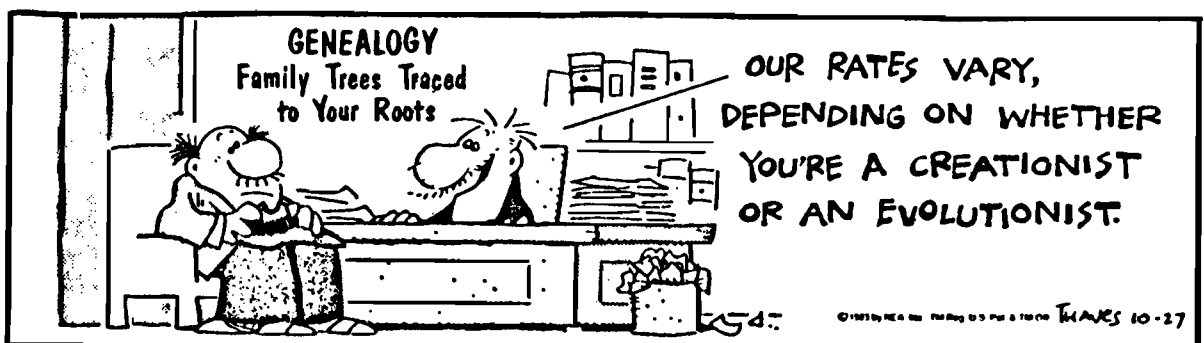
Another helpful technique I've found is to look at four or five pages on either side of the name you find in whatever census you are working. That is the way we can look over the old neighborhood. What you will usually find is your ancestor's parents, male and female, lived within a few miles of each other. Sometimes they lived right next door to each other. In working the Orangeburg census I can tell what area of the county I'm looking at just from the different mix of the names. And I've always found my ancestor families living within a few miles (at most) of each other.

Despite my complaints, the census is usually where I start any time I have a new name to research, and I recommend it to you too. Don't hesitate to use the various censuses, just always remember to try to go that extra step in getting additional information to help verify what you find and don't bet the farm on any information you should happen to find in this most often used "primary" source.



FRANK AND ERNEST

BY BOB THAVES



IN MEMORIAM

The Fairfield Chapter extends its deepest sympathy
to the family of

Nellie Ladd McMeekin

Nellie was one of our charter members.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Annette J. Stewart of 401 Tuxedo Dr., Thomasville, Ga. 31792. Annette is doing research on the Stewart-Wilson family of Fairfield and would like any information on those families who owned land in the 25 Mile Creek and Bear creek area. She is also working on the Isom, Guess, Strom, Owens, Jackson and Weatherington families.



REPRODUCE THIS HANDY CHART.

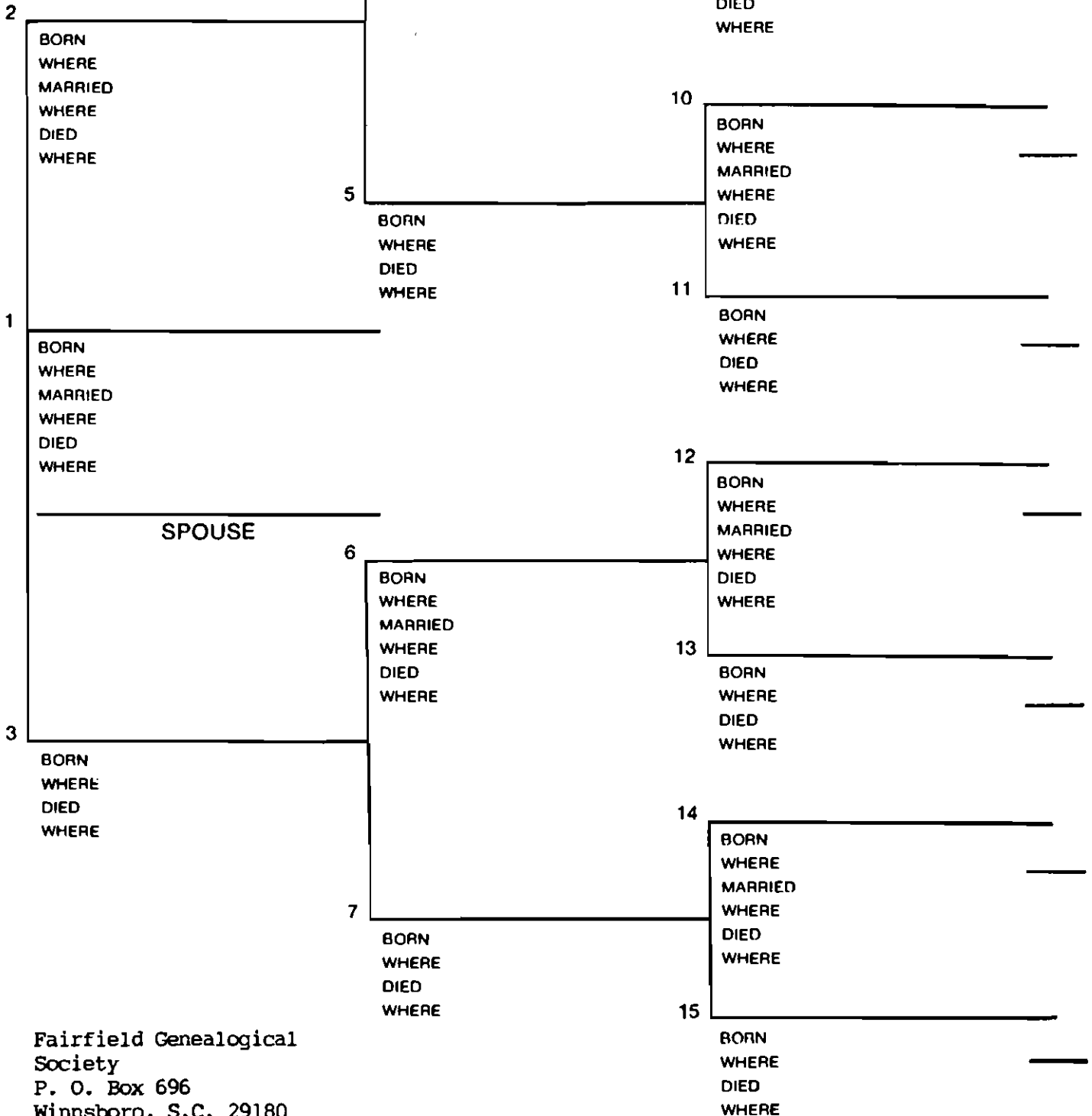
On the next page is a new chart that will make an excellent one for every day use. All you need do is put this chart on a good copier and run off as many as you need. You can get a small punch and put three holes in it if you wish and make a small note book to keep handy.

When I write a letter to a fellow researcher, cousin or someone I hope can help, I always send along a chart. I draw an arrow to the place on the chart where the name I'm looking for should go. (When I used to get a chart in the mail it always helped me, especially if the letter contained lots of information on who married whom, so I started sending one along when I wrote.) Also, as I'm talking genealogy with friends I often find they tell me they would love to "get started," but don't really know how. I whip out a chart, have them put their name in place, then their parent's names, and so on. When they see just how easy it is and when they realize they don't know who their great grandparents are, they take the chart and start working on it. ((Just a little missionary work there, folks.))

PEDIGREE CHART

CHART NO. _____

NO. 1 ON THIS CHART IS
THE SAME PERSON AS NO. _____
ON CHART NO. _____



YOUR LEGISLATOR GOOFS AGAIN!

Death certificates have been a prime factor in our research for years. Unfortunately, South Carolina has always been a poor state to research death certificates because our state was one of the last in the nation to start keeping them in 1916. If an ancestor died before 1916 you are simply out of luck in the official death record area.

Now, in an effort to protect the feelings of people who have AIDS, the state legislature has passed a law closing death records of anyone who has died in the last fifty years! In effect that means for fifty years prior to 1988 you will not be able to get death records. That leaves only the short 22 year period from 1916 to 1938 available to researchers.

The only good part about it is supposedly you only have to swear you are a blood relative of the person on whom you are trying to get the certificate before they will let you have it. That should be no problem--just tell the people you are a blood relative. In most instances that will be true. In the other instances, if your heart will not let you tell a little white lie, you will be out of luck.

One thing you can do is get in touch with your local legislator (write him) and ask him why he voted for such a foolish law. Then ask him to help reverse it. This AIDS thing will eventually pass, but in the mean time legitimate research is being cut off to please a very few people.

**“I don't make jokes—I just
watch the government and
report the facts.”**

Will Rogers (1879-1935)