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New York Genealogy Essentials (free)

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New York State Family History Conference

The next biennial New York State Family History Conference commences 8–10 September 2022, with the in-person conference taking place in Albany, New York.

Publications (found at nygbs.org/store or the links below)

Biebel, Frank. *Marriage Notices from New York City Newspapers of the Early 1830s*. New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2019.

Buiter, Anne Siebert. *Tracings Immigrants through the Port of New York: Early National Period to 1924*. New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2020. [PDF](#) and [print](#) versions available.

Goodwin, Aaron. *New York City Municipal Archives: An Authorized Guide for Family Historians*. New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2016. [PDF](#) and [print](#) versions available.

New York Guide to Birth, Marriage, and Death Records. New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2017. Extracted from the *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer*, revised edition 2017. [PDF](#) and [print](#) versions available.

New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer, revised edition 2017. New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2017. [PDF](#) and [print](#) versions available.

County Guide Series, extracted from *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer*, revised edition 2017. [Available in print](#).

PROVING PARENTAGE THROUGH INDIRECT EVIDENCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF SIBLING RECORDS

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from the colonial period to the early 20th century. Judith teaches genealogy classes in partnership with the Schenectady County Historical Society, is a guest lecturer on a variety of genealogical topics and serves as mentor for the ProGen 38 Study Group.

Judith lives in New York's Capital District and has been taking client work since 2009.

Understanding source context, and nuances of the records they contain, is critical to accurate interpretation of the information they provide. An early 19th century Connecticut, New York and Vermont example demonstrates how your research can succeed, even when no direct parent/child relationship evidence can be found. Attendees will learn the value of using multiple (and frequently ignored) sources to solve questions of parentage.

DIRECT & INDIRECT EVIDENCE: DEFINITION & KEY CONCEPTS

- ♀ **Direct Evidence:** *Fully* answers an entire genealogical question
- ♀ **Indirect Evidence:** *Partially* answers a genealogical question; additional evidence is needed to fully answer the question

Example:

- ♀ **Genealogical Question** = What was John Smith's date of birth?
- ♀ **Indirect Evidence** = Obituary stating, "John was born in 1852"
- ♀ **Direct Evidence** = Obituary stating, "John was born on July 4, 1852"
- ♀ **Reasoning:** A date is a specific day in a specific month in a specific year
- ♀ **More:** The first obituary example *would* be direct evidence if the question was, "When was John Smith born?"

Example 2:

- ♀ **Genealogical Question** = Who were the parents of John Smith?
- ♀ **Indirect Evidence** = John's death record, showing his father as E. Smith and not identifying his mother. **Or**, recording his mother as Mary Brown but not identifying his father.
- ♀ **Direct Evidence** = John's baptismal record, identifying his parents as Edwin Smith and Mary Brown.
- ♀ **Reasoning:** The question, "Who were the parents of John Smith," requires that the full identify of both parents be provided.

- ♀ **More:** The second indirect evidence death record would be considered *direct evidence*, if the genealogical question was, “Who was the mother of John Smith?”

Note: *Negative* evidence is not discussed in detail in this presentation.

PROVING QUESTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIRECT EVIDENCE: PROCESS & KEY POINTS

- ♀ Always attempt to solve the question *first*, using direct evidence
- ♀ Even when a question *seems* to be solved using direct evidence, search for indirect evidence to support the conclusion or suggest other possible scenarios
- ♀ Don’t give up when no direct evidence is found – search out indirect evidence!
- ♀ Learn the history of the place your research target lived, when they lived there, leading to an understanding of what records might exist
- ♀ Consult with local experts to learn what records are available during the timeframe of your research and how you can access them:
 - ♀ Local librarians
 - ♀ Local historical and genealogical societies
 - ♀ State libraries and archives
 - ♀ University and college collections for local history
- ♀ Create a research plan and log your results
- ♀ Analyze and correlate your evidence as you go, and again, once you feel you’ve exhausted all resources
- ♀ Try to *disprove* your own theory
- ♀ Write up your results, in narrative form, to see whether there are any holes in your logic or in the records you have collected

UTILIZING RECORDS THAT MAY PROVIDE INDIRECT EVIDENCE: KEY POINTS

- ♀ Determine which record types may provide information about possible siblings or extended family members, *including*:
 - ♀ Probate files including wills, lists of heirs at law, final distributions, guardianships
 - ♀ Court records challenging or appealing probate decisions
 - ♀ Land records including not only the initial family acquisition or final divestiture of property, but all transactions in-between
 - ♀ Go beyond death notices, to obituaries
 - ♀ Go beyond marriage notices, to engagement announcements and wedding descriptions
 - ♀ Business incorporations and changes to articles of incorporation
 - ♀ Military pension files, including affidavits
 - ♀ Trade, professional or rural directories
 - ♀ Family bibles
 - ♀ *Sourced* genealogies

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY & SUGGESTED READING LIST

The following list is not comprehensive. It provides a sampling of resources for more information about the topics discussed in this presentation. Each weblink was tested and found accurate as of November 2018.

Arlene V. Jennings, "Jane Fife's Mother: Elizabeth (Sowersby) Stather Fife Hought," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 102 (June 2014): 93-95.

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Laura Murphy DeGrazia, CG®, "The Sibling Connection," *NGS Monthly*, 23 August 2017, online archives (<https://ngsmoonthly.ngsgenealogy.org/the-sibling-connection/>).

Marilyn K. Cartwright, "Using Indirect Evidence to Forge Links in the Ancestry of Peter Knight, Blacksmith," *The Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, 38:2 (Philadelphia, PA: Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, 1993), 101–128.

Marya Myers, CG®, "Discovering Identity through Indirect Evidence: Elizabeth James of Bristol, Rhode Island," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 87:3 (September 1999), 206–217.

Melissa A. Johnson, CG®, "Indirect Evidence to Identify an Ancestral Homeland," *NGS Monthly*, 5 June 2016, online archives (<https://ngsmoonthly.ngsgenealogy.org/indirect-evidence-to-identify-an-ancestral-homeland/>).

Melissa A. Johnson, CG®, "Resolving a Question of Identity in NGSQ," *NGS Monthly*, 15 February 2016, online archives (<https://ngsmoonthly.ngsgenealogy.org/resolving-a-question-of-identity-in-ngsq/>).

Perry Streeter, "Was Louisa, Daughter of Aaron and Lucy ([?]) Beard of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Chenango County, New York, The Second Wife of Thomas Streeter of Steuben County, New York?" *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, 142:2 (April 2014), 85–96.

Theodore L. Brownyard, "Descendants of Johan Philip Kreisler," *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, 105:2 (January 1974), 1–9.

Thomas W. Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof* (Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 2013), particularly 13–15.

Victor S. Dunn, CG®, "Griete Smit's Parentage: Proof in the Absence of Vital Records," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 105:1 (March 2017), 245–256.

Yvette Hoitink, CG®, "Determining Origin with Negative and Indirect Evidence: Cylus H. Feagans of Virginia and West Virginia," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 104:4 (December 2016), 5–18.