

Know What You Know

Many novices think they know, or knew their grandparents, so they don't need to find sources to verify their information. They also assume that family traditions are correct and want to start researching for new information.

Start now and make it a habit of verifying everything, even the facts you know

1. If you verify what you know you will gain valuable experience in how to find and search records.
2. You will learn how to glean new clues from these sources.
3. You will learn how to do a pedigree analysis.
4. You will find that records that verify what you know may contain clues that will help you extend your pedigree.
5. You may also find that some of the things you thought you knew were not true at all.

Start at the beginning and build on your successes

1. Some start their genealogy where a relative left off after 30 years of research.
2. You will be starting with all your relatives brick walls.
3. You will quickly become discouraged and assume that genealogy is just too hard.
4. As a beginner always start with yourself.
5. Verify each fact on your pedigree chart.
6. You will have many successes as you climb your family tree.

7. Having success when you are learning a new skill is very important.
8. You will begin to see how the new skills and tools work.
9. It will encourage you to keep trying.
10. The experience you gain will now help deal with brick walls in the future.

Go From “The Known To The Unknown”

Thanks to the rule, “work from the known to the unknown”, one genealogist on a recent trip to Europe blissfully cruised past Charlemagne’s haunts and those of the French Kings that he used to be related to before he started verifying his genealogy.

Worthless Genealogy

If you are not careful it will suck you in. When Doris Barnes started doing genealogy she got sucked in by a book written by a PhD. She said, “I was so excited to learn about the ancestors of Thomas Allen that I made the mistake of not going from the known to the unknown.

“Instead of verifying each generation before going to the next, I jumped back several generations on the pedigree and started working on four Revolutionary War soldiers. When I finally got around to documenting the younger generations, I couldn’t find the marriage of Thomas Allen anywhere.

“I was fortunate enough to finally find a researcher who could help me. When I asked him about the marriage for Thomas Allen he told me I was not related to that family.

“The book by the PhD was wrong. The author had assumed that my Thomas Allen from southern Georgia was the same Thomas Allen from northern Georgia. I didn’t find a marriage for my Thomas Allen because he never married.”