Genealogy Is a Game

You must
outwit, outplay and outlast
centuries of misfortune,
incompetence and deceit
You don’t always win
... but it’s fun and challenging

Local Government
Records

What do they know about you?
How long do they keep the record?
Did they know your ancestor?

Who were your Ancestors?
What makes them distinct?
• Full legal name
  - spelling & alternate spellings
  - nicknames?
  - a Jr, then a Sr?
• Family relationships
  - spouses, children, parents, cousins
  - vitals: birth, marriage, death records

Where did they live?

• Exactly where did they live?
  - town or farm? (terrain?)
• Who were their neighbors?
• When did they live there?
• Where did they work and pray?
  - employee or self-employed
  - travel: roads, waterways; see maps

Why Did They Go There?

• To find a lure, read history.
• Why did they go there?
• Did they come with someone?
• Did they follow someone?
• Did someone follow them?
• What route did they travel?

Types of “Local” Records

• Census Records (a Federal Gov. Record)
  - first, collect all you can
  - place of census, birthplaces of family
• Vital records (Church, Local Government)
  - children’s birth, baptismal,
  - marriage, death
• Family Bibles, Letters, Photos (look on back)
• Newspapers (obituaries), “Mug Books”

With whom did they deal?

• Use to distinguish two of same name
• Relatives and neighbors?
  - Marry the girl next door (deeds)?
  - Witness: baptism, marriage, etc
• Business deals
  - Deeds, Common pleas
• Suspicious/criminal activity?
  - Depositions

What were they worth?

• Local Government Records
  - Taxes on person and property
  - Own or rent property (Deeds)
  - Heirs? (Wills / Probate Court)
  - Disputes (Chancery Court)
  - Debt (Court of Common Pleas)
  - Orphans’ Court, Alms House
  - Apprentice indentures

Notes: http://copland.udel.edu/~tdoherty/GovRec.pdf
Which Sources to Believe?
Original vs Secondary* Records
- Closest to date of event
- Eye witness to event
- Unbiased and competent
- No reason to hide the truth
- Incentive to be accurate
* history/genealogy book, on-line, hearsay

Always
- Record your source of information.
- Was it the original record?
  - if not, find the original record.
- Confirm the original record itself.
  - was it made with competent hands?
  - did anyone want to hide the truth?

“Local” Research Guides
... and use USGenWeb: http://www.usgenweb.org

1856 Mass. Vital Records
1841-1910 (on-line)

Multiple Records
Original (o) and Copy (c)
- Vital records: “Local” o, State:c
- Federal Census: US:o, State:c
- Deed: Grantee:o, Book:c
- Probate and Orphans’ Court:
  - Case file:o, Court Book:c
- Tax Lists: several “originals”
  - “duplicate” in Levy Court Book
- Other Records: www.state.de.us

1796 Sussex Co. Orphans’ Court
County Clerk’s Book entry on 22 Nov
1847 Apprentice Indenture

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Orphans’ Court 1784
Distribution of Henry Farsons’ Land to
Sons: William, John, Henry, David
Daughters: Mary Starr, Jane Spruance/Jones, Ann David/Ford

Tax Assessment Records
- Lists by local jurisdiction, usually:
  - township (in Del., a hundred)
  - summarized at county level
- Annual lists track people year to year
- Order of appearance on list
  - often longest residents listed first
  - families often kept together
- First year spelling usually worst

Multiple Tax Lists Each Year
- Free male residents age 21+ and those with property (heirs/minors):
  1. Annually update last year’s list
  2. Add new; omit dead and gone
  3. Survey the area – update again
  4. Try to collect from rest
  5. “Error” and “delinquent” lists
  6. “Duplicate” list in Levy Court Book

Murderkill 1787 Tax List
- Tax on “person” indicates resident
- Tax on land only – not resident
- Tax amount indicates wealth
- Delinquent/error list often helpful
- Detailed tax lists
  - show property and assessed value
  - list slaves and ages

Mispillion 1801 Detailed Tax List
- Tax List Learnings
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Sarah Ann Moody’s Heirs’ 1885 Deed
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Sarah Ann Moody’s Heirs’ 1885 Deed

Sarah Ann (Hays) Moody dies 19 Apr 1885

All these names in grantor’s index, but not Sarah Ann Moody nor John Moody

Using Deeds to Build Relationships

- Search grantor (seller) index
  - will usually name spouse if married
- Search grantee (buyer) index
  - keeps original deed
  - clerk records in county deed book
- Early deeds not necessarily recorded
  - appear in book in order deeds brought to deed office
  - deed might be recorded 50 yrs later

Building the Goodfellow Family Group

Family Interviews

Thomas, son of John Goodfellow & Catherine Tivy of Simcoe Co ON

Susanna is a descendant of Jethro and Phelps Smith?

Thomas Goodfellow m. Mary Smith (Susanna’s sis?) 1872 in Chicago

Susanna is a descendant of Jethro and Phelps Smith?

Thomas Goodfellow’s Delaware Land

1880 IL

Thomas Goodfellow’s Delaware Land

1868 Beers’ Atlas

1868 U.S. Tax

Choosing Among Available Records

Goodfellow Family Whereabouts

1857 ON, 1860 NY/PA, 1863 NJ, 1860/1870 not DE, 1872 IL

Susanna (Goodfellow) Doherty’s ancestry from obit

- Mary Smith
- Very few Jethros
- Jethro a dentist?
- found in Rev. War
- A Jethro in VT, Maine & in Simcoe Co ON
- Phelps Smith acquires Jethro Smith’s Simcoe Co land

Susanna (Goodfellow) Doherty’s ancestry from obit

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Building the Goodfellow Family Group

Family Interviews

Thomas Goodfellow 1826 ON – 1904 Chicago

Susanna Smith ca 1835 ON – ?

father probably born in VT

Thomas F. Doherty 1850-1904

Susanna Goodfellow 1855-1936

Norman P. Goodfellow 1858-1913

Kate Goodfellow 1860-1914

Thomas L. Goodfellow 1863-1910

Thomas Goodfellow m. Mary Smith (Susanna’s sis?) 1872 in Chicago

Susanna is a descendant of Jethro and Phelps Smith?

Thomas Goodfellow’s Delaware Land

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Goodfellow’s Land Bought: 1865

1868 Beers’ Atlas

1868 U.S. Tax

...but no deed of Goodfellow selling the land

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In September, ...

In 1870, John Freeman Goodfellow died in Brooklyn. Then, a week later, Susannah Goodfellow died in the same city.

Great Chicago Fire: 8-9 Oct 1871
Carpenter Thomas moved there to help rebuild the city.

Building the Goodfellow Family Group
Family Interviews

Then, a week later...

Find Jethro Smith in U.S. Census
Son [0-9]; Phelps Smith b. 1808 VT [tombstone]
Check LDS Family History Library microfilm
Jethro Smith in 1810 Thetford, Orange Co VT
Jethro Smith not in 1820 U.S. census [emigration?]
Jethro Smith Emigrated 1815 to ON

1824 Petition for Land in Simcoe Co Ontario

Chicago 1888 Voter List

Goodfellow, carpenter, naturalized Philadelphia

1888 Chicago voter list

How did Thomas Doherty meet Susanna Goodfellow?

An intriguing long shot possibility

How did Thomas Doherty meet Susanna Goodfellow?

Family story: immigrated alone at age 18

Thomas F. Doherty - born 15 May 1850 Ireland

Thomas Doherty, age 18 b Ire., arrived at Boston on “Tripoli” from Liverpool 26 May 1868 with Michael (22) and Hannah (20) Doherty

Had brother John Doherty and family in Boston

Not in June 1880 Chicago census (street by street)

Only Thomas Doherty ages 19-21 in 1870 census is age 19 laborer in Wilmington, Delaware