

# ELUSIVE IMMIGRANT!

## The Search for Dora Lühr

WARREN BITTNER, CG®  
© 2020 Warren Bittner

### Class Outline:

1. The Genealogical Proof Standard.
  - a. Reasonably exhaustive research.
  - b. Complete citations for each source.
  - c. Analyze the data.
  - d. Resolve conflicting evidence.
  - e. Write a conclusion based on the evidence.
2. Document Analysis.
  - a. Analyze documents carefully.
  - b. Infer information from the data.
  - c. Be cautious of inferences.
  - d. Write down why you draw conclusions.
3. American Church Books.
  - a. American church records frequently list birth place.
  - b. Church records can be difficult to locate.
  - c. It is worth the effort to find them.
4. Spelling and Names.
  - a. Be a creative “schpeller” with surnames and town names.
  - b. Check for European equivalents of English given names. Charles/Carl, John/Johann, Louis/Ludwig, Trudy/Gertraud, etc.
5. Look for discrepancies in names and dates and compare data.
  - a. Compare data and resolve discrepancies.
  - b. Summarize research clues.
  - c. Track the source for each clue.
  - d. How do you know what you know?
  - e. Compare potential connections with document clues.
6. Associates.
  - a. Look for names of associates that appear more than once.
  - b. Tracing friends and associates will break brick wall problems.

7. Gazetteers.
  - a. Gazetteers, when effectively used are the most important tool to identify the correct town.
  - b. Learn the difference between a town and a parish. Be sure you identify the town where the civil or church records were kept.
  - c. Be a creative speller for town names.
  - d. Check for levels of jurisdiction
  - e. Why levels of jurisdiction are important.
  - f. Check for several towns with the same name.
  - g. How to use a gazetteer to identify the towns to be used in an area search.
  - h. Often one gazetteer is not enough, compare the information in several gazetteers to get as complete a picture as you can about the possible towns of origin.
  - i. Come back to the gazetteer often when initial searches don't work out.
  - j. Gazetteers often indicate how many churches were in a town.
  - k. Search records of each church.
  
8. Maps.
  - a. Use maps to identify outlying communities from which an ancestor may have come.
  - b. How to do an area search.
  - c. Use maps to determine if an area search is needed.
  
9. Church and Civil Records.
  - a. Getting the most out of church and civil records.
  - b. Pay attention to witnesses and godparents.
  - c. Confirmation and first communion records are often your best clue for people who were "from" a town, but not born there.
  - d. Begin with the assumption that more than one person in town has the same name, identify every one of them, and try to eliminate them all.
  
10. Names.
  - a. Names uncommon in the U.S. may be common in Europe.
  - b. A person of the same or similar name as your ancestor may not be him/her.
  
11. Area Searches.
  - a. An area search may reveal other people with similar names.
  - b. An area search is part of doing exhaustive research.
  - c. Be sure you don't miss small towns in the area.
  - d. Begin the search in a small circle, expand to a larger circle.
  
12. Develop a Theory.
  - a. Find the best candidates.
  - b. Develop a theory.

- c. Test the theory.
  - d. Try to disprove the theory.
  - e. Ask questions.
13. Try to disprove the theory.
- a. Search confirmation records.
  - b. Corroborate unrecorded births.
  - c. Prove which children died.
  - d. Find families that have moved in.
14. Avoiding Common Pitfalls.
- a. A rare name in the US may be a common name in the area of Europe from which your ancestor came.
  - b. Learn as much as possible in U.S. records so you don't identify a distant cousin in Europe as your ancestor.
  - c. Always be open to further evidence.
  - d. Collaborate with other researchers.
  - e. Find friends and neighbors. People traveled together.
  - f. People can't live on two continents at once.
  - g. Try to disprove theories.
  - h. Create checklists and compare them.

#### SELECTED PUBLISHED CASE STUDIES

1. Bittner, F. Warren. "Dora Lühr's Hannover Origin: A Case of Conflicting Direct Evidence." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (September 2010): 165-76. This article expands the research for this lecture.
2. Freilich, Kay Haviland. "Was She Really Alice Fling? Righting a Wrong Identity." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (September 2000): 225-28. A short example of excellent research.
3. Garrett-Nelson, LaBrenda. "Parents for Isaac Garrett of Laurens County, South Carolina: DNA Corroborates Oral Tradition." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 108 (June 2020): 85-112. "Fascinating, and thought-provoking!" The article "demonstrates the struggle to reconstruct African American families and the methodology that can break through their unique walls... I have learned much—not just about records, family, human nature, and research methodology, but also the extent to which families are intertwined across all ethnicities." [Comments by Flynn Clarke Kennedy and Elizabeth Shown Mills.]
4. Hatton, Stephen B., "Using Networks to Backtrack the Migration and Identify the Parents of Jacob Wynkoop of Morgan County, Ohio." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 102 (March 2018): 111-128.
5. Henderson, Harold A. "Fannie Fern Crandall and Her Three-Timing Darling Husband," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 106 (March 2018): 35-48. Proof that if you are afraid of skeletons in the closet, don't do genealogy.

6. Johnson, Caleb. "New Light on William<sup>1</sup> Bradford's Passenger List of the Mayflower." *The American Genealogist* 80 (April 2005): 94-99. In this short article, the author revolutionizes our understanding of what is easily the most scrutinized passenger list since the ark. He applies modern genealogical evidence evaluation methods and disproves some accepted origins for *Mayflower* passengers, and he suggests new avenues of research for others. This is a great case for the argument, "It doesn't matter how closely the document has been studied before, there is more to see if we study it in depth and look beneath the surface."
7. Johnson, Linda Bennett. "Name Changes Within the Melting Pot: The Search for 'Sarah Frances Gilmore' of Detroit." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 84 (June 1997): 85-93.
8. Jones, Thomas W. "Organizing Meager Evidence to Reveal Lineages: An Irish Example — Geddes of Tyrone." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 89 (June 2001): 98-112. This article is a superb example of using very little information to its best advantage. A brilliant case study!
9. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "Building a Case When No Record 'Proves a Point.'" *Ancestry* 16 (April-May 1998): 26-31. Elizabeth explains how to put together a convincing argument.
10. \_\_\_\_\_. "The Search for Margaret Ball: Building Steps over a Brick-wall Research Problem." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 77 (March 1989): 43-65.
11. Ouimette, David S. "Proving the Parentage of John Bettis: Immigrant Ancestor of Bettis Families in Vermont." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 98 (September 2010): 189-210. In this award-winning article, David Ouimette demonstrates how thorough research and indirect evidence can be used to establish identity, and why the written proof for the reasoning behind the evidence is essential
12. Pratt, Warren C. "Finding the Father of Henry Pratt of Southeastern Kentucky." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 100 (June 2012): 85-103. An excellent example of in-depth research and skillful analysis to solve a very challenging research problem.
13. Russell, Judy G. "'Don't Stop There!' Connecting Josias Baker to His Burke County, North Carolina, Parents." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 99 (March 2011): 25-41. A great example of the long and convoluted path that is sometimes required to establish identity; and again, why it is essential to write down our evidence analysis and reasoning.
14. Saxbe, William B. "'Thomas<sup>2</sup> Walling and His Way with Women' Seventeenth-Century Misconduct as an Aid to Identification." *The American Genealogist* 73 (April 1998): 91-100. The author demonstrates the creative use of in-depth evidence analysis to solve an identity problem. A great example of why writing down our conclusions is as important as citing our sources, and that the evidence to prove identity is often not "genealogical" in nature.
15. Wayne, Debbie Parker. "Analysis and Correlation of Evidence." *On Board: Newsletter of the Board for Certification of Genealogists* 17 (January 2011): 10-15. "Do we really need to do more research and analysis once we have an official record or information from a firsthand source that directly states a relationship? Yes. We all have examples of records that contain erroneous information."