

Using Lists to Find Proof

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Genealogists examine lists when they conduct research, whether it be in the form of censuses, tax lists, directories, petitions, or others. This class will demonstrate methods of examining a variety of lists as a research tool for providing proof to our research questions.

THE GENEALOGICAL PROOF STANDARD

Applicable to all genealogical research problems, the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) is the method by which we can measure the caliber of our work and know that we have done our best to make an argument for proof. BCG emphasizes the importance of proof and standards in our work: “Genealogical results cannot be partly proved. Proof results only when a genealogist’s research, conclusion, and presentation of that conclusion reflect all five GPS components.”¹

The Five Components of the GPS:

Reasonably exhaustive research
Full and complete citations
Tests of analysis and correlation
Resolution of conflicts
Written report of findings

From The Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, (Ancestry: Nashville, 2014), 2-3.

TYPES OF LISTS

The term “list” can cover a variety of topics and record types, and for the purposes of this lecture, simply refers to any time a list of names occurs. Usually there is a description of what the list is composed of, but not always. How lists are arranged can be especially important. Sometimes lists are alphabetical, others might be ordered by an event or a location.

A list’s arrangement can be important to your analysis of the information. For example, cemetery books that have been compiled either through DAR projects, Boy Scouts projects, WPA jobs, or by a local genealogical society, are usually compiled in one of two ways: they are either arranged alphabetically or arranged in order of plot/location in the cemetery. Which way is more effective for your research? For identifying family members? For identifying members of your ancestors’ FAN Club?² Cemetery books that are compiled in a way that maintains the locations of the plots, so that you can easily identify who is buried next to whom, give more subtle contextual information than cemetery books that do not.

1. The Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, (Ancestry: Nashville, 2014), 3.

2. The term “FAN” refers to the Friends, Associates, and Neighbors of our ancestors, also known as cluster research. The term “FAN Club” is attributed to Elizabeth Shown Mills.

TYPES OF LISTS

indexes of any kind	city directories	tax lists	petitions
censuses	church membership	members of a club or society	fraternal organization member lists
community groups	committees	hotel registrations	hospital admittances and discharges
cemetery books	event participants	jurors	estate sales
militia rolls	voter lists	land lottery winners	letters at post office
school class lists	yearbooks	agricultural lists	breeders lists

SELECTED STANDARDS PERTAINING TO LISTS

- Standard 24 – Understanding Meanings
- Standard 36 – Information Analysis
- Standard 40 – Evidence Mining
- Standard 41 – Evidence Scope
- Standard 47 – Evidence Correlation³

“Evidence mining requires attention to detail, including details that might initially seem insignificant.”
—BCG, *Genealogy Standards*, #40, p. 24

USING LISTS AS A RESEARCH TOOL

“Reasonably exhaustive research” requires investigation across a wide range of sources, including lists of varying types. Lists can be a creation of an original record (tax lists) or a derivative record (indexes or abstracts of originals).

Skipping the use of lists because they lack identifying information or are “just” transcriptions rather than originals could be detrimental to finding proof.⁴ Lists can help establish or confirm the identities of same name, same place individuals in many cases. If you have two men of the same name in the same town, and you locate one in a tax record as owning no property, and one as owning 160 acres in the same year, you now have a bit of information that separates the two individuals. You then use those pieces of information to build a case for separate identities.

3. The standards referenced here can be found in The Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, (Ancestry: Nashville, 2014).

4. However, you can’t hang your entire proof on lists and derivative sources if originals are available. They should be used as a supplement if they provide additional information. See Thomas W. Jones, “Perils of Source Snobbery,” *OnBoard* 18 (May 2012); available on the BCG website Skillbuilding section (<https://bcgcertification.org/skillbuilding-perils-of-source-snobbery/> : viewed 28 June 2018).

Lists can also be used to determine migration patterns which can then form the distinction needed between two individuals of the same name.

USING LISTS TO ESTABLISH IDENTITY - CASE STUDIES

1. Thomas Carroll Mitchell - Was he captured or did he desert?

I, Thos. C. Mitchell make oath that I was taken a prisoner at Sardinia, Miss. in 1865 and confined in prison at Alton, Ill. until the close of the war. I therefore never received a discharge from the Confederate States of America.

Witness
Geo. D. Bennett } Thos. C. Mitchell
mark

On this June 15-1913 before me, a Notary Public, personally appeared Thos. C. Mitchell who made oath to the above statement.

Witness my hand and seal this 18th day of June, 1913

H. P. French
Notary Public
Expire May 21-1917

WAR DEPARTMENT, 378
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
2064515 WASHINGTON, August 7, 1913.

Respectfully returned to the
Adjutant General,
State of Missouri, Jefferson City.

The records show that Thomas Mitchell, aged 37 years, private, Company G (Captain George B. Harper), 2d (Colonel Robert A. McCullough) Missouri Cavalry, Confederate States Army, enlisted January 1, 1862, at Springfield. The only company record on which his name appears is the roll for September and October, 1862. His presence or absence is not stated thereon but a remark appears showing that he was "Detailed teamster and has no horse." A historic roll dated January 1, 1865, bears his name with remarks relative to him as follows: "Served mostly as a teamster. Deserted from near Sardinia, Miss., Nov. 1, 1863, and went home & took the oath of allegiance to the United States." No record of disability or later record in the case of this soldier has been found.

H. D. Heintz
Adjutant General.
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Pension for Ex-Confederate Soldiers, 20 August 1913, Thomas C. Mitchell (Co. G, 2nd Missouri Cavalry), application no. 378, certificate no. 378; Confederate Home Pensions, reel S1086, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

2. Sanford and Lucy Sly - When did they move to Arizona?

3. Gilbert Avery - One man or two?

4. Adam Brand - Proving identity in a passenger list

224	Winnia Loy	26							
225	Adam Brand	63							
226	Anna	60							
227	Katharine	14							
228	Adam Brand	63							
229	Anna Landefeld	15							

"New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957," digital images, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 June 2012), manifest, S. S. America, 1 June 1868, [no page numbers on manifest], steerage passenger 228, for Adam Brand, age 63.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Books & Articles

1. Fox, Judy Kellar. "Ten-Minute Methodology: Identity Proof in a List." *Board for Certification of Genealogists* (<https://bcgcertification.org/ten-minute-methodology-identity-proof-in-a-list/> : viewed 27 June 2018).
2. Hager, Ruth Ann Abels. "Slaves, Soldiers, and Citizens: Special Civil War Recruitment Lists." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 91 (June 2003): 139-143.
3. Holsclaw, Birdie Monk. "From Hypothesis to Proof: Indirect Evidence for the Maiden Identity of Elizabeth, Wife of George Hagenberger." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 92 (June 2004): 96-104.
4. Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 2013.
5. Litchman, William M., "Using Cluster Methodology to Backtrack an Ancestor: The Case of John Bradberry." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 95 (June 2007): 103-116.
6. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Third Edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2015.

Websites

8. Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) - www.bcgcertification.org/
9. Cyndi's List, "Evidence Analysis & Evaluation" category - www.cyndislist.com/evidence/