



Finding Henrietta: Reconciling Conflicting Evidence to Reveal a Woman's Identity

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SYNOPSIS

Henrietta Dixon was never enumerated with individuals identified as her parents in a federal census. Records revealing her family members, including her father, are often conflicting. Additionally, multiple marriages further obscure her identity. This case study uncovers Henrietta's maiden name and emphasizes the importance of a focused research question when attempting to meet the Genealogical Proof Standard.

GENEALOGICAL PROOF STANDARD ("GPS")

- Reasonably exhaustive research
- Complete and accurate source citations
- Tests (through analysis and correlation)
- Resolution of conflicting evidence
- Written conclusion

Standards for Documenting	Standards for Researching	Standards for Writing
Standards 1-8	Standards 9-57	Standards 58-80
Covers: scope, specificity, purposes, citation uses, citation elements, format, shortcuts, and separation safeguards	Covers: planned research, effective research questions, sound basis, broad context, source-based content, topical breadth, efficient sequence, flexibility, extent, terminating the plan, data collection scope, careful handling, respect for source caretakers, using others' work, reading handwriting, understanding meanings, note-taking content, distinction between content and comments, note-taking objectivity, images and printouts, transcriptions, abstracts, quotations, evidence mining, evidence correlation...	Covers: research scope, proved conclusions, selection of appropriate options, logical organization, integrity and ownership, honesty, background information, content, proofs included, overall format, structure, clear writing, technically correct writing, cross-referencing, genealogical formats, biographical information...

STANDARDS FOR RESEARCHING (Standards 9-57)

Standard 10. Effective research questions

"Questions underlying research plans concern aspects of identity, relationship, events, and situations. The questions are sufficiently broad to be answerable with evidence from relevant places and times. They are sufficiently focused to yield answers that may be tested and shown to meet or not to meet the Genealogical Proof Standard. Genealogical-research questions include (a) a clearly described unique person, group, or event as the question's focus; and (b) specification of unknown or forgotten information that the research is to discover (for example, an identity, relationship, event, or biographical detail)."¹

Standard 47. Evidence Correlation

"Genealogists test their evidence by comparing and contrasting evidence items. They use such correlation to discover parallels, patterns, and inconsistencies, including points at which evidence items agree, conflict, or both."²

Standard 48. Resolving Evidence Inconsistencies

"Genealogists attempt to resolve conflicts or incompatibilities among two or more evidence items. Resolution involves (a) identifying evidence items that support each side of a conflict and (b) articulating a defensible rationale for setting aside evidence items that support all but one side of the conflict."³

Standard 50. Assembling conclusions from evidence

"Once a genealogist resolves conflicting evidence, all remaining relevant evidence items are compatible with a single answer to the research question. This answer becomes a conclusion. Credible conclusions may rest on direct, indirect, or negative evidence in any combination. Credible conclusions include placing individuals accurately in their families or other groups."⁴

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Anderson, Robert Charles. *Elements of Genealogical Analysis*. Boston: New England Historic and Genealogical Society, 2014.

Hait, Michael G. "Free and Enslaved: John and Melinda Human/Newman of Talbot County and Baltimore, Maryland." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 103, no. 2 (June 2015): 115—127.

Hoyt, Sharon L. "'Her Sixth Matrimonial Venture': The Many Marriages of Ida May Chamberlain." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (September 2018): 217—238.

LaRue, Nicole Gilkison. "A Woman of Many Names: Henrietta Dixon of Baltimore City, Maryland." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 108, no. 3 (September 2020): 183—193.

¹ Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards* (Washington, D.C.: Ancestry, 2021), 11.

² *Genealogy Standards*, 27.

³ *Genealogy Standards*, 28.

⁴ *Genealogy Standards*, 50.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "Louis Monet's Daughters Dorothee and Dorothee: Sorting Tri-Racial Roots of Two Same-Names, Previously Merged, Colonial-Born Freedwomen." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 109, no. 2 (June 2021): 85—110.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "Documenting a Slave's Birth, Parentage, and Origins: (Marie Therese Coincoin, 1742-1816): A Test of Oral History." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, 96 (December 2008). Pages 245--266.

Mills, Elizabeth Shown and Gary B. Mills, eds. "Reassembling Female Lives," a special issue of the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (September 2000).